

***Diocese of Hallam***

***INSPECTION OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION  
(Section 23 of the 1996 School Inspections Act)***

**St Michael's Catholic Primary School  
Stoneyford Road  
Wombwell  
Barnsley  
S73 8AF**

Inspection Date: 28 February – 1 March 2001  
Diocesan Inspector : Mr Stephen Owen

This inspection of the denominational character of St Michael's Catholic Primary School was carried out under the direction of the Governors of the school in fulfilment of their obligations under the requirements of Canon Law (ref. 804, 806), Section 23 of the 1996 School Inspection Act, Section 13 of the Education (Schools) Act 1992 and Sections 241 and 259 of the Education Act 1993. This inspection was conducted according to the Handbook for the Inspection of Religious Education in the Diocese of Hallam.

The process of Inspection in the Diocese of Hallam has been developed to support and encourage each school community. It is hoped that this report will celebrate all that is positive and praiseworthy in St Michael's Catholic Primary School and help promote sound development for the future.

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A copy of this report may be obtained from the Governors of St Michael's Catholic Primary School, Stoneyford Road, Wombwell, Barnsley S73 8AF or the Diocese of Hallam Schools' Department, Hallam Pastoral Centre, St Charles Street, Sheffield S9 3WU

## **INTRODUCTION**

### ***BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL:***

<b>Name of School:</b>	St Michael's Catholic Primary School
<b>Type:</b>	Junior and Infant
<b>Status:</b>	Voluntary Aided
<b>Number on Roll:</b>	133 (inc. seven Travelling children)
<b>Age Range:</b>	5-11 years
<b>Gender of Pupils:</b>	Mixed
<b>Chair of Governors:</b>	Mrs Rosemary Nugent
<b>Headteacher:</b>	Mr Frank Woulfe
<b>Address of School:</b>	Stoneyford Road Wombwell Barnsley S73 8AF
<b>Telephone Number:</b>	01226 752120
<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	28 February – 1 March 2001
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St Michael's School is situated in the parish of St Michael's and All Angels, Wombwell. The majority of its children come from Wombwell itself and Darfield but other children come from the outlying villages of Middlecliffe, Billingley, Broomhill, Brampton, Elsecar and Hemingfield. Consequently a large number of pupils travel to and from school by bus and car. The school is on the border of the Dearne Valley and the whole area has suffered recently by the closure of the coalmines. There has been some creation of employment by the opening of small factories, but the area still remains one of high unemployment.

At the time of inspection St Michael's was undergoing a considerable amount of repair and redecoration which meant a great deal of disruption and upheaval experienced by all who work at the school.

The pupils are arranged in four classes, all in mixed year groups. Approximately thirty-three percent of pupils are baptised Catholics.

Class 1	Rec/Y1:	25
2	Y1/Y2:	29
3	Y3/Y4:	40
4	Y5/Y6:	39

These figures include seven Travelling children.

The present Headteacher has been in post since September 1999. The teaching staff consists of four full-time teachers of whom three are Catholic. They are strongly supported by a number of administrative and support staff.

