

St Michael's CE High School

Curral Road, Rowley Regis, B65 9AN

Inspection dates 8–9 May 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The school has been recognised nationally for its sustained improvement in standards in the last four years.
- Students regularly reach standards in science that are above the national average.
- Students currently at the school are making improved progress in mathematics and progress in English that is above the national average.
- The school has successfully eliminated inadequate teaching and the very large majority of teaching is good or better.
- The calm and purposeful atmosphere in lessons and around the school has led to improvements in students' achievement.
- A wide range of strong partnerships means that students are exceptionally well prepared for their futures beyond the school.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have had a profound impact on improving the quality of teaching and raising achievement in the school.
- All school leaders and staff are now quick to identify and tackle any underachievement.
- Students make very good use of skilled learning mentors in the inclusion centre. This leads to improvements in behaviour, attendance and achievement.
- Parents and students appreciate the high quality of provision for disabled students and those with medical needs. These students play an active role in all aspects of school life.
- Students are fully involved in making important decisions about school life. The elected Student Voice group provide exceptional role models to other students.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some of the most able students do not achieve as well as they might to reach the highest GCSE grades.
- Not enough students yet make more than expected progress in mathematics throughout the school.
- The impact of teachers' marking to improve students' work is variable.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 45 lessons, of which 16 were jointly observed with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher or assistant headteachers. In addition, the inspection team looked at students' work in their books and listened to younger students read.
- There were meetings with groups of students, senior leaders, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 61 responses to the online questionnaire Parent View and considered the 89 responses to a staff questionnaire. In addition the 57 responses to a recent questionnaire to parents from the school were also considered.
- The inspection team examined the school's own information on students' recent and current progress; the school's evaluation of how well it is doing and its records of the monitoring of the quality of teaching; records relating to behaviour and attendance; and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Richard Boswell, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Caroline Pardy

Additional Inspector

Mandy Wilding

Additional Inspector

Jeremy Seymour

Additional Inspector

David King

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Michael's CE High School is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- Most students come from White British backgrounds and a very small minority come from minority ethnic backgrounds. Very few are at the early stages of learning English.
- The percentage of students who are supported through the pupil premium (which provides additional funding for students in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals) is above average.
- The proportion of disabled students is above average and 25 of these students are supported through specially resourced provision within the school. This provision is for disabled students and students with medical needs.
- The proportion of students who have special educational needs supported through school action is broadly average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- A very small number of students attend provision away from the school site on a full- or part-time basis at the following providers in Sandwell: Greensprings Youth Training Scheme, Sandwell Community Caring Trust, Nova training, NACRO.
- The school met the government's floor standards in 2013, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The headteacher has received support from Local Leaders of Education at Earl's High School, Halesowen and Perryfields High School, Sandwell and from a National Leader of Education from Bartley Green School, Birmingham.
- Since the last inspection, there have been significant changes in the composition of the leadership team.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching and so raise achievement by ensuring that:
 - students have a good grasp of basic arithmetic and using the subject to solve problems in everyday life
 - all students, including the most able, are fully challenged to do their best
 - students always act on comments teachers make in books when they mark their work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students start at the school with standards that are below those found nationally. As a result of improved attitudes to learning, in the last four years they have been leaving with standards that are increasingly closer to the national average and, in the last two school years, these have been broadly in line with the national average.
- Students currently at the school are now making good progress in English, mathematics and science in both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. The proportion on track to make expected progress in mathematics is in line with that found nationally; in English, it is above the national average. The progress of students leaving the school in the last three years, particularly in mathematics, has not been as good because they have not been able to catch up fully on ground lost as a result of the weaker teaching they received when they were in Key Stage 3.
- The proportion of students achieving five good passes at GCSE including English and mathematics has steadily improved over the last four years. This is substantially as a result of actions taken by the headteacher and the new leadership team. Improvement in standards has been more rapid than that found nationally and, in 2013, the school was ranked 35th in the country's 200 most improved schools.
- Standards in science have been consistently above the national average as a result of strong leadership in the department and the high quality of teaching across both key stages. The performance of students in religious education has also been notably strong, as it has in vocational courses in catering and French.
- The gap in the attainment of those students who are supported by additional funding and others in the school narrowed from being one and a quarter grades in English in 2012 to being one grade in 2013 but remained at one and a third of a grade in mathematics. The gap is closing in both subjects for students currently at the school following the use of academic coaches and teachers working with an outstanding school. These students are now making the same good progress as other students.
- In recent years, the proportion of pupils making more than expected progress in English and mathematics has been below that found nationally. As a result of more consistently good teaching, the proportion of current pupils making more than expected progress in English is much increased but the impact has not been the same in mathematics.
- More of the school's most-able students in Key Stages 3 and 4 are now on track to make expected and more than expected progress in both English and mathematics. In English, the proportion on track to make expected progress is above that found nationally. A small group of gifted Year 10 mathematicians have already all achieved A* at GCSE and are now moving on to study AS level mathematics. The early entry of students for GCSE examinations is now only used for these small numbers of the most-able students.
- The progress of disabled students and those who have special educational needs, including those currently at the school, is improving over time. The proportion of these students making expected progress in English is above the national average while it is broadly in line in mathematics. The school's commitment to equal opportunities is evident, for example, in the inclusion of these students in every aspect of school life and learning.
- The school makes good use of the additional 'catch-up' funding for Year 7 with one-to-one and

