

St Michael's CE High School

Curral Road, Rowley Regis, West Midlands B65 9AN

Inspection dates

1–2 November 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher and senior leaders provide strong leadership which is valued by pupils and staff. Staff form a united team, committed to providing the best possible education for pupils. Morale is high.
- Leaders, including governors, know the school well, including its many strengths and few weaknesses. They take effective action to address weaknesses. Consequently, the school continues to improve.
- The curriculum has been thoughtfully planned and contributes well to pupils' academic progress and personal development. It is supplemented by a very wide range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils embrace these enthusiastically.
- Middle leadership is strong across the school. Subject and pastoral leaders, supported well by senior staff, lead the development of their areas well.
- Staff provide high-quality, individualised care and support for pupils, especially for those who are vulnerable. Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and children looked after make good progress because of the support they are given.
- Relationships between adults and pupils are very positive. Teachers know their pupils well. Pupils like and trust their teachers and other adults. Classrooms are calm places of learning.
- Teachers know their subjects well. Most plan lessons that interest and engage because activities are well matched to pupils' abilities. Questioning is generally very effective in encouraging pupils to think about their work. A little teaching is less effective because planning and questioning are not of the same high quality.
- Over recent years, pupils' progress, by the end of Year 11, has been slow in a small number of subjects including mathematics, history and geography. Current pupils are now making much better progress in these subjects.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and at other times of the day. They are smartly dressed, polite and courteous. They are very proud of their school.
- Pupils' personal development is outstanding. The school provides a rich array of opportunities for pupils to lead and contribute to the school and local community. Consequently, pupils develop into confident, mature and articulate young people, very well prepared for life after school.
- Pupils enjoy school and attendance is consistently higher than that typically seen in secondary schools. Pupils value the care and support of the school's adults. Pupils feel safe in school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve outcomes at the end of Year 11 in subjects where pupils' progress has been slow, including mathematics, by ensuring that all teachers consistently:
 - plan activities that are well matched to what pupils already understand, know and can do
 - use questions to make pupils think deeply about their work
 - develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills in subjects other than English and mathematics.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher and senior leaders are relentless in their determination to provide the best possible education for pupils. Staff value this strong leadership and share its vision for an inclusive school where pupils are cared for and are successful academically. Almost all staff who responded to the staff inspection questionnaire said that the school is well led. All said that they are proud to work at the school and morale is high.
- Leaders know the school's strengths and weaknesses well. They address weaknesses quickly and effectively. For example, they have addressed historically weak leadership and teaching in a small number of subjects, including mathematics. Consequently, although published outcomes in these few subjects still require improvement, pupils currently in the school are making much better progress.
- The school's curriculum contains an appropriate range of subjects in each year. In key stage 4, a balance of academic and vocational options ensures that pupils study subjects that motivate and interest them. The key stage 3 curriculum has a strong focus on English and mathematics, with a view to strengthening pupils' basic skills. Leaders regularly evaluate the curriculum and make changes when they think they are necessary. For example, from September 2017, the school moved from lessons of 50 minutes to lessons of 100 minutes. Leaders made this change to reduce movement around the large school site and so make more-productive use of lesson time. The change has proved successful. The curriculum effectively supports pupils' academic and personal development. It has contributed well to improving teaching and pupils' behaviour.
- An extensive range of extra-curricular clubs, visits and activities supplements the curriculum. These include sporting, music and drama activities and also several opportunities to serve in the local community. Weekly personal, social, health and economic education lessons cover local, national and global issues. They help pupils to develop a good understanding of British values, including respect for and tolerance of others.
- Together, the school's curriculum, extra-curricular opportunities and clear ethos contribute exceedingly well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils demonstrate caring and welcoming attitudes to each other, to staff and to visitors. Consequently the school is a place where all pupils are accepted for who they are.
- Middle leaders form a committed and hard-working group. Pastoral middle leaders know their pupils very well and communicate effectively with colleagues across the school. Subject leaders are increasingly leading the improvement of teaching in their subjects. For example, new leaders of mathematics have overhauled the school's scheme of learning in response to pupils' needs and changes in the key stage 2 curriculum. They have revised the department's assessment practices to ensure that they and teachers know where there are gaps in pupils' understanding. Strong leadership of mathematics is one of the key reasons that pupils' progress in the subject is improving rapidly.

