

St Michael's CofE Academy

Flanshaw Lane, Wakefield, West Yorkshire WF2 9JA

Inspection dates

13–14 December 2016

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Strong leadership at all levels has underpinned rapid and sustained improvements since the last inspection. Middle leaders are now effective in their work to improve teaching and raise achievement.
- Governors challenge and support school leaders well. They have a good overview of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- The very high quality curriculum gives pupils a broad range of experiences across many subjects. As a result, pupils leave well-equipped for the demands of secondary school.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and challenge pupils well in lessons.
- Pupils make good progress in all subjects during their time at the school. However, in reading the least able do not make as much progress as other ability groups.
- The most able pupils and disadvantaged pupils make good progress in both key stages.
- The achievement of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is good although they could make better progress with a sharper approach to addressing their needs.
- Pupils behave sensibly at lunchtime and breaktimes. Inspectors found children to be well-mannered and polite.
- In lessons, pupils apply themselves well to their work, presenting it neatly and taking a pride in its appearance.
- Pupils are safe and secure. They are confident staff deal with any reported cases of bullying should it occur.
- The early years provides high-quality experiences for children to thrive in the next stage of their education. They are taught well and the setting is well led and managed.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement in reading for the least able pupils in school by:
 - ensuring pupils are heard reading aloud by an adult more frequently than they are at present
 - improving how records of pupils' progress in reading are logged and how these records inform the next steps in their learning.
- Help pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to make even faster progress by ensuring:
 - pupils are all following interventions that enable them to make maximum progress across all subjects
 - the interventions are regularly checked to see if they are effective.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher leads with vision and an impressive level of commitment to both pupils and staff. His trusting approach has enabled middle leaders to embrace their leadership roles while also nurturing and developing their individual talents. The result is a happy school that has improved rapidly, where pupils thrive and where staff are valued.
- The curriculum is strong, not only in the core areas of reading, writing and mathematics but in such areas as visual arts, where pupils are working around two chronological years above their age as they research existing artists and explore painting techniques with the support of visiting specialist teachers. In history too, leaders have given much thought into what makes a good historian in researching source materials and linking together historical events.
- Since the last inspection, middle leaders have risen to the challenge of checking rigorously on the quality of the curriculum and the quality of teaching. This increased scrutiny has improved teaching at a fast pace. Leaders now have been given additional time to provide advice to teachers on how they might improve their teaching. This has been instrumental in driving up standards.
- The pupil premium is managed well and checked to see if it is having a positive impact on learning for disadvantaged pupils. Trips and visits are funded as are specialist teachers to boost pupils' progress in small groups. For many, the trips give pupils experiences they would not otherwise have, such as singing in the cathedral or seeing a pantomime at Christmas.
- The additional funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is not yet used to its full potential. Pupils currently make good progress, although leaders are aware that a sharper allocation of resources for special educational needs could result in these pupils making even faster progress.
- The physical education (PE) and sport premium for primary schools is used effectively so that staff are able to observe and work alongside experts and so improve their own skills.
- Achievement information is analysed well by school leaders, who use it to inform regular meetings with teachers to hold them closely to account. This practice has led to rapid improvements for boys, disadvantaged and the most able pupils in particular. However it could be sharper when analysing the progress of the least able readers and the impact of interventions for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Performance management has been strengthened since the last inspection. This has led to staff taking an active interest in their professional development and researching weaker areas of their teaching so their skills develop quickly.
- The Trust works well in collaboration with Wakefield City Academies Trust to share resources and so it has a larger pool of schools with which to share good practice and ensure that assessments are as accurate as they can be. The school therefore has benefited well from this arrangement.

