

St Michael's Church of England Aided Primary School

Nantmel Grove, Bartley Green, Birmingham, B32 3JS

Inspection dates 11–12 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy
	This inspection:	Good 2
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Early years provision	Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- From starting points that are often low, pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they leave.
- The headteacher leads the academy very effectively. She is relentless in her drive to bring about lasting improvements. She is determined to make the academy an exciting and enriching place of learning.
- The academy leaders have created a harmonious school community with high expectations at the heart of its work.
- Regular checks by the academy's leaders have ensured that teaching is improving. Carefully targeted training is provided for all staff.
- Leaders' drive to provide a high standard of education for all pupils has improved teaching and raising standards.
- Pupils enjoy a wide range of opportunities which develop their confidence and widen their experience. They thrive and develop into confident young people who are well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- The early years provides children with a good start to their education. Children make good progress during their time in the Nursery and Reception classes.
- Behaviour is good. Parents, staff and pupils all value the academy's high expectations for good manners and its emphasis on showing respect for others.
- The academy's efforts to ensure that children are safe are very successful, a view that is strongly supported by parents and staff.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some middle leaders are new to their roles and have not fully developed ways to accelerate progress in their areas of responsibility.
- Teachers do not provide enough interesting and challenging activities that interest boys or stretch all of the most-able pupils.
- Teachers' expectations in some subjects are not high enough. Pupils are not always required to follow up advice on how they can improve their work, particularly in their spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 18 lessons, or part lessons. Five lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour and attitudes in lessons, playtimes, when they moved around the academy, during lunchtime, and at the beginning and end of the school day. The inspectors spoke to pupils about their perceptions of the school.
- Inspectors looked at the work pupils were doing in lessons, reviewed the work in pupils' writing, mathematics, and other exercise books, and heard some pupils read.
- Meetings were held with academy leaders and one member of the governing body. The lead inspector also had a telephone discussion with the Chair of Governors.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, which included: the academy's checks on how well it is doing and its plans for improvement; evidence about how teachers are set targets to improve pupils' progress; records of the academy's checks on the quality of teaching; minutes of meetings of the governing body and the senior leadership team; information about pupils' progress over time; and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- Inspectors took account of 15 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and also spoke with parents informally. They also considered 20 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Terrance Mortimer, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Teresa Mason	Additional Inspector
Lynne Bennett	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The academy is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The school converted to become an academy on 1 January 2013. When its predecessor school, also known as St Michael's Church of England Aided Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The early years consists of a Nursery class, where children attend either part time or full time depending on need, and two full-time Reception classes.
- The academy is growing in size, with an increasing number of pupils joining the academy at other than the usual times, part-way through the school year.
- About two thirds of the pupils are from White British backgrounds with just over a third from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. A small minority of the pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the pupil premium provides support is well above the national average. The pupil premium is government funding to support the education of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above the national average.
- The academy's headteacher is a local leader of education.
- The school supports Quinton Church Primary School. One of the assistant headteachers from St Michael's Primary is Head of School at Quinton Church Primary School.
- The school is a member of the Bartley Green Teaching School, which provides support for teaching, and also the Oaks collegiate where the school is at present leading the new primary module for the college.
- Four class teachers have joined the school within the last two years.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and thereby achievement so that both are consistently good or better for all pupils by:
 - ensuring that teachers always give clearly-defined, challenging tasks to the most-able pupils
 - providing more activities that interest boys so that they are fully engaged with their work and make better progress
 - checking pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar more frequently and giving more time to teaching these skills
 - showing pupils consistently in marking how to improve their work, providing them with enough opportunities to respond to the comments and ensuring they act on the advice given
 - routinely sharing the features of existing outstanding practice in teaching, for example challenge and planning for rapid progress, within the school partnership.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - developing the role of subject leaders, so that they play a more consistent and effective part in helping pupils to achieve well within their areas of responsibility.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has created a strong team spirit among staff, who are fully supportive of the school. All teachers strive to provide the best possible education for their pupils so that they have an equal opportunity to succeed. This has meant that pupils are keen to learn and their behaviour is good. Standards are improving across the school as pupils make better progress. Attendance has improved significantly since 2014.
- Improvements in pupils' achievements are a result of strong leadership of teaching by the headteacher and governors. The performance management procedures have been used well to tackle poorer teaching and reduce its impact on pupils. A dip in the performance of pupils in 2014 has been tackled successfully. Pupils across the school now make good progress in mathematics, reading and writing. Standards by the time the current pupils in Year 6 leave are set to be above those in 2014.
- Checks on lessons and pupils' work provide an accurate picture of the quality of teaching. Areas for improvement, such as the work for the most-able pupils being too easy, have been identified and teachers are responding well to the guidance they are given.
- The curriculum is carefully planned so that it interests almost all pupils and engages them in their learning. The school has begun to introduce new initiatives to broaden pupils' writing experiences, especially for boys, but it is too soon to determine their impact on standards. However, the indications are that these are capturing boys' imagination more successfully than in the past.
- Leaders make sure pupils have plentiful opportunities through the curriculum to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. The school encourages pupils to show respect for each other and to recognise that each person is unique and should be appreciated for themselves. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain, as leaders ensure they have a good understanding of British values, such as democracy. They learn about the rights of the individual and the importance of taking responsibility for one's actions through their school council and school Eco-warriors. Pupils understand the need for rules and expectations and the benefits they bring, and have respect for different faiths and beliefs.
- The funding made available to promote primary sport has been used effectively. The range of sports has been extended. The school employs a coach to increase the variety of competitive activities in which the pupils participate. The proportion of pupils regularly taking part in sport has increased significantly as a result of the coach's well-organised and successful work.
- Procedures for safeguarding, including vetting of prospective staff, are fully in place. Parents feel that their children are safe at the school. They show very high satisfaction with all that the school does and play a positive role in supporting their child's education at home. Increasingly, they ensure that their children attend regularly and get to school on time.
- The academy monitors pupils' progress, behaviour and attendance in detail to ensure equality of opportunity and identify potential underachievement. Senior leaders ensure that any disadvantaged pupils who start to fall behind are quickly identified and receive extra help to catch up. Much of this support is provided by the extra staff, whose services are paid for partly through the pupil premium funds. The use of these funds has proved highly effective in ensuring that disadvantaged pupils are now achieving equally as well as their peers.
- The early years leader analyses data on children's achievement and checks teaching to gain a complete overview of the effectiveness of teaching. Leaders of subjects, many of whom are new to their posts in the school, are not yet doing enough to raise standards or improve the quality of teaching in their areas of responsibility. The headteacher has rightly targeted this as a priority for this year.
- Strong partnerships exist with key support agencies to promote pupils' education, safety and well-being.

