

St Michael's CofE Primary Academy, Handsworth

Piers Road, Handsworth, Birmingham, B21 0UX

Inspection dates 1–2 July 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	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 executive headteacher's outstanding leadership and management have driven the rapid improvement seen in teaching and learning since the school opened.
- Teachers' performance is managed exceptionally well. Staff benefit greatly from the excellent support they receive from the school's strong links with its partner school.
- The quality of teaching is good, pupils achieve well and standards are rising in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Reception children make excellent progress, and therefore get off to a really good start in their learning.
- Governors are rigorous in holding the school to account. They support it but also challenge it exceptionally well.
- Pupils behave well. They feel safe and say they are well-looked after and taught how to keep themselves safe. Their parents agree.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and they are eager to learn and do well. The school does much to encourage them to aim high.
- Attendance has improved in the past two years and is now average. The school is extremely vigilant in checking up on all absences.
- The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very strong.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not enough outstanding teaching to enable pupils to make even more rapid progress, particularly in writing.
- Learning sometimes lacks urgency in literacy sessions, especially when pupils cannot get to their writing tasks quickly.
- Writing is not always marked well enough when used in different subjects.
- When pupils do corrections, what they do is rarely marked. In some cases, this means errors persist unnecessarily.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 12 lessons. Four of the visits were conducted jointly with the executive headteacher or the executive deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors also observed play and lunchtimes, and held discussions with pupils, governors, staff and representatives of The Diocese of Birmingham Educational Trust.
- Inspectors were unable to access the online questionnaire (Parent View) but gained parents' views by speaking to some parents as they brought their children to school, and by examining the recent questionnaires conducted by the school.
- Inspectors considered the 15 responses to the questionnaires for staff.
- A wide range of documents was scrutinised, including information about pupils' progress and attendance, the school development plan, the school's self-evaluation document, and records and policies about safeguarding and the quality of teaching.
- Inspectors examined the work in pupils' books, and sampled sessions where pupils were learning the sounds letters make (phonics) or were taking part in guided reading activities.

Inspection team

Doris Bell, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Julie Bullous

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school. This is its first inspection since it became an academy in October 2012.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported through school action is average. The proportion of pupils who are supported at school action plus, or who have statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives additional funding, known as the pupil premium, is well-above average. This funding is for looked-after children and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well-above average as is the proportion who speak English as an additional language.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school has an executive headteacher, who is the operational and substantive headteacher for two schools, one of which (St Michael's) is sponsored by The Diocese of Birmingham Educational Trust. The other school is St Mary's Church of England Primary and Nursery Academy, Handsworth, hereinafter referred to as 'the partner school'.
- The executive headteacher is supported by an executive deputy headteacher. The school recently appointed its own deputy headteacher.
- The headteacher is a national leader of education and currently supports several schools on their journey to improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make more teaching, and therefore pupils' progress, outstanding, especially in writing, by:
 - giving pupils more time to write, and expecting more writing from them in lessons
 - marking writing skills equally well wherever they are used, and particularly in other subjects
 - showing pupils that, when they do corrections in English and mathematics, their efforts are valued and marked so that the sometimes unnecessary repetition of errors can be avoided.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- All pupils, from the least to the most able, achieve well. Their good progress is evident in their books and in the data held by the school. More are working at the higher levels of attainment than in the past, and the upward trend in attainment evident in 2012 and 13, is continuing.
- From low starting points on entry to Reception, children have made outstanding progress this year. They have quickly learned to read, write and count, and also to communicate well with others, whether new to this country or not having had pre-school experience.
- The results of the Year 1 phonics screening were just above average last year. Early indications are that they are the same this year. Pupils who read to inspectors, or were heard reading in other lessons, use their phonics skills well to help them with new words. They are developing good comprehension skills and a love of reading.
- In 2013, pupils did particularly well in the grammar, spelling and punctuation test. These technical skills remain strong. Displays around school relating, for example, to books read, or to history and science, show that, when given the opportunity and the right stimulus, pupils write well. Such writing has good grammatical structure, accurate spelling and punctuation, and the ability to draw the reader into the subject matter.
- Pupils do not always do enough writing in class. This is because, sometimes, they spend too much time writing out dates and learning objectives, or are not moved on to their writing tasks quickly enough, even when they are itching to do so. They therefore run out of time to complete them.
- More-able pupils are suitably challenged with harder work. This has contributed to the greater proportion now reaching the higher levels in the national tests and assessments and demonstrates the school's commitment to helping all pupils to do their best.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress. Recent training has ensured that support staff have the skills to meet the pupils' different needs and therefore contribute to their good progress.
- The good progress made by pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium grant has resulted in their attainment being ahead of other pupils in reading, writing and mathematics in 2013. This is the opposite of what is found nationally.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about sport and exercise and readily join in the activities available to them. They understand that, by doing so, they are helping to keep themselves fit and healthy. They also enjoy the opportunities they have to participate in competitive sport.

The quality of teaching is good

- Gaps in attainment are closing rapidly for all pupils because good and occasionally outstanding teaching is helping to eradicate previous underachievement. The support that teachers receive from their partner school has been instrumental in this and they use it well.
- Reception staff check each child's needs and plan their work accordingly. They take children, step by step, through what they need to do to succeed. For many, this includes learning to

speak and understand the English language, which they do quickly.