Governance of the school

- While some governors, including the chair, are new to post, they have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This is due to some high-quality information that is given to them by senior leaders on how well pupils are performing in different subjects.
- Governors have supported the headteacher well in ensuring funding is used to maximum effect and is focused on where it makes most difference: in the classroom.
- The chief executive of the trust has worked well to develop the skills of new governors.
- Development plans are closely scrutinised by governors. Challenging questions are asked in meetings to hold school leaders closely to account.
- Governors take their responsibilities for safeguarding of pupils very seriously, regularly auditing the school's systems and processes to check they are compliant with current requirements.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Policies and procedures for safeguarding are kept up to date with the latest government guidelines.
- Leaders work well with outside agencies to make sure that those pupils who are particularly vulnerable are safe and secure.
- The school makes thorough checks on all staff new to post.
- All staff, including lunchtime supervisors, receive high-quality training on recognising any potential signs of risk and know what to do should they have any concerns.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching has now improved to the point where pupils now make good progress in all subjects. Teachers have good subject knowledge and know their pupils well. This enables them to make sure the work is neither too easy nor too difficult.
- School leaders had identified that teaching assistants had gaps in their understanding of how to teach phonics and literacy. This has been addressed well through high-quality training and mentoring.
- Assessment information is used well to plan lessons and target pupils' weaknesses, making sure that pupils do not fall behind. This has been more successful in mathematics and writing than in reading however, where there is scope for the least able to make faster progress.
- The most able in lessons are stretched well. Pupils told inspectors how teachers would sometimes give them one-to-one support to use a greater range of sentence styles in

their writing or to think of new ways to work out mathematical problems. Teachers have also made sure the most able work independently as much as possible. This helps them to solve problems on their own, for example by looking up information on the walls of the room or researching information in books.

- Teachers question pupils well so that they have to do far more than answer with a single word. This deepens their understanding and makes them think deeply. When pupils struggle to answer, teachers gently prompt them to help them while not giving away the answers.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe and secure in school. They said that bullying when it does occasionally happen, is 'nipped in the bud' quickly by staff. All pupils said that they would feel safe confiding in an adult in school.
- Pupils understand well the potential dangers of the internet, mobile phones and social networking. Police officers have come into school to help pupils understand how to manage risks and how to stay safe when riding a bicycle or walking near water.
- Pupils talked to inspectors about Christian values they learn at school, such as making friends, helping and supporting each other and listening to others' views. They also talked about how they appreciate each other's similarities and differences in relation to faith, background and culture.
- In particular, pupils thought the different languages spoken in the playground enriched and broadened their own experiences. Pupils whose home language was not English talked about how well they had been welcomed into the school community and how well they had been given equal opportunities to succeed.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- In lessons pupils apply themselves well to their work. They present their work neatly and with pride. This is because teachers insist on high standards and have set the bar appropriately high.
- In the playground, which is occasionally a little busy as pupils play football among small groups who wish to chat, pupils behave well and show good manners towards adults and each other.
- The site is litter free and pupils wear their uniform proudly.
- Attendance is broadly average for different groups of pupils. Pupils are punctual to school in the morning.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The results of the 2016 tests showed that Year 6 pupils had made good progress in all subjects, but particularly fast progress in mathematics. In key stage 1, test results also showed strong progress since pupils emerged from the Reception class.
- For pupils currently in Year 6, inspectors found that their progress is accelerating further. None of these pupils reached the highest levels when they were in Year 2 but inspection evidence shows that a good proportion are now reaching the highest levels expected of Year 6.
- In mathematics, pupils in key stage 1 quickly learn to work confidently with numbers, learning the key operations of adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing. Pupils learn their times tables systematically and then progress to solving problems fluently using their mathematics skills as they get older.
- Writing is an area that has improved at a fast pace and this is very apparent in pupils' books. Pupils learn how to spell common words well, use a greater range of punctuation as they progress through the school and use correct grammar both in their speech and writing. Teachers model good writing and speech at all times to pupils.
- Although pupils' progress in reading is still strong, it is the weakest of the three key subjects due to the slower progress being made by the least able pupils. These pupils are not always heard reading aloud every day and the records that are kept of their reading progress lack the necessary sharpness to enable staff to support them to progress at a fast rate.
- However, the most able make fast progress in reading and many read avidly in their own time. Inspectors enjoyed discussing contemporary authors with pupils who showed enthusiasm for literature.
- Across a range of other subjects, pupils make good progress as a result of teachers' good subject knowledge and high-quality teaching from visiting teachers to the school. Music, art and PE have high profile in the school and pupils achieve well in these subjects.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities made good progress in 2016 in both key stages. However, inspection evidence shows that pupils currently in the school could make faster progress. This is because the interventions some are following are not enabling them to reach their potential. Moreover the interventions are not evaluated sharply enough to ensure that they are of maximum benefit to pupils.
- The most able, including the disadvantaged most able pupils make good progress in all subjects. Work is challenging for these pupils and the good feedback these pupils receive on their work constantly pushes them to excel.
- Over time, the progress of disadvantaged pupils has risen in all subjects so that there are diminishing differences between their progress and that of others nationally.