Some particularly effective links have been established with other schools, including the schools to which Year 6 pupils transfer when they leave. Community links have also been strengthened.

- The academy receives good support from the Challenge Partnership, which formally monitors the academy. It provides challenge and support in dealing with issues such as teaching and learning and the academy's development.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors are very well informed about the academy. They are well organised and apply their wide range of skills and valuable expertise to challenge and support the academy's leaders.
- Governors understand the impact that teaching has on pupils' achievement and are fully aware of the quality of teaching across the academy. They know how underperformance has been tackled. They know how good teaching is recognised and rewarded. Governors have a good knowledge of the systems used in teachers' performance management. They are fully aware that pay should be linked to performance and that pay increases are not automatic.
- Governors have an accurate knowledge of the academy's data on pupils' attainment and progress and how these compare with national data. Governors make regular visits to the academy. They work well with all staff, and work closely with the academy to ensure that it maintains its drive to raise standards. With the support of senior leaders, the governing body ensures that the school's arrangements for safeguarding its pupils are effective and meet all statutory requirements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are courteous and respectful to each other and adults. The atmosphere in the academy is calm, warm and welcoming. Pupils move around the academy in an orderly manner and are polite, such as when they hold doors open for others to pass through.
- Pupils take a great pride in their environment. There is a noticeable lack of litter around the premises.
- Discussions with pupils and the academy's records show that poor behaviour, including racist or discriminatory incidents, is rare. A small number of pupils sometimes display challenging behaviour but the academy manages these pupils consistently and well. Pupils with behavioural difficulties are supported in a caring and nurturing way, often through the nurture group. This leads to the improved behaviour of these pupils.
- Parents and pupils say that behaviour is good. Pupils have positive relationships with their teachers. They say teachers are fair and listen to them. Pupils said they come to school happily to meet their friends and learn new things.
- Pupils are keen to learn in lessons and are mostly engaged in the challenges they are given. However, occasionally the work is not fully challenging for all pupils, especially the most able. As a result, a few pupils occasionally lose concentration.
- Attendance in 2014 improved significantly on that in 2013, and is now above average. Punctuality is good.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Records and procedures are fully up to date. Safeguarding policies and practices are followed by all staff.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations, including when using the internet, and are aware of the different forms of bullying.
- Regular visitors to the academy talk to the pupils about potential dangers and how to keep themselves safe.