- Leaders know where teaching is strongest and where it is less effective because they regularly check using different sources of information, including observation, looking at pupils' work and analysing their attainment. Good practice is regularly shared with colleagues. Leaders target training well at the individuals, subjects or issues where it is needed. They also check that training has had the desired effect. Leaders set teachers targets that are well focused on improving teaching and pupils' progress. Almost all staff who completed the inspection questionnaire agreed that leaders use professional development to encourage, challenge and support them. Newly and recently qualified teachers told inspectors that colleagues have given them high-quality training and support.
- Teachers' use of assessment and leaders' use of assessment information are both strong in the school. Teachers accurately assess what pupils understand, know and can do. They use this information well to help pupils understand what they need to do next in order to improve their work. Leaders use assessment information to identify pupils who are beginning to fall behind and then provide extra support to help them to catch up. This effective practice underpins the strong and improving progress of pupils and groups of pupils across the school. For example, it is a key reason why disadvantaged pupils are making increasingly good progress.
- Leaders use the pupil premium and literacy and numeracy catch-up premium well to support those pupils for whom it is intended. Disadvantaged pupils are benefiting from effective teaching and extra help when they need it. Pupils who join the school with weak basic skills are catching up with their peers because of the curriculum's strong focus on literacy and numeracy in key stage 3.
- Provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is very effective. Leaders have trained teachers well to plan lessons that meet the needs of these pupils. Teaching assistants provide skilful and well-planned support in lessons. Any pupil who needs extra help is provided with it. Pupils in the school's focus provision are fully integrated into lessons and wider school life, as are other pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. These pupils make good progress and leaders are therefore making good use of additional funding for SEN.
- High-quality pastoral care and support for pupils is evident throughout the school. The local authority and other agencies recognise this as a particular strength. One consequence is that there is a large number of children looked after placed in the school. Support for these pupils, as for other vulnerable pupils, is of a very high quality. The attendance of this group is high and their progress is strong. At the end of Year 11 they achieve good qualifications and move on to further education. They are well prepared for life after school.

Governance of the school

- Governors ensure that they are well informed about the school's performance. All governors have a link to aspects of school life, such as safeguarding, SEN and different subject areas. They visit the school to meet with staff and speak with pupils. They then report to committees or the full governing body.
- Governors reflect on their own performance and seek to improve their effectiveness. To this end, they commissioned an independent review of governance in January 2017

and have carried out their own audit of governors' skills. They have undertaken training in safeguarding and interpreting published school performance data.

Consequently, the governing body has a good level of knowledge and expertise, which it is using increasingly well to question leaders and hold them to account.

- Statutory duties are carried out with diligence. For example, governors regularly check that safeguarding arrangements are effective. Similarly, they keep a close eye on how the school's budget is spent, checking that targeted funding is having sufficient impact.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The leadership of this area is strong. Staff are well trained to spot the signs that a pupil might need extra help. Systems are clear and well understood by all. Consequently, staff readily pass on to leaders any concerns they have, secure in the knowledge that they will be treated seriously and appropriately. The school has several senior staff who have been trained to a high level in safeguarding and they use this expertise well to ensure that pupils who need extra help get the support they require.
- Members of staff take their responsibility to care for and keep pupils safe very seriously. All staff who completed their inspection questionnaire said that pupils are safe in school and that bullying is dealt with effectively.
- The overwhelming majority of parents who completed a school survey this year said that their children feel safe in school. A small number of parents who responded to Parent View said that their children do not feel safe in school and that bullying is not dealt with well. Inspectors found no evidence to support these views. They spoke with many pupils during the inspection and all said that they feel safe in school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching is consistently strong across subjects. Leaders have successfully eliminated the small amount of weaker teaching that was previously apparent in some subjects. Consequently, current pupils are making good progress in most subjects and years.
- Most teaching is characterised by effective planning. Teachers know their pupils well and plan activities that are well matched to their abilities and needs. Consequently, levels of challenge are high and pupils who need extra help are well supported. A little teaching is less effective because planning does not take into account what pupils already understand, know and can do. When this is the case, pupils either find the work too easy or are unable to attempt tasks confidently.
- Most teachers use questioning very effectively. They insist on full answers, asking pupils to think again or to add more detail when responses are brief or superficial. This makes pupils think about their responses and so deepens their understanding of their work. Occasionally, questioning is less effective. When this is the case, teachers are too accepting of brief or incomplete responses.
- Relationships in classrooms are warm and respectful. Pupils trust their teachers and value their support and that of their peers. Consequently, pupils are confident learners.