## **PART ONE**

### **ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL AS A CATHOLIC COMMUNITY**

#### **1 THE MISSION OF THE SCHOOL**

- 1.1 St Michael's Mission Statement was written in June 1996 and is divided into two sections: *Aims* and *Actions*. Whilst the aims and actions are highly commendable, there needs to be more cohesion and flow to reflect the school's values and intent. More recently, a Vision Statement has been written by the Headteacher. This presents a clear message with Christ at the centre of all that goes on in the busy and varied life of the school. It would be good practice for all to have a closer look at interweaving the philosophy and ideals expressed in this statement into a statement encompassing both vision and mission.
- 1.2 Sixteen questionnaires were returned by the parents. All clearly showed that parents are pleased and satisfied with the quality of Religious Education their children are receiving. They acknowledge and appreciate the openness and friendliness of the relationship between home and school, and feel welcome, valued and supported by the Christian culture and ethos of the school. The parents also recognise the importance of the moral and spiritual education provided by the school and are glad to know what is going on in Religious Education lessons through information received about termly topics etc. This is good practice and a strength of the school.
- 1.3 The school values the part played by parents in all that they do, for the liaison between home and school and for their obvious loyalty and support.
- 1.4 Sacramental preparation is primarily parish-based, undertaken by two catechists who enjoy a very close relationship with the school and governing body. This preparation is supported within school and the partnership between school and parish is good.
- 1.5 Relationships throughout the school are good – open and friendly, and the children benefit greatly from this atmosphere. All who work in the school for the good of the children do so in a way that includes everyone, and this benefits all concerned. The children respond confidently and competently to visitors and have a directness of approach that is very pleasing and refreshing.

#### **2 THE SCHOOL AS A WORSHIPPING COMMUNITY**

- 2.1 Acts of collective worship were seen during the inspection in the form of a Key Stage One assembly, a Key Stage Two assembly and a whole-school assembly. The lay-out and dynamic of the school hall where assemblies took place faced difficulties due to internal building/repair work and items of furniture and equipment were stored there temporarily.

- 2.2 The Key Stage One assembly observed began well with the children entering the hall quietly to appropriate music. More active participation by the children would have enhanced the message put across, and the content could have been more tightly focussed towards the particular age range. Merit certificates were presented to deserving pupils at the end, and it was obvious that the children respond well to the praise given to them.
- 2.3 The Key Stage Two assembly also began well, and the older children entered the hall quietly and respectfully, again to appropriate music. Most of the children listened attentively to the meditative aspect of the assembly, but a significant minority found difficulty in responding to this particular approach. Sharing of these acts of collective worship with all children and staff might further enhance the message.
- 2.4 The whole-school Ash Wednesday Service covered the themes of 'sadness' and 'joy'. The older children took an active part and read confidently and competently. The content of the service was a little diffused and would have benefited from a clearer and more rigorously defined focus. Ashes were distributed to all children, including the 'Little Angels' who are part of a nursery provision facilitated by the school.
- 2.5 Collective Worship is good and meets statutory requirements. The school now needs to reflect and draw up a whole-school policy on Collective Worship.

### **3 SPIRITUAL AND MORAL DEVELOPMENT**

#### **3.1 Spiritual Development**

- 3.1a St Michael's rightly recognises the importance of spiritual and moral development amongst its pupils. Opportunities for reflection are frequent and are appreciated by most pupils. There is a quiet and genuinely respectful atmosphere as the children move in and out of assemblies, and they listen well. This atmosphere is enhanced by the use of appropriate music.
- 3.1b Traditional prayers are well known by the children and spoken aloud with care and thought.
- 3.1c Throughout the school children's prayers, ideas and thoughts explicitly show the spiritual development they are offered as they grow and mature as part of the school community.
- 3.1d Very good use indeed is made of retreats and other days away that help promote spiritual growth and development. This is a strength of the school and is to be commended.

### **3.2 Moral Development**

- 3.2a In listening to the children's comments and answers during Religious Education lessons, it is perfectly clear that they have an explicit understanding of what is right and wrong, and their attitudes towards adults and indeed to each other exemplify this. They can relate to what Christ asks us to do and there is a willingness on their part to do that.
- 3.2b Children show a refreshing lack of sophistication in their friendliness and co-operation towards all who make up the school community.
- 3.2c During the inspection the behaviour and demeanour of the children was very good indeed. They are a credit to themselves and to all who work in the school. This is a strength of the school.
- 3.2d The children's attitude to school is lively and cheerful.

