



DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD

Inspection Report

Name of School: St Michael's Primary School

LEA: Newham

Inspection Date: 21st March 2018

Reporting Inspector: Pamela Brannigan

This Inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of School: Primary
School Category: Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils: 4 - 11
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 205
Appropriate Authority: The Governing Body
Date of previous inspection: February 2013

School Address:
Howard Road
East Ham
London
E6 6EF

Tel. No. 020 8472 3964
Headteacher: Mrs K. Ward
Chair of Governors: Mrs J. Ashton

Information about the school

St Michael's Catholic Primary with Nursery is a one form entry school in East Ham in the London Borough of Newham and part of the diocese of Brentwood. The school serves the parish of St Michael's, East Ham from which many pupils come. There are currently 205 pupils aged 4-11 on roll with a further 24 part-time children in the nursery. The school is over subscribed. The proportion of Catholic pupils is 95%. There is a well above average number of pupils from minority ethnic groups and 70% of pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is around the national average.

Key grades for inspection

1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Unsatisfactory

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 1

St Michael's is an outstanding Catholic school. The strong Catholic ethos permeates all areas of school life. Outcomes for pupils are excellent as is the overall quality of Catholic education. Opportunities for spiritual and moral development are interwoven through religious education, prayer and an understanding of what it means to be part of a Catholic community. Leaders are excellent role models and have a vision for the whole school community which includes the well-being of parents and families. Pastoral care is shared by all members of the school community and relationships within the school are excellent. Pupils spoken to say they feel safe and well cared for. Both pupils and parents greatly appreciate the very many opportunities offered to develop a wide range of interests through before and after school clubs and lunch time activities. Parents welcome the Catholicity of the school and the way their children's prayer life is supported and developed. Pupils' standards of attainment are in line with and sometimes exceed diocesan expectations.

The school has a very good capacity for sustained improvement and has put in place systems to ensure its self-evaluation is accurate and links into the School Improvement Plan. The last inspection in 2013 identified three areas for development: to increase the level of challenge for the ablest pupils; to further develop rigorous assessment and moderation procedures in religious education; to fully implement the 'Come and See' religious education programme. All areas have been fully implemented and as a result standards in religious education have risen. Moderation meetings are held regularly in school and the local deanery to share assessments and judgements with other Catholic schools. The school gives a high profile to religious education and has very good strategies to share good practice and support new teachers.

The headteacher, senior leadership team and governors have a clear vision for the Catholicity of the school and the central place of prayer, worship and religious education. The headteacher ensures that all staff are given opportunities to extend their knowledge and improve their skills through staff meetings and attendance at diocesan led training. Four teachers hold the CCRS qualification and one more is currently undertaking the course.

The school leadership has an excellent capacity to maintain effectiveness. The headteacher shows outstanding leadership of a Catholic community through her commitment to all aspects of school life. The subject leader for religious education is experienced and well placed to support colleagues and new teachers. Together with the senior leadership team they have a clear focus on Catholic life in which they are supported by all staff and the local parish priest. Governors are dedicated, have a wide range of expertise and are fully involved in the life of the school. Strong systems are in place to develop and support initiatives which lead to good outcomes for all pupils.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to implement the areas identified in the religious education action plan especially those linked to the involvement of pupils in collective worship.

Prepare for assessment without levels in line with diocesan recommendations.

Attainment and progress in religious education are outstanding. The very good start pupils are given in Early Years ensures that from a low base pupils make good progress year on year so that by the time they reach Year 6 attainment reaches and sometimes exceeds diocesan expectations. All lessons observed during the inspection were good or outstanding and pupils worked with interest and commitment. An excellent Year 5 lesson on sacrifice explored the betrayal of Jesus by Judas. Using scripture and bible references pupils researched the events leading up to the betrayal for use in a whole class discussion. In the 'Conscience Alley' activity which followed pupils demonstrated an in-depth understanding of the issues involved and showed insight into Judas' motivation. All pupils spoken to said they like religious education and enjoy a wide variety of activities during the lessons. Each pupil has a portfolio containing levelled assessment pieces of work. Pupils have a good knowledge of the Catholic faith appropriate to their age and are able to apply religious ideas to their own lives. Workbooks are well presented, show coverage of the curriculum and indicate good progress made by all groups. Pupils spoken to had a good level of understanding of scripture, sacraments, Catholic teaching and moral issues. They behave well and are courteous and thoughtful to adults and each other.

