

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



SECTION 48 INSPECTION REPORT

St Michael's RC School
John Felton Road
Bermondsey
SE16 4UN

Chair of Governors Mrs S Northam
Headteacher Mrs G Grabowski
Inspectors Mr C J Cahill

Inspection dates 9-10 October 2007

**ARCHDIOCESE OF SOUTHWARK
COMMISSION FOR SCHOOLS & COLLEGES**
St Edward's House, St Paul's Wood Hill, Orpington BR5 2SR
Tel 01689 829331 Fax 01689 829255
Director of Education: Dr Dilys Wadman

Introduction

Description of the school

St Michael's is voluntary aided. It is situated in the Cathedral Deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark. It is maintained by Southwark LA. The principal parishes which the school serves are Our Lady of La Salette, Bermondsey, St Gertrude's, Bermondsey, English Martyrs, Walworth, St Peter and the Guardian Angels, Rotherhithe, The Most Holy Trinity, Dockhead. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 93%. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to religious education is 9% 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. The attainment of pupils on entering the school is broadly around average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free schools meals is well above average. An above average number of the pupils receive extra support in class. Sixty per cent of the pupils are from ethnic minority groups. The proportion of pupils from homes where English is an additional language 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 is a good Catholic school. The Catholic life of the school benefits from very capable leadership at all levels which has helped the development of a strong Catholic community. The school is well led by the Head teacher, the leadership team and by Governors who work together to further the school's aim to be 'A Catholic caring community leading in education'. This vision is articulated not only in discussion but practically in the daily work. Gospel values underpin the ethos of the school and are implicit in the pastoral approach to pupils. There is a strong feeling of determination to meet the challenges of this inner city school where pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds and of social deprivation. The school is an established Business and Enterprise college and was awarded a second specialism in Modern Foreign Languages earlier this year. Other awards including Investors in People (2007) indicate that there is a strong sense of care for individuals, both pupils and staff. The mission statement emphasises the importance of spiritual and educational growth of all and a place where pupils and staff can respect, support and value each other. In many ways these ideals are clearly seen in both classrooms and corridors and there are good relationships between pupils and with staff. Teachers provide excellent role models. Pupil behaviour observed in the school is good and in religious education lessons pupils show good self discipline. Prayer is prominent and an integral part of religious education lessons and form time. Praise and encouragement of pupils' work and efforts are clearly seen in lessons. The curriculum in religious education is appropriately planned in each key stage and there are many opportunities taken to further spiritual and moral developments of pupils. Standards of achievement in religious education are satisfactory and teaching is consistently good with some outstanding practice seen.

A key issue in the last inspection in 2003 was the review and implementation of chaplaincy in the school. This work is now developing and there are excellent opportunities provided to fulfil the needs of this Catholic community in terms of liturgy and personal development. There is very good capacity for the school to further improve and develop. There is a clear commitment from the Head Teacher, leadership team and Governors to develop the Catholic life of the school and the Catholic curriculum. The leadership of the religious education department is good and teamwork is evident. A well established process of self review is in place which should lead to defined priorities in development planning to secure further improvement. A shared commitment from all staff in all curricular areas, together with those with pastoral responsibilities, enhances the capacity of the school to grow as a faith community.

Grade 2

What steps need to be taken to improve further?

- Continue to build on the Chaplaincy of the school in terms of liturgy and support for personal growth of each member of the community
- Develop the monitoring of teaching and learning in religious education to develop expertise and to share good practice
- Progress the work on tracking of achievement and standards at each key stage in religious education
- Continue to explore new ways of assessing standards and achievements in religious education so that pupils are fully aware of what they need to do to improve

The Catholic life of the school

Leadership and management

The school is well led by the Head Teacher and leadership team and a clear vision of the Catholic ethos is evident to all. The Governing body are supportive and committed to the values and aspirations which the school holds. Leadership is very much by example throughout the school and subject leaders and a strong pastoral team promote high quality care. The excellent leadership of the Head Teacher serves to inspire others and there is respect, good order and discipline throughout the school. This ethos is strengthened by the school's aim to lead in education in the local community. The mission statement has been reviewed by the whole staff through Inset sessions and this has led to a great deal of positive response to accurately reflect the values and practice of the school. Systems for self evaluation are established in the school and are used to measure the impact of provision and to identify objectives for further development. St Michael's has good relationships with parents, parishes and the local community and the school continues to promote itself successfully. Charity work is a strong feature and includes practical support and fund raising for CAFOD, Samaritans purse, British Legion Poppy appeal, AFRIKIDS and Breast Cancer charities. The school plays host to a local Senior Citizens party every Christmas. This active participation where pupils learn more about the essence of charity work by denying themselves and by serving the needs of others is commendable. Pupils are also encouraged to use their talents to help raise funds for worthy causes as seen in the school band concerts for the Eleanor Hospice and residential homes. One parent commented that St Michael's is 'a very good school for children to learn everything'.