- Pupils are confident that adults will listen to and address any concerns they may have.
- All parents who responded to the online questionnaire, and those that inspectors spoke with, consider that their children are happy, safe and well behaved.

The quality of teaching is good

- The leadership of the academy has maintained a sharp and effective focus on improving the quality of teaching. Good teaching is now the norm across the academy and some is better. This has ensured that all groups of pupils are achieving well in reading, writing and mathematics. Good relationships and effective class management are features of the teaching in most lessons. These help to pupils to develop positive attitudes to learning and ensure that they almost always concentrate fully on their work.
- Teachers make clear what pupils are going to learn. Through the effective use of questioning, pupils' progress is checked and their understanding is deepened because, in the main, they are made to think hard. This is a strong feature of much of the good teaching seen in lessons. For example, in a mathematics lesson, pupils in Year 5 made rapid progress in understanding fractions because the teacher constantly asked pupils to explain the reasoning that led to their answers and checked that they all understood before moving on.
- Good teaching of phonics provides the basis for the improving standards in reading seen this year in the early years and Year 1. This, together with the good teaching evident in all other classes, lays the foundation for pupils' good progress in reading as they move through the school. As a result, they become increasingly confident readers who are able to read for purpose and for pleasure by the time they leave.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to make sure that disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress. Each pupil has a well-constructed individual support plan, which includes their personal learning targets. These are used by teachers in planning to make sure that the work set is matched to pupils' needs.
- The teaching of writing is good and, as a result, standards are rising. Pupils have opportunities to write for different purposes and at length. This is especially the case as pupils move through Key Stage 2.
- Staff know pupils very well, and there are good relationships between pupils and teachers. Staff generally have high expectations and set work that engages pupils in their learning. Pupils enjoy lessons and are keen to learn. They say that teachers make lessons interesting by using a variety of approaches and that lessons are 'really fun' and 'we learn a lot'. Pupils said that they especially enjoyed using computers in their learning.
- Teachers make good use of their subject knowledge and assessment information to plan work that is appropriately demanding for almost all groups of pupils. Sometimes, however, boys and the most-able pupils are not always given work that is hard enough for them to reach the highest levels and make the best possible progress.
- There are inconsistencies in the marking of pupils' work. Some marking, particularly in English and mathematics, provides pupils with clear direction for improvement, but other marking does not help pupils to improve their work. In some instances the teachers' expectations, as expressed in their marking, are not high enough. Spelling and punctuation errors are not always checked and poorly presented work is sometimes accepted without challenge. Where pupils are given guidance, they are not always required to follow it through and so learn by correcting their own mistakes. Consequently, their progress slows.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics during their time in the academy. From their starting points in the Nursery or Reception year, which are generally below those typical for children's ages, they reach standards that are broadly average by the end of Year 6.