Pupils make an excellent contribution to the Catholic life of the school. The mission statement, 'in the footsteps of Jesus, we strive to achieve excellence in everything we do' is well known by all members of the community. Pupils respond very well to opportunities to understand the needs of others in school and the wider world. They are keen to take on responsibilities including membership of the School Council, 'Mini Vinnies and prefects. Prefects now also have the responsibility of being religious education leaders and help set up for class masses.

Pupils are given opportunities to show support for a number of local, national and international charities. In recent years these have included Cafod, Children in Need and 'Toilet Twinning'. They have a good understanding of the theology underpinning their actions. Pupils are encouraged to see themselves as part of their wider community with responsibilities for other people and the environment. They demonstrate this by taking part in an annual Citizenship project, singing at a local residential home and being part of the Commonwealth Choir.

Prayer and worship are central to school life. Pupils respond very positively to opportunities to develop their faith journey. They are given many opportunities to play an active role in assemblies, Masses and class acts of worship. Religious education leaders are responsible for setting up the school hall for Masses and assisting younger pupils with liturgies. The centrality of the Church's liturgical year with its seasons and celebrations are leading to a good understanding of the links with the sacraments and life of Christ. Each class has an attractive prayer table which is used as a focus for worship as well as a display board which includes religious vocabulary and pupils' work. Pupils are developing the ability to pray in different ways and at different times. They use scripture, the traditional prayers of the church, meditation and their own prayers, many examples of which were seen during the inspection. Following the Stations of the Cross in Lent is enabling pupils to become familiar with traditional Catholic devotions. As they develop, pupils are able to apply aspects of Jesus' life and teaching to their own lives and understand that a sense of service is part of being a member of a Catholic community. There are plans to develop a prayer garden to allow pupils to engage in prayer independently.

Pastoral care is very good and shared by all members of staff and governors who work closely together to promote the spiritual development of pupils and the Catholic life of the school. Pupils feel safe, well cared for and know where to go for help if they need support. They value their school and all it offers. They know they are respected, listened to and encouraged to help each other. A Year 6 day held at John Bosco camp helps the transition to secondary schools. Parents speak very highly of the school, the headteacher and the care given to their children. They appreciate the support the school gives to pupils through a breakfast club and a range of extra-curricular activities. One parent wrote, 'The school has been a great opportunity for my children; they have grown spiritually and intellectually since they started.' Individual parents also appreciate the help offered through a counsellor from Brentwood Catholic Children's

Services who comes in every week. Parents praise the quality of education, the support given to their children's prayer life and the commitment and approachability of staff.

Leaders and managers

Grade 1

Leadership at all levels is outstanding. The dedicated headteacher and her team demonstrate excellent leadership of the school by the way they promote a clear Catholic vision to the whole community. This is affirmed by staff and governors who are all committed to providing the best possible environment for the pupils. The headteacher has ensured that the School Improvement Plan gives priority to Catholic Life and religious education and is linked to the action plan. The current system of self-evaluation is well evidenced, detailed and accurate. The subject leader has a very good knowledge of areas for development and is well placed to support colleagues who receive religious education in-service training throughout the year. This is in addition to extra support given to new and non-Catholic members of staff.

Senior leaders monitor religious education by means of lesson observations, work scrutiny and joint planning which is followed by feedback to individual teachers. The impact of rigorous monitoring results in high standards in religious education. There is currently a very strong focus on assessment and moderation both in-house and with other deanery schools. There are strategies in place to give further challenge to all groups of pupils. Much emphasis is placed on staff development which includes teaching assistants who play a key role in the school.

Governors work closely with senior leadership and have a very good understanding of strengths and areas for development. They are well informed about the life of the school through the headteacher's report and frequent monitoring visits. An annual 'Governors' Day' provides a good opportunity for visiting classrooms, talking to pupils and subject leaders and attending assemblies. The link governor is the parish priest from St Michael's; he is able to give the governing body a detailed understanding of developments in religious education.