Early years provision

Good

- Standards by the time children move into Year 1 from Reception are broadly in line with those around the country, although the attainment of boys lags slightly behind that of girls. However, it is clear from children's work especially in literacy and numeracy and through the introduction of high-quality provision for two-year-olds that standards are rising.
- Throughout all the early years classes, teaching is strong. Children are introduced to books from the moment they start. They progress to recognising letters and then linking letters to sounds (phonics). During the inspection, children in Reception were reading simple words fluently using techniques they had learned in phonics lessons, and then writing these words in their books.
- The outdoor areas generally support learning well, giving pupils opportunities to read, write and use their mathematics outdoors. However, there is scope to stretch the most able Nursery age pupils by giving them opportunities to collaborate with Reception children outdoors.
- The early years is well managed. Assessments all take place to ensure that the next steps in learning are clear for all children to move them on quickly. Those who do not speak English as their first language learn quickly, and are supported well by adults.
- The curriculum ensures that there are ample opportunities to learn from visitors and from trips out of school. During the inspection, a visiting snowman enthralled children as they asked questions such as 'Will you melt if you stay in the sun?' Such experiences bring learning to life for children.
- Children's behaviour is exemplary because adults set high standards. Shouting out and running is very rare. At lunchtime, inspectors were impressed how well children helped each other and chatted sensibly while eating their meals. These strong behaviours prepare children well for Year 1.
- Parents are well integrated into learning, contributing to assessments where appropriate. 'Stay and play' sessions help parents to understand how to continue learning at home.
- The relatively new provision for two-year-olds provides a good head start to children who quickly learn the basic principles of working together, good manners, how to share and the routines in the setting. Many begin to recognise their name when it is written down and start making friends.

School details

Unique reference number	139279
Local authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	10020992

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	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	502
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gemma Stringer
Headteacher	Faz Islam
Telephone number	01924 303720
Website	www.stmichaelsceacademy.org.uk/
Email address	headteacher@stmichaelsceacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	11–12 March 2015

Information about this school

- The school does not comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish regarding financial arrangements.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- In September 2015, the school opened provision for two year olds. At the time of the inspection, 32 children were enrolled.
- The school is part of the Enhance Academy Trust.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics
- The school has a slightly below average proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, the majority of whom have moderate learning difficulties or have additional speech, language or communication needs.

- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in all classes and in small groups of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. They observed some lessons jointly with school leaders.
- Inspectors spoke to governors, the chief executive of the trust, staff, pupils, parents and senior leaders. Various pupils were heard reading by inspectors.
- Inspectors took account of the 20 responses to the online questionnaire for parents (Parent View) and the school's own survey of parents' views.
- Inspectors scrutinised various documents in school, including those relating to child protection, performance management of teachers, minutes from governing body meetings and achievement information.

Inspection team

Robert Jones, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Linda Clay	Ofsted Inspector
Christine Turner	Ofsted Inspector

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