

# ST. MICHAEL'S SCHOOL



## CATHOLIC OASIS

Saint Michael's School is a small but busy institution that endeavours to offer Catholic families the means to educate their children in an environment favourable to their intellectual, moral and spiritual growth and development.

The school seeks to be a safe haven for families. Children learn not only to read, write, count, and calculate, but more importantly, to think.

St. Michael's is an independent school. Our children are taught according to traditional methods of learning similar to what we experienced in our own school days. Thus, they are able to analyse and to comprehend. True freedom requires an agile mind. The ideas and ideals of Catholic Education are older and wiser than those of bureaucratic committees.

The school also offers an environment favourable to good behaviour and virtue. Children are encouraged to place others before themselves, and God before all else. They are expected to help out with various duties. Generosity, or love of neighbour in action, is encouraged and rewarded. Forgetfulness of self and awareness of

others make for happiness. Happy children grow into cheerful, confident adults.

Finally, the school is a world in miniature, which seeks to give God His rightful place. Each class begins with a prayer. The children assist at Holy Mass. They learn their catechism and have frequent access to the confessional. The priests are present throughout the school day. Feast days are celebrated. Christ in all and all for Christ.

A healthy mind, a gracious heart, a holy soul: these are what we seek to foster and to achieve. Children make up the greater portion of all that is innocent in the world. We must provide them with the best environment to preserve that innocence, so that it flowers into virtue and cheerful love.

We write to you this Christmas to solicit your support. Please help us to help our children.

May the Infant Jesus grant you every blessing this Christmas, and always.

**The staff and children of St. Michael's School.**

# From the New Headmaster

J.R.R. Tolkien titled his first children's book: "The Hobbit, or There and Back Again!" I should not compare myself to a hobbit (though I have acquired some resemblance around the waist area), but I can claim to have returned from a long and adventurous journey.

I was first assigned here at St. Michael's School in 1998, freshly ordained and full of energy. I spent two short and busy years playing a small part in the school's educational endeavours, before being sent abroad to help at other schools.

During the past seventeen years I have lived in three countries and worked in seven different institutions. Constant travel and change has brought me in contact with many varied experiences, some painful and some exhilarating.

This Christmas I find myself once again "at home, back again!" How strange to return to this little corner of Hampshire and to resume similar duties to those I carried out a generation ago inside these same walls. On the one hand, nothing has changed. Despite some newer buildings, the sights, sounds and smells are all the same, as are many of the faces who help and work here.



On the other hand, much has changed. Perhaps I was simply oblivious to it before, but now the evidence is compelling. Today, in the field of Catholic education, the stakes are higher, the risks greater, the needs more pressing.

Society is evolving at increasing speed. Such are the changes in recent years that the challenges we face in order to educate our children in a Catholic environment would be insurmountable, were it not for God's grace. Vice is not only rife, but is today presented as virtue. Our children's baptismal innocence is under severe attack from the most tender age. Thus, do more families rely more heavily on the few Catholic institutions still in existence, to help them raise their children as sons and daughters of God and His Church.

St. Michael's has been in operation for nearly thirty years. The school has experienced much pain, but also much happiness. There is no greater joy than to see old pupils, now young parents, seek out and settle near to the school, always at great personal sacrifice and cost, in order to send their own children to the place where they learnt to know, love and serve God. St. Michael's has also produced vocations to the priesthood and the religious life. God has blessed our work.

However, an additional challenge has arisen, about which we turn to every reader in the hope of moving them to come to our aid.

Thirty years of eager and energetic children have left their mark. Our buildings are burdened and worn. Our installations are tired and broken. As the cost of living rises, we see our families struggling to cope with the added burden of financial want.

St. Michael's has always depended on the generosity of outsiders to pay its bills. Today, as the world becomes more hostile to the truths and values we seek to pass on to our children, our apprehension grows that we will not be able to meet the needs of families who come to us.

A kind benefactor who has accepted to take on the expense of one child's tuition stated her motivation in the simplest of terms: "If the school cannot function for want of money, that child, and many more, may well lose their souls. I want our Lord to remember that I did my bit to help preserve the innocence of soul He paid for with His life."