Grade 2

Quality of provision for personal and collective worship

The school has great strengths in its prayer life, in collective worship and in its impact on the moral and spiritual life of the pupils. Prayer is an integral part of religious education classes and assemblies and pupils treat these opportunities for collective worship with reverence. There is scope for pupils to participate more in liturgies and in particular to take responsibility for the voluntary Mass in the Chapel each Friday. Much progress has been made in working with local priests to provide high quality liturgy in the school and the school is indebted to the unstinting work of a Parish Priest who acts as an unofficial Chaplain, ensuring that the sacramental needs of staff and pupils are met. A trained counsellor is used to provide for the needs of individual pupils when required. Retreat programmes are established on a class basis with SPEC East and religious education teachers are involved with planning and delivery with the staff from the Centre. Penitential services have been a recent initiative mainly to make the sacrament more accessible but also to provide opportunities for contact between pupils and priests. Outcomes have been very positive. The school liturgy coordinator has ensured that these services are well planned and supported. Pupils' wellbeing is a high priority and there is good evidence of quality personal development, not just within the prayer life but in the curricular and extra curricular provision. Education in personal relationships is developing and the use of the Birmingham resource materials will enhance the schools' effectiveness in its teaching. Pupils speak highly of prayer, liturgy and worship at St Michael's. They like being involved and feel that it benefits them. They recognise the strong messages given to them in assemblies, form time and in religious education lessons about the Gospel values of care, respect, tolerance and forgiveness.

Grade 2

Community Cohesion

The Head Teacher, Governors and staff work towards a vision which promotes community cohesion. Inclusion is pivotal to this vision and pupils are given clear guidelines regarding social behaviour. The use of exclusion in the school strikes an appropriate balance between consideration of the excluded child's needs and those of the school. Pupils spoken to during the inspection appreciated not only what the school offers them but the high expectations set for them. St Michael's has effective links with other schools in the area as well as good links with the local community. In religious education work on other faiths is progressing and World Religions Day has become a regular feature in the school calendar. This actively draws on the expertise of a number of local representatives of other Faiths including Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism and Sikhism. St Michael's took part in a Borough 'Multi Faith Day' Inset and was able to share good practice with other schools. The school is well placed to develop the work in promoting community cohesion through the values and attitudes it encourages and brings out in its pupils.

Grade 2

Religious education

Achievement and standards

Pupils make satisfactory progress across the two key stages in religious education. In lessons they are able to express their beliefs and the teachings of the Church and show that they can think spiritually, morally and theologically according to their abilities. There were good examples seen in lessons where pupils could relate what they had learnt to their everyday lives and they were able to express their feelings and emotions with comparative ease. The task of group discussion on how pupils would bring about civil rights in 1960's America is one such example. Differentiation is established in lesson plans and a range of suitable materials is utilised. Pupils at both key stages respond well in class and demonstrate their enjoyment of the subject by engaging fully and actively in their work. Progress will be more easily tracked at key stage three when levelling is firmly established and comparisons made between their attainment in religious education and other core subjects. Target setting at key stage four is in place and good work has been carried out to analyse performance and raise achievement at GCSE. Results at this level have been variable and there is a need for improvement particularly with regard to the boys.

Grade 3

Teaching and learning in Religious Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good with some outstanding practice seen during the inspection. Lessons are systematically planned, resources are well used and expectations by teachers are high. The effective use of ICT is a common feature of lessons. Teachers are secure in their knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith. Teaching techniques and styles are used which, for the most part, match the learning preferences of the pupils. When active participation occurs the learning is outstanding. Pupils respond well to the good pace and challenge in some lessons and show great creativity. Clear learning aims are set out and when learning outcomes are referred to often, the teaching is particularly effective. In class support from teachers and learning assistants for individual pupils is of a high standard. Teachers are constantly assessing and praising pupils' work and when this is more formally set up there will be greater consistency across the department. The response by pupils in religious education is good and there is a good atmosphere of enjoyment and participation in lessons. Parents are kept informed of their child's progress in religious education on a regular basis.

Grade 2

The religious education curriculum

The religious education curriculum is well organised and appropriately resourced. Sufficient time is given for classroom teaching in accordance with the Bishops' Conference and Diocesan requirements. It is seen as an essential part of the core curriculum in the school. The schemes of work based partly on published works are clearly laid out and a good team ethos ensures that the work is shared and reviewed by the whole department to ensure effectiveness. Resources are available, shared and well used. Good support is evident for all and this leads to a consistent approach. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is planned and clearly promotes Gospel values. All the work in religious education reflects the school policies on literacy and key skills and business links have been added where possible in line with the school's status as a business college. At key stage four virtually all pupils are entered for GCSE and Saturday study support sessions are organised through the year and are very well attended. The learning environment for religious education is stimulating.

Grade 2

Leadership and management

The leadership of the department is good. The subject leader has created a good team who are clear about their role and purpose. Teaching and learning are monitored and this has led to the team sharing ideas and practices. Expectations are high and there is a good drive for continuous and sustained improvement. The department is well managed and systems are in place to develop personal expertise in the classroom. Teaching areas are well managed with good displays of both teacher and pupil work. Priorities for development in religious education are set out and regular review of progress on these will ensure that they are realised and embedded effectively. Religious education does make a significant impact on the development of pupils at St Michael's.

Grade 2