



## St Michael's Catholic Primary School

URN: 147131

Catholic Schools Inspectorate report on behalf of the Bishop of Hexham & Newcastle

05 March 2026 – 06 March 2026

### Summary of key findings

#### Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school

##### Catholic life and mission (p.3)

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission

##### Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education RE

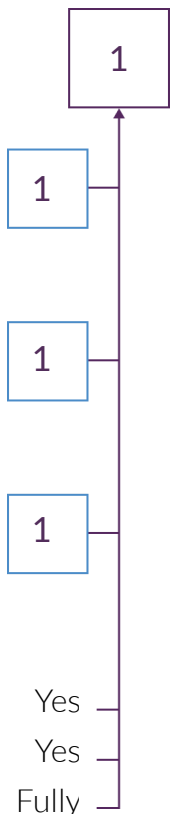
##### Collective worship (p.7)

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school

The school is fully compliant with the general norms for religious education laid down by the Bishops' Conference

The school is fully compliant with any additional requirements of the diocesan bishop

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection



Yes

Yes

Fully

## What the school does well

- The school's mission statement is widely recognised, readily accessible to all and a central feature of school life. Because it is prominently modelled by adults in the school community, pupils see it, know it and try to live it out through their own actions
- Pupils are proud to be part of St Michael's and readily seek out opportunities to lead the school's Catholic life
- The strong vision, drive and monitoring of school leaders, including the religious education leader, have influenced rapid and sustained improvements in the subject
- The school's partnerships with the parish and with parents are flourishing and enhance the very strong Catholic life and mission of the school
- Opportunities for pupils and their families to join in prayer and liturgy are a strong feature of the school calendar and enable pupils to move their faith into practical actions in support of others

## What the school needs to improve

- Develop feedback strategies in religious education to stretch and challenge pupils to deepen their learning
- Increase opportunities for pupils to demonstrate their religious knowledge through choosing original and creative ways of expressing what they have learned
- Continue to develop pupils' understanding and ability to articulate the religious meaning underpinning Catholic social teaching

## Catholic life and mission

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.

### Catholic life and mission key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

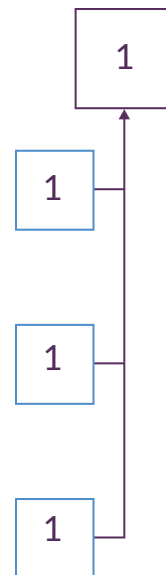
The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school

#### Provision

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school

#### Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school



Pupils at St Michael's Catholic Primary School proudly play an important part in their school's Catholic life. They readily seek out and respond to opportunities to take on leadership roles. Children understand the school mission well and, because it is prominent, they know it and try to live it out. Thriving groups such as Mini-Vinnies, the chaplaincy group and the Cafod group influence the work of the school and enable all pupils to see how they can respond to the school's mission. They have a strongly developed sense of care for others and a clear understanding of how they can support others through charitable enterprises such as Red Sky Foundation, Missio and St Cuthbert's Hospice. Pupils know that they are valued as unique individuals. They have a good understanding of what makes each of them special and they know that, in their school, differences are respected and celebrated. Many pupils understand the principles of Catholic social teaching and how these can be applied to their lives. Pupils are continuing to develop their understanding of the religious roots for their actions. The behaviour of pupils is exemplary. They are actively involved in the school's chaplaincy provision as leaders and participants. This positively influences the Catholic life of the school.

St Michael's mission statement: 'Learning together in faith and love, we shine as children of God' is a central feature of school life. It is prominent in every classroom and regularly referenced in prayers and lessons. Staff at St Michael's are excellent role models as they embrace the mission and enthusiastically participate in activities which reflect the life and mission of the school. Staff have a calm, positive approach which impacts successfully on relationships at all levels. Strong partnerships with parents are evident, recognising the key role parents play as first educators. One parent commented that this is a 'brilliant, brilliant

community with Jesus at its core'. Everyone is welcomed in a generous spirit, especially the most vulnerable. The presence of pupils and families of other faiths and other cultures is celebrated. Pastoral care and inclusion are a strong feature of the school. The physical environment has many artefacts, prayer spaces and displays which identify St Michael's as an unmistakably Catholic school. The relationships and sex education programme enables pupils to develop a holistic vision of the human person. The chaplaincy team are prominent with pupils actively and regularly supported by staff to develop provision of the school's Catholic life.

