

**ARCHDIOCESE OF SOUTHWARK
COMMISSION FOR SCHOOLS & COLLEGES**



SECTION 48 INSPECTION REPORT

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the
Archbishop of Southwark and inspection of
Denominational Education under Section 48
Of the Education Act 2005
URN 100858

St Michael's Catholic College
Llewellyn Street
Bermondsey
SE16 4UN

Chair of Governors	Mrs M Bannister
Headteacher	Mrs G Grabowski
Inspectors	Mr J Carvill
	Mr M Dell

Inspection dates 30 & 31 March 2011

**ARCHDIOCESE OF SOUTHWARK
COMMISSION FOR SCHOOLS & COLLEGES**
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Introduction

Description of the school

St Michael's College is an oversubscribed mixed voluntary aided school situated in the Cathedral Deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark. It takes pupils from a wide range of socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds. It is maintained by Southwark LA. The principal parishes which the school serves are The Most Holy Trinity, Dockhead, Our Lady of La Salette, Bermondsey, St Gertrude's, Bermondsey, English Martyrs, Walworth, St Peter and the Guardian Angels, Rotherhithe. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 95%. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to religious education is 10% in Key Stage 3 and 12% in Key Stage 4.

The school takes pupils from 11 to 16 years. The number of pupils currently on roll is 691, with a girl-boy ratio of 60:40. The attainment of pupils on entering the school is just below average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free schools meals (29%) is well above average. An above average number of the pupils (27%) receive extra support in class and a very high proportion (62%) of the pupils are from ethnic minority groups. The proportion of pupils from homes where English is an additional language (42%) is above average.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding	Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 2	Good	Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness as a Catholic school

St Michael's College, as a Catholic learning community, is outstanding. It is a very welcoming, caring, orderly school which lives out its mission statement in its everyday life. Prayer is central to this high achieving school and pupils are very comfortable with prayer and praying. Leadership and management are excellent where the dynamic headteacher has clear and strong views about Catholic education. She is very well supported by a dedicated staff and committed governing body. Maintenance and fostering of spirituality has a high priority in the school development plan. Pastoral care is excellent and pupils feel safe in the school and most enjoy it and want to be there. Chaplaincy is outstanding, as is the college's provision for community cohesion. The behaviour of the pupils is exemplary and their relationships with each other and the staff are very good indeed. The vast majority of parents are very supportive of the college and the distinctive Catholic education it provides. The provision for prayer and worship is outstanding. Standards in religious education are outstanding as is teaching and learning. The content of the religious education curriculum is good while leadership of the department is excellent. The school has successfully addressed all of the issues raised in the last inspection, (October 2007). Chaplaincy provision is now excellent while there is now in place a robust system for monitoring, tracking and assessment in religious education. The inspectors believe the school has an excellent capacity to maintain and build on its outstanding provision.

Grade 1

What steps need to be taken to improve further?

In order to improve even further the governors and senior leaders should:-

- Review the content of the Key Stage 3 religious education curriculum.
- Ensure there is consistency in monitoring the quality of tutor time prayer.

The Catholic life of the school

Leadership and management

Grade 1

Leadership and management of St Michael's College are outstanding. There is a very welcoming, caring, orderly and spiritual ethos in this learning community. It is living out its mission statement in its everyday life. The headteacher, whose presence around the college is very dynamic and effective and who leads by example, has very clear and strongly-held views of Catholic education and how it should impact on the lives of the pupils. In this she is very well supported by a dedicated and committed staff, whose morale is very high, and by active and effective governors. They support the Catholic life of the college by frequent visits and attendance at liturgies, while effectively monitoring standards through regular reports from the headteacher and through the link governor for religious education who attends departmental inset days on learning and teaching. The Catholic life of the St Michael's has a high profile in the College Development Plan where it shares prominence with raising attainment and achievement. Most of the college policies are based on the mission statement, Christian values and specifically, where appropriate, church teaching. Pastoral care is excellent. Pupils enjoy being at college and they feel safe there. They believe staff want what is best for them and that most teachers will 'go that extra mile' for them. Chaplaincy is outstanding. The chaplain does excellent work in co-ordinating and leading liturgies and worship, providing support and resources for form tutors and complementing the pastoral care system by being available to give emotional support to pupils and staff. One pupil summed up the high regard in which the chaplain is held when he said "without her this wouldn't be as good a Catholic school as it is". The behaviour of the pupils is exemplary and relationships in lessons and around the college are excellent. The vast majority of parents are very supportive of the college over a range of headings. The new building is very impressive. It is spacious with plenty of light and wide corridors for pupil movement. It is respected and cared for by the pupils with no visible litter. Although the pupils only moved into the new premises in January there are some visible religious artefacts, notable a beautiful crucifix in the lecture room and crosses in some classrooms, which help identify it as distinctly Catholic. No doubt in time more will be added to match the contemporary design of the building and which will complement the distinctly Christian ethos and spirituality which is so evident in this learning community.

