

St Michael's Church of England High School

Curral Road, Rowley Regis, B65 9AN

Inspection dates

31 January–1 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- In recent years not enough students achieved the results of which they were capable in a range of subjects by the time they left the school.
- Students eligible for free school meals and the pupil premium have not achieved as well as others. Teachers do not always know how to provide effective additional help for these students.
- Teaching over time has not been consistently good enough to enable students to learn as quickly as they are capable.
- The written comments that teachers make when marking student work are not of the same high quality as their verbal feedback.
- Students are not routinely encouraged to respond to written comments in their work to show they have understood what they need to do in order to improve.
- There is a very small proportion of inadequate teaching in the school.

The school has the following strengths

- The quality of teaching is improving strongly as a result of effective monitoring of lessons and carefully selected training by school leaders. This is an improving school.
- The rate at which students learn in lessons throughout the school is improving and many more students in the school are achieving better results at the end of each year.
- Students are proud of their school, and they show positive attitudes to learning in lessons.
- Students take an active part in school life through their 'student voice' committee.
- Through the inspirational leadership of the headteacher, school leaders have an accurate awareness of the strengths of the school and correctly prioritise what to do in order to sustain improvement.
- The Governing Body are passionate about supporting and challenging the school to do well, including rewarding and recognising the good performance of teachers.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 47 lessons, of which 13 were jointly observed by the headteacher or senior leaders. In addition, inspectors made several other short visits to lessons.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation about the school, including the school's own data about the progress and the attainment of students. Safeguarding and attendance records were also explored.
- A range of students' work was scrutinised, and informal and formal discussions were held with students from all year groups.
- Discussions were held with the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative from the local authority, senior leaders and teachers in charge of subjects or areas of school life.
- Inspectors took account of 70 responses to the on-line Parent View questionnaire and other communication from parents during the inspection, and 85 responses from the questionnaire that staff were invited to complete.

Inspection team

Clare Saunders, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Pamela Hemphill	Additional Inspector
Joseph Skivington	Additional Inspector
David Turner	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger-than-average-sized secondary school, where most students are of White British heritage.
- An above-average proportion of students are eligible for the pupil premium, additional government funding for specific groups of students.
- The proportion of disabled students or those with special educational needs and who are supported by school action, school action plus or by statements of special educational needs, are above the national average. The school has a specialist resource base for students with physical or medical needs.
- A small proportion of students attend alternative provision away from the school on a part time basis to gain vocational qualifications.
- The school shares its site with two other schools, which were not part of this inspection.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teaching is always good or better, especially in English and mathematics, helping students to improve their achievement by:
 - making sure that written feedback in marked work matches the high quality verbal feedback given to students in lessons
 - always giving chances for students to correct and improve work after it has been marked so that improvement can be seen
 - ensuring that teachers effectively support students who attract the pupil premium in order to accelerate their progress
 - regularly sharing the good and outstanding practice in the school through professional development opportunities, including ways of getting the best possible progress from students who attract the pupil premium
 - eradicating the very small proportion of teaching that remains inadequate through targeted professional support to raise the expertise of identified teachers.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The proportion of students who gain five good GCSEs, including English and mathematics, by the time they leave the school is broadly average. Although attainment is improving, students are capable of achieving more.
- Students have not made gains in their learning at fast enough rates in recent years, especially in English and mathematics, in order for them to achieve their best. This is now improving strongly for students throughout the school in the vast majority of subject areas.
- The attainment and progress of students who are eligible for free school meals is just below that of their peers, and their average point scores are lower than those of other students. This is showing improvement compared to previous years, especially for students in Key Stage 3, with targeted use of the pupil premium to support these students, although the school has limited analysis on what additional support works well and over time these students have not performed as well as others.
- The small number of students who are looked after by their local authority achieve in line with their peers, as a result of careful monitoring of their progress and wellbeing by specific staff in the school.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs learn well throughout the school, especially those supported by statements and those within the specialist resource base, who make good progress. This is a result of effective additional support, such as small group tuition, which is closely targeted at meeting the needs of individual students whilst keeping them fully included in all aspects of school life. It enables them to narrow the gap in attainment with other students.
- In the majority of lessons, including English and mathematics, students are developing their skills, knowledge and understanding well, and there are some notable strengths in some subjects, for example history and science.
- Some students sit mathematics GCSE early in Year 11, with opportunities for students to improve their grade at the end of year 11.
- A very few students attend other colleges on part time basis to study for vocational qualifications. The progress and welfare of these students are carefully tracked by the school and they do well.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching has not been consistently good enough over time to enable students to make good progress in a range of subjects including English and mathematics. Although teaching has recently improved, there are still some areas that require improvement and overall it is too soon to have brought about sustained improvement.
- A small proportion of teaching remains inadequate or requiring improvement. In these lessons, learning activities do not pick up on what the students have previously learned or understood so that work is too easy or too hard. Similarly students do not have many opportunities to work on

their own or in small groups as the teacher can talk for too long.