Dear friends, please remember us this Christmas, and next year too. Help us preserve our children's innocence by helping St. Michael's School with your prayers and kind generosity. Please help our children.

*"Whatsoever you do to one of these, you do to Me."*

May God grant you a happy and holy Christmas, full of blessings.

**Fr. John Brucciani**

# St. Michael's, facts and figures

Traditional Mass  
Daily catechism  
Daily rosary  
Strong academics

40 junior children,  
48 senior boys (32 boarders)  
25 senior girls

Opened in 1992  
by the Society of  
St. Pius X

£600 000  
annual budget  
£310 000  
school fee  
income

In need of  
Sponsors

Rev. T. O'Hart to be ordained to the priesthood in 2018  
Three other former students in seminary training  
Three religious vocations ... and counting!

**"Suffer little children, and forbid them not  
to come unto Me:**

Children whose parents attended  
St. Michael's in years past.



**for of such is the kingdom of heaven."** Matt.19:14

I owe my faith to the efforts and sacrifices of all the priests, sisters, teachers and benefactors who made and continue to make St. Michael's possible. If I had not been able to go to school there, I would certainly be a very different person, someone my dear husband would perhaps have preferred not to marry!

Thanks to St. Michael's, we are able to pass on the faith to our children. Without the school, they would have nowhere to go. Where else will they learn to know and love God, guard their innocence and save their souls?

Letter from a former pupil, now parent.

# Heart of the Matter

Each Wednesday the entire school attends Holy Mass together. On the day I write this article, I celebrated a Requiem. I preached on the importance of praying for the Poor Souls, and on the power of our humble prayers that are able to open the very gates of heaven. The pupils listened dutifully, and although they obviously hoped I would not preach for too long, their subsequent visits to the nearby graveyard showed that they had been receptive to the message conveyed.

It is a wonderful sight to watch the entire student body; infants, juniors, seniors and sixth formers, kneeling together before the altar of sacrifice and joining in the priest's offering of prayer and supplication for the sins of mankind. As I stepped to the communion rail to begin distributing Holy Communion, I marvelled at the children who presented themselves to receive our Lord.

The younger children huddle together along the rail, watching each other as the priest lays the consecrated host upon the tongue. They are recollected, but ever alert to their surroundings, until our Lord comes to them and they drop their heads and file back to the benches with hands joined and lips murmuring a fervent prayer.

The older children are more relaxed as they take their place to receive our Lord. Piety does not show as much in adolescents, but is no less real. Yesterday's confessions prove that they know what they are about and want a part of it.

Lastly, the sixth form come and kneel in serious silence. As I turned to begin the line, it struck me that this, here, was what a Catholic school was all about.

As Headmaster, one becomes used to a relentless feeling of apprehension and anxiety. There is so much to think about, to worry about, to work out, to remember and to organise. Morning meditation often turns into a mental checklist of ongoing and future problems. Mind and heart become restless with the fear that our little

school will eventually succumb to the apparently insurmountable challenges it must face, day after day, in particular each monthly pay day! The thought of our families, so desperately dependant on our work of Catholic education, and the idea of such limited and so few means wherewith to withstand the war waged on innocence, leaves one wondering if the school is up to the task.

Yet the sight of young men and women, who yesterday came as distracted children and who today are young adults in search of their Eucharistic Saviour, is proof that, however great the difficulties, the school is indeed accomplishing its task. With such odds stacked against us, every communion is a miracle, and to see this age group on their knees is to witness God's blessing on our work. As our young people prepare to venture out into the world for the first time, their happy attendance at Holy Mass shows that they will go out armed with the knowledge and virtue necessary to walk warily and wisely.

From our most tender years, our catechism has taught us that we are made to know, love and serve God. St. Michael's School endeavours to be a fourteen-year course in the art of knowing, loving and serving our Lord Jesus Christ. Our students pray, but they also study and learn so that, whatever skills they acquire and profession they chose, they will know how to exercise these in a manner beneficial to their souls.

How vital, then, is the work we do! How vital, also, the support we need so that these young beings are able to preserve their innocence and save their souls in a world given to sin. How wonderful for St. Michael's to contribute to the instruction and care of our children's children! We have several former pupils who have returned as teachers and parents. More are on the way.

**God be praised!**