support in small groups for both literacy and numeracy.

- Students studying off the school site at alternative provision make progress similar to their peers and, in the last school year, all students at alternative provision achieved pass grades in English and mathematics.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching has significantly improved since the last inspection and this has resulted in sustained improvements in the attainment of Year 11 students in 2013 and improved progress for students who are currently on roll at the school. Students throughout the school enjoy their lessons and show positive attitudes to their learning. Relationships between staff and students are strong.
- The teaching of science is particularly strong and inspectors saw a strong emphasis on practical work, carried out safely and carefully by students. The safe use of equipment and students familiarity with making risk assessments was also seen in the use of sewing machines in a textiles lesson.
- All groups of students, including those who have special educational needs and those for whom the pupil premium provides support, benefit from the development of literacy skills in a wide range of lessons, from physical education to business studies, and across the year groups. Support staff and learning mentors work closely with classroom teachers so that behavioural or learning difficulties are not a barrier to participation.
- Throughout the school, teachers have consistently high expectations and good subject knowledge. This is reflected in the school's own records. Students know how well they are doing and their progress is regularly and accurately assessed. Teachers are quick to spot any underachievement. Students receive regular homework that is marked and returned promptly but teachers do not always ensure that students follow this up with corrections and exercises to improve further.
- The teaching of mathematics has improved and students are now making better progress in the subject. However inconsistencies in the teaching of basic arithmetic, particularly in Key Stage 3, has led to some students not having solid foundations on which to build their learning.
- Teachers do not always give the most-able students work that is hard enough or which provides sufficient challenge. For example, these students are not regularly asked questions by teachers that lead them to compare different points of view or contrasting theories and so help them to achieve the highest grades.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. This is a calm and orderly school, with high expectations of courtesy and respect. The wider school values of service and of social and moral responsibility are seen in everyday interactions both in the classroom and around the school, particularly in the work of the elected 'Student Voice' group.
- Students talk about their lessons with enthusiasm and the school has succeeded in encouraging strong attitudes to learning. Older students spoke about the changes in the last few years, and this is evident not only in the better progress that students are making but also in the behaviour seen during the inspection. It is also clear in the pride students have in the appearance of their

uniform and the neat presentation of work in their books over time.

- There is a clear system of sanctions and any rare incidents of disruption in the classroom are dealt with firmly and fairly. Students say that although there are some rewards for good behaviour, the school could provide more positive incentives.
- Behaviour is not outstanding because the proportion of fixed-term exclusions is above that found nationally. This is as a result of the school adopting a 'zero tolerance' towards any aggressive or violent behaviour. The rate of these exclusions is falling.
- The school's work to keep students' safe and secure is good. Students are aware of risks they may face, both online and in life beyond school, and they know how to take appropriate action to keep themselves safe and, for example, to protect their identities on the internet. Students who attend provision off the school site are closely and regularly monitored.
- The school has been particularly effective in working with local primary schools to ensure the move to secondary school is as smooth as possible. This includes, for example, new Year 7 tutor groups spending a week at an outdoor activity centre, building relationships, and with an emphasis on the introduction of good behaviours for learning at secondary school.
- Students, including disabled students and students who have special educational needs, say they feel safe anywhere on the school site and are free from any intimidation or prejudice. They know what to do and who to see if any bullying does occur. Both students and parents say, and school records show, that the school deals with any incidents swiftly and effectively.
- There has been a marked improvement in attendance as a result of the school's work with families and individual students.