Together with the headteacher's report this puts governors in a good position to challenge and support. Governors and staff participate in diocesan training sessions and are closely involved in steps for school improvement. The parish priest visits each week to get to know the pupils as well as to plan class Masses and liturgies. He also acts as an additional resource in classroom religious education and has arranged for seminarians staying in the parish to talk to pupils about vocations to the priesthood.

Leaders ensure that the school is a welcoming community where everyone is respected and valued. Diversity is celebrated and pupils are taught to respect other faiths. There are very good links with other schools both deanery and local authority run, through sporting and cultural events. Pupils are given good opportunities to show leadership and develop a sense of service through charitable fund raising and involvement in the local and wider community. Opportunities for spiritual development ensure that pupils are able to reflect on their own lives and experiences. Parents are invited to Masses, liturgies and many other school events and are kept well informed about their children's welfare and progress. They appreciate the good level of contact with the school which includes homework diaries, curriculum information meetings in September and letters which enable them to support their children's education and faith journey. Information about the prayers pupils will learn is communicated during a Reception parent workshop before pupils begin school.

Parish links are excellent and the school choir sings at the First Holy Communion Masses held in St Michael's Church which is adjacent to the school. There is also a carol service in the church each year for families and parishioners. Regular planned visits to the church ensure that the school is a partner in parish life. These close links enable pupils, families and parishioners to see school and parish as one community.

The quality of teaching and learning in religious education is excellent. During the inspection all lessons observed were good or outstanding. They are planned carefully with clear learning intentions and a varied range of activities including debate, drama and role-play. The school has made a major investment in resources including new sets of bibles for Key Stage 2 which has led to increased familiarity with scripture. Pupils benefit from the high profile given throughout the school to religious education. In all classes observed pupils were fully engaged and made good progress. Teachers have high expectations, very good subject knowledge and respond well to pupils' comments as they take every opportunity to develop understanding. Lessons are well differentiated to enable all groups to make good progress and higher order questioning was evident in lessons observed. Good support by teaching assistants enables all groups of pupils to make progress. Marking is positive, interactive and enables pupils to identify next steps in their learning. Good monitoring, assessment, planning and tracking supports the attainment and progress of all groups of pupils.

The quality of the religious education curriculum is outstanding. At least 10% of curriculum time is devoted to religious education. The programme 'Come and See' is supported by 'Journey in Love' and materials from Cafod. The headteacher gives religious education a central place in the life of the school and this is demonstrated by the budget devoted to it and the current level of resources. Religious education displays around the school emphasise the centrality of faith to the work of the community This includes the 'St Michael's Way,' a code of conduct for how to behave and treat other people developed by staff and pupils. The curriculum enables pupils to become aware of their responsibility for each other and their environment. It contributes very well to their spiritual and moral development. The school's programme of visits to Rome for Year 5 pupils contribute to pupils' independence and sense of worth. Year 6 pupils attend an annual retreat day with Brentwood Catholic Youth Service. The support given to families through a wide range of extra-curricular activities gives a strong sense of community to the school. There is every indication that current high standards are likely to be maintained or improved.

Provision for prayer and worship at St Michael's is outstanding. Assemblies and liturgies are very well planned and contribute greatly to pupils' spiritual development. They often include visual presentations, bible readings drama, singing and music. During the inspection a powerful assembly led by the headteacher explored 'World Water Day' using Cafod materials. Pupils participated with interest and concentration and were keen to respond to questions and offer their own ideas about the necessity of water for life as well as other uses including baptism and holy water. Pupils are involved in collective worship several times a day in their classrooms and are given opportunities for meditation and personal reflection. Each classroom has an attractive prayer focus with religious artefacts and display boards which include children's work. Pupils attend Mass several times a term as a class or part of a whole school celebration. They prepare for this by selecting hymns, composing bidding prayers, reading, offertory and as altar servers. Parents, families and parishioners are invited to Masses, other celebrations and attendance is very high. Pupils are given many opportunities to develop their knowledge of Catholic traditions through a study of the Beatitudes, Reconciliation in Advent and Lent, Stations of the Cross, May procession and Rosary as well as close links with the local parish.

The inspector would like to express her thanks and appreciation to all members of the school community for their welcome and openness during the inspection.