Leaders and governors have a clear vision for the school and recognise the key roles they play in ensuring that the development of the school's Catholic life and mission is at the core of their responsibilities. Governors are rigorous in their support and challenge, actively monitoring the school's work. Leaders work well to promote the bishop's vision, joyfully welcoming him to their community to celebrate a recent anniversary. There are exceptionally strong parish links with the parish priest and school leaders working well together to ensure a flourishing partnership which enriches school life for pupils. Highly successful strategies for engaging with parents mean that parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about their children's experience of school, and the support they receive from school. Leaders are inspirational witnesses to the gospel and to Catholic social teaching. Staff feel well-supported with one commenting, 'Leaders are responsive to changes and issues while having careful consideration for workload and staff wellbeing.' School self-evaluation is systematic, robust and well-planned, drawing on a variety of sources including the views of pupils, who play a key part in planning improvements. Opportunities to develop a Catholic understanding of the world are successfully threaded through the wider curriculum.

## Religious education

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.

### Religious education key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

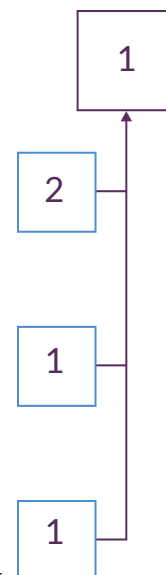
How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education

#### Provision

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education

#### Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for religious education



Pupils enjoy their religious education lessons and approach learning tasks with interest and enthusiasm. They are developing secure knowledge, understanding and skills which reflect the learning required by the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*. Many pupils state that religious education is their favourite subject, with some parents stating that they often talk about their lessons at home, discussing and debating their learning in religious education more than any other school subjects. Pupils of all abilities make good progress. The school has consistent strategies in place to ensure that pupils now remember more of what they have been taught. Pupils can speak confidently about their current learning although they have a limited understanding of what they need to do to improve their work. Pupils have a good understanding of the Bible as a special book and older pupils are skilled at using this to support their learning. Work in books is neatly presented, always completed and of a consistently good quality. Pupils have limited opportunities to summarise what they have learned in original and creative ways. Behaviour in lessons is outstanding because pupils are committed to the value of the subject. Pupils achieve above average attainment in comparison to other core curriculum subjects.

Teachers have a high level of confidence, good subject knowledge and a deep commitment to the value of religious education. Teachers have a profound understanding of the impact religious education has on the moral and spiritual development of pupils and regularly seize opportunities to draw links with their lessons and Catholic social teaching. They have high expectations for religious education and communicate this effectively to pupils. Teachers use

questions skilfully to check precisely for understanding and they adapt explanations and learning tasks to enable pupils of all abilities to succeed. Planning is linked to pupil assessments and is adapted for pupils of all abilities. The celebration of effort and sharing of good work is embedded in classroom practice and is motivating for pupils. Inconsistencies in feedback from teachers mean that some pupils are not always clear about next steps or how to improve their work. Teachers make good links between lessons and how pupils can apply their learning to their lives beyond the classroom. There are a good variety of activities available to pupils over a unit of work to show their learning, but opportunities to present their learning in different ways is restricted.

Leaders and governors ensure that the religious education curriculum is a faithful expression of the Directory. The curriculum is introduced systematically and is increasingly demanding for pupils as they progress through the school. Religious education has at least full parity with other core subjects and is prioritised in school plans for professional development, resources and timetabling. Leaders ensure that regular, high quality professional development opportunities are provided for staff in both subject knowledge and pedagogical development. This involves support within school, working with colleagues in other schools across the Trust and accessing relevant diocesan training. The religious subject leader has an inspiring vision and a relentless commitment to securing improvements. Working closely with other school leaders, she has been instrumental in securing a prominent place in the school's development plans for religious education. This has contributed to the rapid and sustained improvements that the school has made in the subject. Well targeted actions arising from systematic and searching self-evaluation are helping to close the gap between groups of pupils. Excellent links with external agencies and organisations enhance pupil engagement with religious education. Governors monitor the school's work rigorously and are knowledgeable about the school's strengths and areas for development.

