

# St Michael's CofE High School

## Inspection report

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Unique Reference Number	104019
Local Authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	336221
Inspection dates	23–24 September 2009
Reporting inspector	Philippa Francis HMI

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

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Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1002
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs B Adams
Headteacher	Mr R V Worthington
Date of previous school inspection	10–11 January 2007
School address	Throne Road Rowley Regis West Midlands B65 9LD
Telephone number	0121 5595224
Fax number	0121 5594203
Email address	headteacher@st-michaels.sandwell.sch.uk

Age group	11–16
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 27 lessons, and held meetings with staff, governors and groups of students. They observed the school's work, and looked at improvement plans, minutes of meetings, the headteacher's reports to governors, staff and pupil questionnaires and 499 parental questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- achievement of boys
- actions taken to tackle low rates of attendance
- systems for monitoring and reviewing students' progress
- the school's evaluations of the quality of teaching and learning
- actions taken by the school to promote health and safety.

## Information about the school

St Michael's Church of England High School is a medium-sized school and is situated in an area of above average socio-economic disadvantage. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals is slightly higher than average. Most students are of White British backgrounds. The school has a designated resource base for 25 students with physical disabilities, accounting in part for the much higher than average number of students with a statement of special educational needs. The proportion of other students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is also higher than average. The school gained specialist business and enterprise status in September 2005 and is a full service extended school. The school will move to new premises in 2011.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate  
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

## Main findings

St Michael's is a satisfactory school with good and outstanding features. It has a highly inclusive ethos shown through the wide range of students who attend and in the school's outstanding care, guidance and support for all. The school's long history of supporting students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those in its designated resource base, continues to be a considerable strength alongside its highly effective support for students who face extensive barriers to learning because of a range of complex social and contextual factors.

Achievement is satisfactory. Students' results in external tests, although remaining low, improved significantly in 2009 as a result of a range of concerted actions derived from a realistic and thorough appraisal of the students' performance. Boys' achievement improved markedly. Students' knowledge of health and safety is good. Students behave well and most work hard. Attendance is improving but low.

The school's good curriculum is broad and well matched to its students. This close match contributes strongly to the improving levels of attainment and learning. Teaching and assessment are satisfactory. Limited improvement has been made since the last inspection although previous concerns over gaps in staffing in core subjects have largely been resolved. Teachers do not consistently use assessment information to ensure that learning meets fully each student's learning needs or check frequently enough on understanding. Not enough lessons contain the variety and challenge to involve and stretch students fully and ensure consistently good progress. Students often respond by relying too much on teachers and not thinking enough for themselves.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Actions taken by managers in 2009 proved effective in improving several important areas of concern securely and quickly, although the impact on improving teaching has yet to be realised. Self-evaluation is accurate. The management team has been strengthened at all levels. These factors contribute to the schools' satisfactory capacity to improve. The school's skill in partnership work is outstanding and highly beneficial in many ways.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Raise the quality of teaching and learning to be consistently good by ensuring that:
  - assessment information is used consistently to plan lessons and to make sure that teaching and learning activities are well matched to students' ability and will stretch and extend their knowledge and skills
  - regular and thorough checks are made on students' understanding during lessons in order to maintain challenge and effective learning
  - marking is consistently of high quality, includes constructive feedback to students on how to improve their work, and requires action by students
  - teachers use a broader and more interesting range of strategies tailored to meet the needs of each student and to increase the level of participation in learning activities by students
  - regular monitoring of classroom practice focuses on evaluating the quality of students' learning and progress.

About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Results in external tests improved significantly in 2009, meeting and, in most cases, exceeding the school's targets. Students' attainment, however, remains low, reflecting the low starting points of many. The percentage of students gaining more than five good grades at GCSE across all subjects, and when including English and mathematics, increased sharply. This represents a marked improvement on the previous two years. The wide gap between the attainment of boys and girls evident in 2008 narrowed significantly in 2009 to closely match the national picture. Attendance is improving but remains low, partly because of a small core of persistent absentees.

Students work hard in most lessons and, compared with data from 2008, the progress they make in their learning is considerably improved. Almost all make satisfactory progress, and students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. Behaviour is good: students are highly considerate to others, polite and respectful. The level of exclusion has diminished notably. Students show pride in their school in very many ways but lack some care for their environment, as shown by the high levels of litter around the school and the persistent vandalism of toilets by a very few. Students feel safe and enjoy school. They show good knowledge of health and safety and this is increasingly reflected in their lifestyles.

Students contribute well to school and community life in a number of ways. Students' input into planning the new school is high. Peer mentors work effectively with local primary schools in support of Year 6 pupils' transition into secondary school. The

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development of workplace skills is satisfactory; students are punctual and work well together. They develop confidence in personal and social skills and are well supported in planning their futures. Students' application of basic skills remains limited by their low levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy, although this is increasingly rapidly. Students are gaining confidence in applying information and communication technology skills shown especially in their most recent work. Social and moral values are well embedded in students, but their spiritual development and cultural awareness of the wider world is more limited and not yet well promoted across all parts of the curriculum.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

## How effective is the provision?

The combination of outstanding care, guidance and support with a considerably improved, good curriculum is significant in supporting securely the improved and satisfactory progress being made by students. The school works very hard with each student to tackle any barriers to learning, which are often complex and persistent. Considerable skill is evident in supporting students with physical disabilities; these students are fully integrated into all aspects of school life. Punctuality is good and attendance is improving securely because of robust and concerted actions taken by all staff; the school met its attendance target for 2009.