## **PART TWO**

### **CURRICULUM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

#### **4 *STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS***

##### **4.1 Attainment and Progress**

- 4.1a It is clear from the lessons seen that children are making progress in knowledge and understanding in their religious education lessons. They speak with confidence and competence and have a sound basis on which to build further improvement and progress, ensuring quality to their overall literacy development.
- 4.1b Children's written work seen during the inspection is of a more variable standard. A sharper focus on monitoring and assessment strategies would ensure a more consistent approach and improve standards and would also enhance provision for a range of abilities.
- 4.1c The older children attain good standards as they prepare for their move to secondary education. Relationships with the secondary schools are good.

##### **4.2 Attitudes to Learning**

- 4.2a Children's attitudes to learning are good. They are both attentive and interested in teaching sessions and respond well to challenging questions, especially so in upper Key Stage Two.
- 4.2b There was a very pleasing learning atmosphere in all lessons observed and it was impressive to note how confident and competent the children were in drawing conclusions based on a particular teaching focus or objective.

- 4.2c Some participation was noted in assemblies, and this element could be further developed in line with the age of the children.

## **5 QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROVIDED**

### **5.1 Teaching**

- 5.1a Good teaching took place in both Key Stages. All lessons observed in Key Stage One were well planned and clearly delivered. Teaching objectives were tightly focussed and the content was suitably differentiated to allow children of all abilities to take an active part in the learning process. In Key Stage Two the teaching ranged from satisfactory to good. Where the teaching was good, the use of clearly differentiated questioning allowed children to answer confidently and competently.
- 5.1b In all classes the displays of children's work were good. Time and care had been taken to enhance the religious themes undertaken and the children were quite rightly very proud of their work.
- 5.1c The teaching staff follow the newly revised 'Here I Am' religious programme and use Diocesan planning proformas satisfactorily.
- 5.1d Individual lesson plans produced for the inspection were satisfactory, but some would have benefited from a closer look at the time allocation and management that makes up a class lesson.
- 5.1e Medium planning documentation is clear but greater emphasis and importance could be placed on differentiation by task rather than outcome in some classes.

### **5.2 Religious Education Curriculum and Assessment**

- 5.2a The Headteacher is also the Religious Education Co-ordinator. Diocesan meetings are attended regularly and materials, resources and relevant information shared. The teaching staff have welcomed the newly formed 'Here I Am' religious education programme.
- 5.2b At present there are no formal procedures for the monitoring, assessment or evaluation of the teaching and learning of religious education within the school. Short-term lesson plans are collected in and scrutinised and informal monitoring takes place through observation at assemblies. There is a need for a whole-school review of this process to ensure consistency and to raise standards where needed.
- 5.2c There is a Religious Education policy in place which is a comprehensive document. A policy document for monitoring, assessment and evaluation should now be developed.
- 5.2d Reports to parents were not seen during the inspection.

## **6 THE MANAGEMENT OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

### **6.1 Leadership and Management**

- 6.1a St Michael's school has undergone a number of changes in leadership and management in recent times, and is now obviously benefiting from a very open style of management led by the current Headteacher who was appointed in September 1999.
- 6.1b The Headteacher, who is also the Religious Education Curriculum Co-ordinator, has the support and loyalty of the governing body, who are keen to be involved in all aspects of the life of the school. This is a strength of the school.
- 6.1c The Chair of Governors, the Parish Priest and the Headteacher are keen to further develop and evolve the effective partnership between parish and school and are strongly committed to developing strategies and procedures that will facilitate success.

### **6.2 Staffing, Accommodation and Resources**

- 6.2a The school has hard-working and committed staff with a range of experience and expertise. There is a very friendly atmosphere between parents and those who work in the school for the good of the children. Non-teaching and support staff also enjoy the atmosphere of friendliness and mutual self-respect that is a strength of the school.
- 6.2b St Michael's is still undergoing extensive maintenance, repair and redecoration and already vast improvements are witnessed. The newly decorated classrooms are a pleasure to be in and the quality of religious education displays is good.
- 6.2c Despite the difficulties mentioned above, children's displays are well presented throughout the school and are of a good quality.
- 6.2d It is pleasing to note that notices for parents regarding parish/school matters are also clearly displayed and well presented.
- 6.2e The staff at St Michael's are to be commended for coping so well with the difficulties faced in terms of re-building and refurbishment.
- 6.2f Resources are catalogued efficiently.