- Reading, writing and mathematics are mostly taught well throughout the school, and pupils' work is usually planned well to meet their different ability levels. However, teachers do not always make best use of the time available for pupils to write and they sometimes interrupt pupils too often when they are writing, at times slowing their overall progress.
- Relationships between pupils and staff are excellent. Teachers reflect on their own practice and teach pupils to reflect on their learning and behaviour. They constantly encourage pupils to live up to the school's motto of 'being the best (they) can'.
- Marking is good in literacy and mathematics. It helps pupils see what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. It does not often enough extend to marking writing skills when they are used in different subjects. Therefore, a valuable opportunity is missed to help pupils reach their writing targets quicker.
- In most classes, pupils respond well to marking and do their corrections. However, the corrections are not always marked. Consequently, errors are sometimes repeated because pupils do not fully understand where they have gone wrong.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are taught well. They, and pupils eligible for the pupil premium, are supported well. Pupils who speak English as an additional language, including those new to the country, receive good support. This enables them to take a full part in everything on offer as quickly as possible.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils enjoy coming to school and they are eager to learn. Attendance is average and, like punctuality, it is improving. The school rigorously follows up all absences to ensure that pupils are safe.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils trust the staff to help them and keep them safe, as do their parents who commented, for example, 'I trust the school to keep my child safe'.
- Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe when using, for example, computers, the internet, mobile phones and social networks. The school's procedures regarding acceptable use of technological equipment are rigorous.
- All staff, parents and pupils spoken to during the inspection agree that the behaviour of pupils is good and pupils work and play together well. They understand and appreciate the system of awards and sanctions that keep it so.
- The behaviour of pupils is good because it is managed well. The inherent self-discipline that ensures pupils take responsibility for their own behaviour and for some of their own learning is developing but it is not fully established.
- Pupils understand the difference between persistent bullying and falling out with someone from time to time. They report, that on the rare occasions bullying does take place, it is dealt with quickly and effectively.
- The school council plays an active role in the school, contributing, for example, to changes in

uniform and the purchase of playground equipment. It also asked to have more teachers outside at break, mainly to control football, and its request was granted.

- Pupils find lessons interesting and are eager to learn. They know their targets and the levels they are at, and how to improve their work. They recognise that they are making better progress now than in the past. They are proud of their achievements and they present their work well.

The leadership and management are good

- The executive headteacher's uncompromising drive to secure the best for all pupils by becoming an outstanding school is the key to the rapid improvement that continues to take place in teaching and learning. It manifests itself in the high expectations the executive headteacher has of the staff's ability to rise to the high demands made of them.
- Staff morale is high. All staff want to do their best for the pupils and they are working together well to achieve this goal. They understand the links between their targets and the priorities in the school improvement plan, and how they arrive from the school's own accurate and well-evidenced evaluation of its effectiveness.
- The checks made on teaching and learning are rigorous, robust and accurate, and teachers' performance is managed exceptionally well. Areas for improvement are followed up with training and coaching, most often through the strong links between the school and its partner school. These links have ensured that teachers' assessments of the levels in pupils' work are accurate.
- Staff responsible for leading different subjects take part in all monitoring activities. However, they are relatively new to post and, although learning fast, they are not yet fully au fait with how to interpret data about pupils' progress and use it to best effect. They work with their counterparts in the partner school and this is helping them grow quickly into their roles.
- Throughout the school community, there is a 'can do' culture, which staff, pupils and parents all recognise. Parents feel they are listened to and that the school staff always make time for them. They are becoming increasingly involved in their children's learning and are particularly pleased with the progress their children are now making.
- The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceedingly strong, as is the school's commitment to equality of opportunity. Pupils are successfully taught to appreciate the world around them and to respect each other's differences. They explained that there is no harassment or discrimination because of race, colour or belief because 'all religions are taught equally well so that helps us to understand them'.
- The understandable focus on improving literacy and numeracy quickly, and ensuring the pupils' good progress in science, has meant that other subjects had to take a back seat. They are nevertheless covered adequately in topics that also promote literacy and numeracy skills and provide opportunities for pupils to express themselves through the arts.
- Safeguarding meets current government requirements and all training, including for child protection, is up to date. Access to the school building is well controlled and all staff are rigorously checked for their suitability before they take up their posts.
- The provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is led and managed well. All support programmes are kept under constant review and targets are adjusted

quickly in response to how well the pupils are progressing. The provision for children in Reception is also managed well.

- Staff from The Diocese of Birmingham Educational Trust monitor and support the school well. The Trust recognises the strength of the current leadership but still rightly checks that what the school is doing is helping pupils to make faster progress.
- The primary school sports funding is being used wisely to provide specialist training for teachers and additional opportunities for pupils to participate in a wider range of sporting activities, including with other schools. Pupils are eager to join in everything on offer.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The relatively new governing body supports the school well and challenges it robustly. It hones its skills through training, and it knows the school and the issues it faces very well. Governors visit the school and their link classes very regularly to gain information at first hand. They seek the views of staff, parents and pupils, and are heavily involved in everything the school does. They understand data about pupils' performance and use their knowledge well to hold the school to account. This is helping to eradicate the legacy of underachievement in the school, even although pupils in Years 5 and 6 especially, are still catching up because of their previous slower progress.
 - Governors support the executive headteacher in managing staff performance, including when difficult decisions have to be made because staff are not performing well enough. They ensure that any increase in salary is linked to performance and keep a very close eye on spending to ensure value for money. They know how pupil premium funding is being spent and what impact it is having on pupils' learning. They are also beginning to check the impact that the sports funding is having on teacher expertise and pupil performance.

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	138433
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	440055

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	181
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brian Hall
Headteacher (Executive)	Ava Sturridge-Packer
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
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