They are not afraid to have a go at challenging work. They are happy to ask their teachers questions if they do not understand something.

- Teaching meets the needs of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities well. Leaders have trained teachers well. Consequently, teachers plan activities in which these pupils succeed. Teaching assistants provide extra, expert support in class when it is needed.
- Leaders' efforts to promote literacy and numeracy in subjects other than English and mathematics are beginning to have an impact. In several subjects, teachers plan lessons with a view to helping to improve pupils' basic skills. However, this is not yet a consistent picture across the school and teaching does not always support pupils' literacy and numeracy development.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils are confident learners. They are keen to do well, they work hard and take pride in their work. Their books are typically well organised and work is well presented. Pupils value their teachers' feedback and actively improve their work as a result.
- Pupils feel safe and well cared for in school. All pupils who spoke with inspectors confirmed this. They also told inspectors that bullying is very rare and any that does happen is dealt with well by adults. Pupils trust the school's staff to deal with bullying or any other problem they might have. Older pupils have been taught about how to cope with examination stress. There is additional support available for any who are struggling with stress or any other mental health issue.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe from potential dangers. They are taught about the risks that can arise using the internet. For example, the school has its own social media platform, 'Safebook', which helps pupils to learn how to use social media safely and responsibly.
- Pupils are encouraged to express their views about the school and they do so readily and confidently. Leaders ensure that as many pupils as possible are involved in sharing their opinions. For example, pupils have set up the 'STAR Committee', a group for disabled pupils, who meet to discuss issues specific to their needs. These pupils were recently instrumental in the purchase of accessible gym equipment.
- Leaders work hard to help parents understand the potential dangers their children might face. The school takes part in the '21st Century Child' programme. Working in partnership with several agencies, including the police, women's aid and trading standards, the school is educating pupils and their parents about issues such as drugs and alcohol, illicit goods and the impact of pornography on young people.
- Pupils are very much involved with the local community. For example, pupils recently participated in a 'Poppies and People' project, where they researched the history of names on a local war memorial for a civic service of remembrance.
- They are actively involved in raising money for local, national and international charities. Over recent years, pupils have raised more than £24,000 for charities.

- A high-quality careers education programme runs throughout the school. It includes visiting speakers, visits to colleges and universities, a week of work experience in Year 10 and individual interviews in Year 11. Pupils told inspectors that they feel well supported in making subject choices in Year 9 and in choosing destinations for when they leave the school. Almost all pupils move on to appropriate further education or training when they leave St Michael's.
- Pupils attending alternative provision attend regularly, behave well and make good progress. Staff check pupils' attendance each day and hold half-termly review meetings to monitor their progress. Leaders also visit these placements to speak with pupils and staff.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well in lessons. They listen attentively to their teachers and to each other. They support and encourage their classmates. Low-level disruption in lessons is rare and more-serious disruption is very rare. Systems to manage poor behaviour are used well on the few occasions when they are needed.
- The school is calm and orderly throughout the school day. Pupils move quickly and sensibly around the building between lessons. At breaktime and lunchtime, they behave maturely and show consideration for others, with a minimum of staff supervision. For example, during the inspection inspectors observed an evacuation of the school following a fire alarm. Pupils left the building quickly and calmly and assembled silently as they waited for the instruction to return to lessons.
- Leaders use exclusion appropriately, as a sanction of last resort. Since the previous inspection, the number of fixed-term exclusions increased steadily. However, since September 2016, improved behaviour has seen the number reduce sharply. Very few pupils are now excluded more than once. Support and restorative work following an exclusion ensure that most pupils do not repeat poor behaviour.
- Attendance is consistently higher than the national average for secondary schools. Staff work hard to support the families of the small number of pupils who are persistently absent. For example, a panel of governors meets with parents to encourage them to make sure that their child attends as regularly as possible. As a result, these pupils' attendance is improving.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' progress by the end of key stage 4 has been slow in recent years in a small number of subjects, including mathematics, history and geography. Unvalidated GCSE results for 2017 show a considerable improvement in geography, a smaller but marked improvement in history and a modest improvement in mathematics.
- Published outcomes in mathematics have been weak for several years. The department has suffered from considerable staff turnover and has lacked stable leadership. New high-quality leadership and stable staffing from September 2016 have seen the quality of teaching and pupils' progress improve considerably. Pupils in key stage 3 are now