## **PART THREE**

### **MAIN FINDINGS AND AREAS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT**

#### **7 MAIN FINDINGS**

- 7.1 St Michael's is a good Catholic school with a strong commitment to the faith journey of its children.
- 7.2 The school has an open, warm and welcoming atmosphere which is a tribute to all who work for the good of the children – home, school and parish.
- 7.3 The school is strongly supported by the governing body who play an active part in the life of the school in a number of ways.
- 7.4 Collective worship is good and meets statutory requirements. The school now needs to develop a whole school policy.
- 7.5 The spiritual and moral development of the children is good. They behave well and show a genuine concern for others.
- 7.6 Children's attitudes to learning are good. They are attentive and respond with confidence.
- 7.7 The school is well supported by the parish priest and there is clear evidence that the link and relationships between parish and school has considerably improved since the time of the last inspection.
- 7.8 There is evidence of good teaching in religious education in both key stages. All teachers strive to promote the children's knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith.
- 7.9 Relationships throughout the school are very good.
- 7.10 Displays of children's work in religious education in classrooms and in more public areas of the school are of a good standard.
- 7.11 The school building is in the process of undergoing much needed improvement and refurbishment of classrooms and other areas. Despite this upset in routine, the staff and children coped remarkably well during the time of inspection and are to be commended for this.
- 7.12 As a result of the above the management of centralised religious education is not without its problems. A comprehensive catalogue of resource exists.
- 7.13 The Religious Education Co-ordinator, who is also the Headteacher, attends courses and presentations offered by the Diocesan Schools' Department.

- 7.14 Celebration of liturgies on Feast Days are a shared joy where the parish “becomes the guest of the school” and the already good and developing relationships that exist here are further promoted.
- 7.15 The written work produced by the children in religious education is of a variable standard. Whilst most teaching observed was good, more demand might be made of the children to produce better presented work on occasions.
- 7.16 There would appear to be little evidence as yet of a formal religious education assessment policy, and this might be considered as part of the school’s development plan. More emphasis might also be placed on the ‘Relate’ and ‘Remember’ aspects of the children’s work.
- 7.17 Parents are happy with the religious education, and spiritual and moral development their children receive. They are pleased with the reception they receive from the school and are appreciative of the regular lines of communication open to them about religious education and other matters.

## **AREAS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT**

In order to build on the good work and progress achieved since the last inspection, the governors, Headteacher and staff should now:

1. Celebrate and consolidate the progress being made by good, open leadership and teaching in the spiritual and moral development of the children and their faith journey in religious education.
2. Develop more systematic and formalised procedures for the monitoring and assessment of teaching and learning in religious education in order to improve and enhance the delivery of appropriate activities for children of differing abilities.
3. Review present arrangements for Collective Worship to ensure the involvement of all concerned and draw up a whole school policy.
4. Review and develop the Vision Statement and Mission Statement of the school.

## **APPENDIX: EVIDENCE BASE**

The programme of inspection included a pre-inspection visit to the school, the Ofsted parents' meeting and three half days of inspection.

Religious education was observed in all classes and three acts of collective worship.

A selection of documentation was presented, including the School Development Plan and relevant policies for religious education, special educational needs, anti-bullying, child protection and also the action plan following the last inspection. The Vision Statement, Mission Statement, Headteacher's form, liturgy programme, plans and reports and assessment documents were also seen.

Interviews were held with the parish priest, the Chair of Governors, the Headteacher (who is also the religious education co-ordinator), and informal discussions took place with governors, staff, parents, teachers, children and non-teaching staff.

### **CONCLUSION**

The Diocesan Inspector wishes to place on record his thanks for the kindness and co-operation shown by the Governors, Parish Priest, Headteacher and all staff, parents and children during the inspection.