The leadership and management are good

- The calm, caring and purposeful authority of the headteacher is steadily transforming this school. One of his key management skills is surrounding himself with a talented leadership team. These leaders have shown a unity of purpose and a steely determination to move the school forward. Parents, students and staff now all share high expectations of achievement, teaching and behaviour.
- The recent improvements in the quality of teaching stem from the high quality of monitoring by the senior team and, increasingly, by subject leaders, as well as carefully targeted training and professional development. There has been a supportive but rigorous approach to any underperformance and the needs of the students have always been paramount. This has led to considerable changes in staffing at all levels in the school and the eradication of inadequate teaching. This track record, together with the good progress of students currently on roll, clearly demonstrates the capacity of the leadership and management to make further improvements.
- The school has insisted on all staff consistently applying policies regarding, for example, assessment and the management of behaviour. This means that students have the security of familiar routines and know exactly what is expected of them as they move from lesson to lesson. This has been key to developing the students' positive attitudes to learning.
- Effective training in the assessment of students' progress has meant that every teacher produces accurate and relevant information on a regular basis. School leaders use this information to make sure that the school is responding to the changing needs of its students. The development

of the staff's professional skills is a high priority.

- The local authority was quick to assist the school in tackling the issues identified in the previous inspection. Good use has been made of local authority training and guidance, along with carefully selected regional and national expertise in helping to improve the quality of teaching. The headteacher has also received valuable support from Local Leaders of Education and a National Leader of Education in neighbouring schools.
- The very large majority of parents who responded to the online questionnaire were very positive about all aspects of the school's work, including communication between the school and home. The school meets all the statutory requirements for the safeguarding of students.
- The school offers a wide range of subjects and activities for students at all stages of their school career. This offer is being constantly reviewed and updated to respond to the needs of the current students and includes a commitment to extended school provision after lessons. There is additional teaching support in literacy and numeracy for those who require it and more-able students are given opportunities to extend their learning. High numbers of students, including disabled students, are involved in sports, building their confidence and self-esteem alongside their sporting talents.
- The school promotes very well the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of the curriculum. This is integrated into lessons and the life of the school. Regular assemblies, often taken by the students themselves, further promote understanding, including the diversity of modern Britain, and visits are organised to mosques, churches and synagogues.
- Independent and impartial advice on careers, training, sixth form and further education is available to all students as they move through the school. The school is determined to raise the aspirations of its students and broaden their horizons, and significant partnerships play a key role in this endeavour. Links with West Bromwich Albion Football Club have led to a diverse range of students benefiting from coaching, fitness and leadership training; a large, local company, William King, provide work experience and opportunities for problem solving; there are strong ties with a number of local sixth form colleges and regional universities.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governors are very supportive of the school. They have a realistic view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and do not shy away from asking difficult questions about the school's performance. They know what is happening in the school as a result of their knowledge of data, their own visits, regular interviews with school leaders and guidance from the local authority. As result, they have a good awareness of improvements since the last inspection, including those in students' performance and the quality of teaching. They also check on how the school is recognising and rewarding teachers, tackling any underperformance and how this links to performance management and pay progression. The governing body has undertaken training in order to improve its effectiveness and they ensure that the school's financial resources are used well. This includes reviewing the effectiveness of the school's use of the extra financial support to help improve the progress and attainment of disadvantaged students in relation to their peers in the school and nationally.

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	442531

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1091
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Chair	Colin Nicholls
Headteacher	Mike Wilkes
Date of previous school inspection	31 January 2013
Telephone number	0121 5616881
Fax number	N/A
Email address	contact.staff@st-michaels.sandwell.sch.uk

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