making good progress. Pupils in key stage 4, and especially in Year 11, have gaps in their knowledge because of previous weaker teaching. As a result, their progress is slower, but improving rapidly. Consequently, although pupils' outcomes still require improvement, their trajectory towards being good is both rapid and secure.

- Pupils, including the most able pupils, make good progress in most subjects. Unvalidated GCSE results for 2017 show pupils making strong progress in science, physical education, German, drama, dance and information and communication technology. Pupils currently in key stage 4 are making good progress across most of their subjects.
- Pupils' progress is strong across all subjects in key stage 3. Historic weaknesses in teaching in some subjects have been eliminated.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress in all year groups. They are very well supported in lessons and at other times. Those in the school's focus provision make the same good progress as others.
- Disadvantaged pupils' progress is strong in key stage 3 and improving rapidly in key stage 4. Unvalidated GCSE results for 2017 show that the differences between disadvantaged pupils' outcomes and those of others nationally are diminishing. In Years 7, 8 and 9, the school's assessment information, confirmed by inspection evidence, shows no significant difference in progress between these pupils and others. Leaders' efforts to promote the progress of the most able disadvantaged pupils have been particularly successful. These pupils are making better progress from their starting points than other pupils.
- Children looked after make consistently good progress. Regular and careful checks on their attainment, coupled with high-quality support when needed, ensure that these pupils thrive in school.

School details

Unique reference number	104019
Local authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	10037896

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1185
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Colin Nicholls
Headteacher	Jayne Gray
Telephone number	0121 561 6881
Website	www.st-michaels.sandwell.sch.uk
Email address	headteacher@st-michaels.sandwell.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	8–9 May 2014

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- St Michael's CE High School is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- Most pupils come from White British backgrounds and a small minority come from minority ethnic backgrounds. Few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The school has an above-average proportion of disadvantaged pupils.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above average.
- The school has a focus provision that provides support for up to 20 pupils who have physical disabilities and/or medical needs.
- The school has more than 20 children looked after.

- A very small number of pupils attend provision away from the school site for a part or all of the week at Sandwell Valley School and Impact Education.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' progress at the end of key stage 4.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in lessons, and some of these observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors met with six groups of pupils and talked to many others about their learning and their attitudes to, and opinions about, school. They observed pupils at breaktime and lunchtime and as they moved around the school.
- Inspectors visited two assemblies.
- A wide range of documents was scrutinised, including information relating to governance, attendance, behaviour, safeguarding, pupils' progress and the checks made on the quality of teaching.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders, teachers and four governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- The lead inspector met separately with two representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of parents' views by considering 41 responses to Parent View, including 20 'free-text' comments, and 318 responses to the school's own parent questionnaire.
- Inspectors took account of 103 responses received on Ofsted's staff inspection questionnaire.

Inspection team

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Huw Bishop	Ofsted Inspector
Elizabeth Ellis-Martin	Ofsted Inspector
John Parr	Ofsted Inspector
Gwendoline Onyon	Ofsted Inspector

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