## Collective worship

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school.

### Collective worship key judgement grade

#### Pupil outcomes

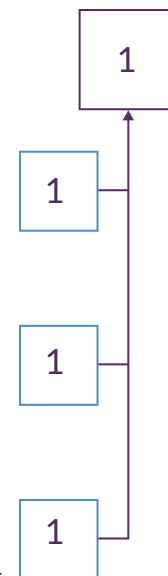
How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship

#### Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school

#### Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship



Pupils respond well to the many opportunities to pray throughout the school day. They show reverence, participate fully and have an excellent understanding of the shape of the Church's year. Pupils are well-supported in developing their skills as they progress through school. They lead celebrations of the word with confidence and participate with prayerful silence, joyful singing and deep respect. All pupils participate regularly in Masses at the parish church, joined by their families and many parishioners, all of whom value the opportunities to worship as a school and parish family. One parent stated, 'School and church work well together to nurture my son's faith. I like how my son gets lots of opportunities to go to church with school.' Pupils are adept at articulating how their prayer and liturgy experiences lead to actions, often linked to Catholic social teaching. The many and varied opportunities to pray are recorded, and evaluated in their Mission Monday folders and class prayer journals. Pupils take on chaplaincy leadership roles with relish, introducing peers to new ways of praying, maintaining focal points in their classrooms and preparing prayer spaces around the school.

Prayer is central to the daily rhythm of school life. Staff are well-supported by school leaders to be inspiring models of good practice. Strong guidance, supportive professional development and opportunities to model celebrations of the word support strong consistency in provision. Well chosen scripture plays a key role at the heart of prayer and liturgy and all pupils understand that the Bible is a special book to be venerated. Excellent links between the themes of celebrations of the word and Catholic social teaching and British values reinforce the wider curriculum and make prayer experiences relevant and meaningful for pupils. Staff introduce pupils to a wide variety of creative ways of praying, and spaces around the school

are used imaginatively and creatively. The school makes good use of the chapel as a place for prayer for pupil groups and for staff prayer. The school works exceptionally well with parents who value the many opportunities they have to join their children for Mass, celebrations of the word and assemblies. There is a thriving relationship with the parish and the parish priest regularly supports worship in school and the parish church.

There is a clear school policy on prayer and liturgy which is regularly reviewed and informs practice across the school. Leaders have produced a comprehensive annual plan of provision which highlights opportunities throughout the year for all year groups to lead worship. This covers key events in the calendar and ensures that feast days and other notable events are included. Additional guidance, produced by the subject leader, to aid staff in preparing for celebrations of the word and for Masses helps to ensure that high quality experiences of prayer and liturgy are the norm. Leaders are highly effective in their support of staff and pupils to plan and lead experiences of prayer and liturgy. There is a clear plan linked to the level of skills and participation reflective of the age and capacity of pupils. Leaders are happy to model this themselves and to be self-critical in their evaluations. This sets a clear tone and expectation for continuous improvement. An effective subject action plan, arising from searching self-evaluation, leads to carefully constructed developments. Recent examples of this include the development of the chaplaincy team and the introduction of a new resource to link Catholic social teaching to current events. Governors actively monitor the quality and impact of prayer and liturgy thereby ensuring it is recognised as a high priority.

## Information about the school

Full name of school	St Michael's Catholic Primary School
School unique reference number (URN)	147131
School DfE Number (LAESTAB)	3943323
Full postal address of the school	Durham Road, Houghton Le Spring, Tyne and Wear, DH5 8NF
School phone number	0191 5840542
Headteacher or Head of School	Mr Nicholas Reeson
Chair of Governors	Mark Burrell
School Website	stmichaelshoughton.bwcet.com
Trusteeship	Diocesan
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust
Phase	Primary
Type of school	Academy
Admissions policy	Non Selective
Age-range of pupils	4 - 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Date of last denominational inspection	29 March 2019
Previous denominational inspection grade	Outstanding

## The Inspection Team

Michael Ewing Lead

Emma Louise Maitland

## Key to grade judgements

Grade	England	Wales
1	Outstanding	Excellent
2	Good	Good
3	Requires improvement	Adequate and requires improvement
4	Inadequate	Unsatisfactory and in need of urgent improvement