Quality of provision for personal and collective worship

Grade 1

The quality of provision for private and collective worship is outstanding. Prayer is at the centre of daily life at St Michael's. Pupils and staff have excellent opportunities to pray. Every lesson begins with a prayer and pupils are very comfortable and at ease with prayer and praying, while all meetings of staff start with a prayer. Provision for Mass is very good with a welcome Mass for Year 7, to which parents are invited, and a leavers Mass at the end

of the year, in addition to Mass on Holy days of obligation which fall in term time. The College is considering how year or class Masses might also be organised. There are Sacramental and non-sacramental services during Advent and Lent. An excellent Service of Reconciliation for the whole of Year 10 was observed during the inspection. It was extremely well planned with a thoughtful and thought-provoking examination of conscience followed by an opportunity for confessions or blessing involving six local priests. Pupils' response was reverent and respectful. A voluntary Mass is celebrated each Friday before school which is usually well attended. In addition there is a prayer group at break time on Fridays during Advent and Lent. The College has successfully developed good links with the many parishes from which pupils come and can usually call on six or seven priests for liturgies. However it relies mainly on one parish priest who gives unstintingly of his time and is a weekly priestly presence in the college. Weekly assemblies are very good. They follow the weekly spiritual theme and a lot of thought goes into setting the atmosphere through the use of suitable music both on pupils' entry and exit. There is very good pupil participation and their behaviour is excellent. Pupils are invited to pray spontaneously and some do, while they respond very well by saying the traditional prayers. Support for form tutors in leading prayer during form period time is excellent. The chaplain provides a themed termly prayer booklet and is also available to advise or provide other resources as needed. The chaplain monitors the quality of the prayer life of the college and recognises that the form prayers should be monitored more consistently. The new chapel, with its specially commissioned stained glass window and where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved, provides an ideal quiet place for meditation or private prayer. Many staff and some pupils use it. The retreat programme provides for self-selecting groups from years 8 and 10 to go on a residential retreat to St Vincent's while all year 9 have a one-day reflection in-house.

Community Cohesion

Grade 1

St Michael's College is outstanding at promoting and achieving community cohesion. The appointment of a member of staff to exclusively co-ordinate this area of college life is testimony to the importance placed on inclusion and partnership. Community cohesion is at the heart of the college and underpins its ethos. It values the very wide diversity of ethnic groups and pupils from varied social backgrounds and relationships among the pupil body are excellent. The college works very successfully to foster and develop links with the local parishes and schools, national charities such as CAFOD and the Samaritans while a recent initiative 'Asian Dialogue' has established links with schools in India leading to teacher exchange. In addition, all pupils have access to the liturgies, while the religious education curriculum promotes respect for and tolerance towards people of other faiths and beliefs. Other projects such as the headteacher's 'Round Table' initiative, talks at assemblies by members of the Mizzen family and the father of Damilola Taylor and the Coram project all contribute to promoting an outstanding community cohesion ethos.