- In 2014, standards at the end of Key Stage 1 were average in reading, writing and mathematics. Current data for 2015 show that standards are improving. They have already risen in reading, writing and mathematics and are on track to be above last year's results when pupils leave Year 2.
- Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 have also improved. In 2014, they were broadly average in reading, writing, including grammar, and mathematics. These results show a dip from those in 2013. Almost all pupils made the progress expected of them in writing in 2014, but they made slower than average progress in reading and mathematics. The proportion that made more than expected progress was below average in reading, and mathematics and around average in writing. When the pupils with statements of special educational needs, who were not entered for the assessments, are removed, overall progress was similar to the national average.
- Inspection evidence and the academy's most recent data show that, while most groups of pupils are making good progress and achieving well, the progress of boys, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs varies across the year groups.
- In the Year 1 reading screening check in 2014, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected level was below that of the previous year and the national average. The pupils who did not achieve the standard are now being given effective support. This is leading to rapid improvement of reading across the school. Pupils now make good progress in reading and achieve well. This is because they are well taught and have opportunities to read regularly. They have a good knowledge of phonics (letters and the sounds they make). The proportion of pupils succeeding in the Year 1 phonics check is currently showing well above that of the previous year.
- Pupils are making good progress in mathematics. They have well-developed basic numeracy skills and the school has developed more opportunities for pupils to use and apply these skills to investigate real-life situations and solve practical problems.
- Pupils make steady progress in writing and the school is creating many more opportunities for the curriculum to excite and interest boys, and for all pupils to write at length in different subjects across the curriculum.
- Achievement for the most-able pupils has been inconsistent. These pupils are less successful at the higher levels in writing, mathematics and their standards in English grammar, punctuation and spelling are not as high as they should be. This is because they are not always provided with sufficient challenge in their work. The most-able pupils are now making good progress in mathematics and achieving well overall because they are increasingly being given work that is more difficult. However, inspection evidence and academy data show that even now sometimes they do not make progress as rapidly as they could and reach the highest standards.
- Disadvantaged pupils supported through the pupil premium achieve well. They receive effective support if they need it and make good progress. However, in 2014, pupils in Year 6 known to be eligible for the pupil premium were about four terms behind those of other pupils nationally in mathematics and reading; they were a term and a half behind in writing. In comparison with other pupils in the academy, their attainment was around three terms behind in reading, mathematics and writing. Academy data show that this gap has now closed to just over a term in mathematics and reading and has been eliminated in writing. The progress these pupils make is improving.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs achieve well because their needs are accurately identified and they receive good support to help them to learn. This help comes from skilled teachers and teaching assistants, though this varies across year groups. Current data show that these pupils are making good progress in Key Stage 2 and achieving at least as well as other pupils in the academy.

The early years provision is good

- The attainment of children on entry to the Nursery varies widely. A small number of children enter the Nursery with levels typical for their age across all learning areas but the majority of children have weaknesses in their language, personal, social and emotional development, and particularly in their speaking skills.
- Adults' careful management of intervention groups and systematic checks on children's learning ensure children make good and, in some cases, rapid progress. This has resulted this year in the academy predicting that the proportion leaving with a good level of development will be much improved on the 2014 results. Children are well prepared for their education in Key Stage 1.
- Members of the early years team work hard to teach early phonics skills and have adapted their practice to prepare children for the curriculum in Year 1. Through the structured sessions in writing skills, children begin to learn how to write independently in the time set aside for this purpose. This is resulting in improved language development.
- Well-planned activities, both inside and outdoors, help children develop a range of skills as well as increasing their confidence.
- Teaching in the early years is good. Staff check children's progress well to ensure activities are set at the right level for all children, including for the most able. Staff are developing children's positive attitudes of perseverance and resilience effectively. Children refer to dinosaur characters, such as 'Tryceratops' and 'Thinkasaurus' when they talk about how hard they are trying to succeed at their individual tasks.
- Leadership and management of the early years are good. Senior leaders work with teaching assistants to check on the quality of their input and improve their ability to support children's learning.
- Staff work well with parents and are readily available to talk to them about any worries they may have about their children. They engage parents in their children's learning by inviting them to special events such as phonics and mathematics mornings. The parents are involved in their children's learning journals, in either digital or paper format according to their preference, by also providing evidence of their children's successes at home.
- Children feel safe and behave well. Staff ensure that the children have clear instructions for their behaviour and safety especially when outside. They cooperate with each other and take turns in using large play equipment. This helps foster children's social skills.

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	139174
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	456301

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	330
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jon Slater
Headteacher	Samantha Cosgrove
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected as an academy
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