- A majority of teachers are now showing a good understanding of how to use information about student achievement to plan lessons in order to get the best outcomes for all students.
- The usefulness of written comments in students' work is variable. Although there are some examples where comments help the students to engage in their learning, encouraging high standard of presentation and pride in their work, in other instances, marking does not identify the strengths and weaknesses of a piece of work, nor encourage students to respond to the written comments.
- Teaching overall is good and some is outstanding. In the best lessons, verbal feedback offered to students by teachers and their peers is of high quality and very helpful in enabling them to know exactly what to improve. Teachers use information about what their students already know and understand accurately to plan learning activities that enable them to progress quickly, efficiently, and consistently to develop written and literacy and numeracy skills.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs, including those based in the specialist resource base, benefit from a range of carefully thought out additional help or strategies. For example, students in Year 7 benefit from lessons which are designed to accelerate English and mathematical skills through being taught in the style found in primary schools.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students are keen to learn in lessons and enjoy taking an active part in activities. They enjoy listening to others' opinions and support each other with accurate and helpful verbal comments about how their peers can improve their work.
- Their conduct around the school is good. They are very proud of their new school building and determined to play their part in keeping the facilities clean and tidy. They show respect and care for adults and peers, and as a result disabled students feel safe and nurtured within the school.
- Students take an active role in the school as part of their 'student voice' committee. This is run efficiently by the students, and they have been instrumental in developing an internet safety awareness campaign, and in helping develop rewards for individual students whose actions reinforce the school's values which include, for example, initiative or compassion.
- The school has clear expectations of the standards of behaviour expected of the students, and students appreciate the clear and consistent use of the behaviour policy.
- Students feel safe in school, and have a good understanding of what would constitute different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying and the misuse of social networking sites, and how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations. They feel that bullying is rare and is dealt with swiftly by the school.
- Attendance is improving due to a range of successful strategies by the school which are consistently applied to highlight the importance of good attendance to students and to parents.
- Parents' views support this positive view of the behaviour and safety of the students in this school.

The leadership and management are good

- School leaders, guided by a highly effective headteacher, have been instrumental in improving the quality of teaching significantly in the last two years. A recently expanded senior leadership team have clear areas of responsibilities and all are passionate about continually improving the students' life chances when they leave the school. As a result the quality of teaching and students' achievements are now improving strongly.
- A clearly planned programme of lesson observations and detailed feedback to staff about what they need to do in order to improve, has informed the programme of professional development organised by the school. This continues to promote the improvements in teaching, although the opportunities for staff to share their own good and outstanding practice could be increased. School leaders have high expectations of staff, who share the school's vision for better achievement for the students.
- Leaders have embraced opportunities to work with other schools to maintain the pace of improvement. They have a clear and accurate evaluation of the school's performance, which helps the school to prioritise its key areas for improvement.
- The curriculum has continued to develop since the last inspection, and provides many opportunities for students currently in the school in a wide range of subjects. A particular strength is how the curriculum contributes to the spiritual, social, moral and cultural development of the students. The school's Christian ethos is embedded in all aspects of the school's work.
- Students make good progress in developing their literacy skills as a result of a carefully planned strategy to provide additional help to develop specific skills.
- School leaders regularly and rigorously manage the performance of staff. The high expectations for the quality of their work are reinforced through the setting of effective performance targets for teachers, which are monitored during the year. School leaders have demonstrated how underperformance is not tolerated. More is expected of teachers who are on the upper pay scale and teachers understand the link between the effectiveness of student learning and teacher pay.
- The local authority has provided effective and timely light touch support for the leadership of the school in the past, and recognises the good leadership and management currently in place.
- Effective leadership, challenging governance and improving teaching points to a good capacity to sustain improvement in the future.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The Governing Body is keenly aware of the strengths of the school and share a vision for improvement based on accurate evaluation and priorities. They work in partnership with the school, providing highly effective support, for example, inviting parents and students to meet them to discuss the importance of regular attendance. They have an accurate awareness of the data relating to students' achievement and ask pertinent questions about how quickly the school is improving. They have a close involvement in the performance management of teaching, taking a firm line with departments or individuals who are underperforming, and offering short term financial support for staff who wish to take on extra responsibility to develop a particular area that might lead to raising students' achievement. They regularly update their skills and knowledge. They have a clear financial awareness and spend the pupil

premium on a range of support and resources, and are in the process of a detailed analysis of what impact this has on targeted students' progress and attainment. Their legal duties for safeguarding and for ensuring equality of opportunity are met in full.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	104019
Local authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	400681

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1065
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Colin Nicholls
Headteacher	Mike Wilkes
Date of previous school inspection	23 September 2009
Telephone number	0121 561 6881
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Email address	headteacher@st-michaels.sandwell.sch.uk

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