The school's focus over the last year on the thorough monitoring of students' progress along with teachers' skill in intervening promptly and effectively when there

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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is a risk of underperformance has ensured many more students are successful. Strategies put in place to support boys have closed the gap between girls' and boys' performance.

The school's evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning is accurate. Teachers foster good relationships in lessons, know their individual students well and offer each considerable support, along with involving parents and carers wherever possible. As one parent noted, 'The teachers offer me and my child 100% support.'. Planning of lessons has improved since the previous inspection and lessons are well managed. Teachers, however, do not consistently use assessment information to ensure that learning meets fully each student's learning needs or check frequently enough on understanding. Marking is not consistently helpful to students. Teachers recognise they need to use a wider range of approaches incorporating challenge but most have only just begun to introduce these features into their lessons.

The school's business and enterprise specialism is increasingly integrated into the curriculum with a strong and productive focus on work-related and enterprise education. Personal, social and health education is very sound. Innovations put in place in the provision of an alternative curriculum, for example, in partnership with West Bromwich Albion Football Club, help to motivate students, especially boys, to stay engaged and to see the value in their learning.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

All staff in the school are highly committed to its inclusive ethos, strongly led in this vision by the headteacher. Raising attainment is firmly at the top of the school's agenda for improvement; the improved results in 2009 are a testament to this. Target setting is used effectively and aspirationally. However, some improvement planning is over complicated and there has been too little impact of actions to improve teaching and learning. Careful consideration is given to ensuring that different groups of students are given equal opportunities and groups' performance is closely monitored. Concerns about boys' achievement were acted upon promptly and effectively, for example by extending the range and appeal of options at Key Stage 4.

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The school’s leadership team has been strengthened by new appointments and middle managers have been refocused successfully on rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the school’s work and are developing their skills well. Governance is improving. The range of governors’ expertise has been extended and its focus on achievement sharpened. Governors recognise that their evaluation of the impact of statutory policies is inconsistent but they are increasingly holding the school to account for its performance.

Good practice is evident in the school’s safeguarding procedures with very strong links to key agencies and high priority given to integrating safe practices into the school’s work. The school has taken a lead, with student input, in producing effective educational materials relative to cyber-bullying and sexual activity, which are used by other local schools. Training in child protection for staff and governors is thorough.

The school makes a strong contribution to community cohesion and many of its initiatives extend far beyond the school gates, for example as the hub school for the Rowley Regis Learning Community, involving 14 local primary schools. The school knows and identifies well with its community and is at the heart of building relationships across different groups within it. Audits of the impact of actions taken to promote cohesion are thorough.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

The rate of response by parents and carers was high. Of 499 questionnaires received

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455 were analysed and inspectors checked the remaining 44. A large majority of responses expressed positive agreement with all 13 statements, and a very large majority with 12 of the 13 statements. A small minority of parents expressed concern about unhealthy school food choices; however, inspectors found that high priority was given to preparing locally-sourced food in a healthy way, but that this is not well communicated to parents or students. Concerns were also noted about the state of the girls' toilets. Inspectors agreed that several blocks of toilets were in need of refurbishment, largely because of ongoing vandalism which the school is trying to combat, and noted that this work is planned to take place shortly.

### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Michael’s CofE High School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 499 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1002 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	153	34	263	58	37	8	2	0
The school keeps my child safe	150	33	280	63	14	3	3	1
The school informs me about my child’s progress	104	24	277	63	51	12	4	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	113	26	285	65	28	6	3	1
The teaching is good at this school	111	25	282	64	38	9	1	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	97	22	266	61	59	14	2	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	87	20	256	58	75	17	10	2
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	107	25	273	64	25	6	2	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	128	29	269	61	33	8	3	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	124	28	236	54	53	12	17	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	86	20	260	62	48	11	12	3
The school is led and managed effectively	120	28	280	64	23	5	5	1
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	152	34	252	57	32	7	2	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.



25 September 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of St Michael's CofE High School, Rowley Regis, B65 9LD

Thank you for your contribution to the recent inspection of St Michael's. We enjoyed meeting so many of you and found your comments helpful in our work. These are our findings about your school:

- St Michael's is a satisfactory and improving school. We judge the school's capacity to improve further is satisfactory. Teachers' care and support for you is outstanding and they guide you well through school life. The school's results in external tests improved a great deal in 2009. You make satisfactory progress in the lessons, work hard and behave well.
- Your lessons are satisfactory. Teachers are beginning to include more variety in how they teach you. We have asked them to involve you more in lessons and to check more frequently that you fully understand each learning point.
- You are nearly all punctual to lessons and some of you have good attendance; well done. However, too many of you have below average levels of attendance and a very few of you persistently miss school; please help resolve this by doing your very best to attend every day of school. The school's relentless focus on attendance is having an impact and attendance is improving.
- The school's curriculum is good.
- You told us that you feel safe and that a very large majority of you enjoy school. Your awareness of healthy lifestyles is good. A few of you expressed concerns about school food and the toilets. We found that food preparation uses healthy approaches and local foods, and asked your school to tell you and your parents more about this. We agree that some toilets need refurbishment but you must play your part in maintaining these to an acceptable standard and reporting any vandalism immediately. This way, you and the school can work together to tackle this problem. You can also help improve the school's environment by keeping the school's campus litter free.
- The headteacher and the school's managers are highly committed to helping you and your parents and/or carers to make the best of all the opportunities that school offers. Their management is satisfactory and their actions have improved the school considerably, especially in the last year or so.
- You make many valuable contributions to school and community life.

Yours faithfully  
Philippa Francis  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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