Religious education

Achievement and standards

Grade 1

Attainment and achievement in religious education are outstanding. In 2010 82% of the pupils gained A*-C grades, a 25% increase on the previous year. This is above the national average for Catholic schools and continues an upward trend over recent years. For girls the percentage of higher passes rises to 92%. The improvement in the results is due to effective interventions by the department, such as outstanding teaching, early parental contact, Saturday support sessions and a stable and dedicated department. Standards at Key Stage 3 are also very high and, with 79% achieving level 5+, is again well above the national average. 63% of pupils reach or exceed their targets at KS3. Standards in the classroom are very high with the quality and quantity of work impressive. Most pupils are aware of their levels or target grades and also what they need to do to improve. Achievement in religious education is outstanding and pupils make excellent progress. Indeed in a 2010 survey pupils identified RE as the subject they felt they were making most progress in and enjoy most. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is exemplary.

Teaching and learning in religious education

Grade 1

Teaching and learning are, overall, outstanding. Lessons are well planned and delivered with clear learning objectives and intended outcomes, which are shared with pupils. Teachers have high expectations of pupils in terms of work and behaviour. The lessons are mostly stimulating and exciting using imaginative methods and a range of activities to engage the pupils' interest and enthusiasm. To carefully phrased and challenging questions pupils display high levels of response that are both knowledgeable and reflective. Resources are very good, support learning and encourage independent learning. Less able pupils are very well supported through scaffolding techniques or writing frames and for the more able there are extension tasks, although occasionally there could be more opportunities to stretch these higher ability pupils. Assessment for learning is well embedded in lessons. For example in a Year 8 lesson pupils were able to assess each other's presentation and articulate what went well and how it could have been even better. Pupils with special educational needs are particularly well supported, as was seen in a Year 10 lesson. Data is well used to inform lesson planning and monitor pupil's individual progress. Homework is set and marked regularly, with written comments showing pupils how they might improve. Excellent use is made of ICT. There is an excellent learning culture in the classrooms and pupils respond with a positive and co-operative attitude. Their progress and achievement at all key stages are outstanding. They are experiencing high quality learning and are receiving outstanding preparation for public examinations.

The religious education curriculum

Grade 2

The quality of the RE curriculum is, overall, good. The content of the religious education curriculum is, in some ways, refreshing and innovative. In years 7 and 8 there is an in-house programme which overall meets the requirements of the Curriculum Directory by addressing the four Areas of Study – Revelation, Church, Celebration and Life in Christ. In year 9 pupils study St Mark's Gospel leading to the GCSE examination at the end of that year. In year 10 they follow a GCSE course in Ethics and in year 11, if they have passed the examinations in the previous two years, they begin a Philosophy & Ethics GCSE course for one year, otherwise they re-do the programmes they didn't pass. In both key stages the curriculum time allocated meets the requirements of the diocese and the Bishops' Conference (10%) with 10% at KS3 and 12% at KS4. The inspectors have some concerns that the programme of study in years 7 & year 8 may not cover in sufficient depth the KS3 programme recommended by the Curriculum Directory, and would recommend that the department undertake a review of the key stage 3 curriculum. They also have concern about the value of pupils studying Philosophy & Ethics in year 11 to GCSE level if they have already gained a high grade in the subject. The practice of enrichment visits to places of religious interest or significance is somewhat limited. Religious education makes a very significant contribution to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade 1

The leadership and management of religious education are outstanding. The head of religious education has a very strong sense of the educational mission of the church and the role of RE in supporting the college's part in this. He has an enthusiasm and love for the subject which is infectious. He very effectively leads and manages a team of dedicated, hardworking and committed teachers and has very successfully developed a culture of affirming and supporting by encouraging a collegiate approach and the sharing of resources and good practice. There is in place an effective programme for monitoring learning and teaching and for addressing issues that arise. Raising attainment and getting the best out of every pupil is at the heart of the department's work and to this end there is a robust system of assessment, target setting, tracking, together with a range of intervention strategies, to maximise each pupil's potential. Excellent use is made of data to identify underachievers and examination results are thoroughly analysed by teaching group, gender and ethnicity and the results used to inform planning. The ICT facilities available to the subject are excellent and, overall, the resources in the department are fine. The accommodation is good with adequate-sized classrooms. The display boards for displaying pupils' work are, at present, limited but these are to be increased over time.