

St Michael's Church of England High School

St Michael's Road, Crosby L23 7UL

Inspection dates

3–4 October 2017

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
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher and other leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas in need of further improvement.
- Pupils' attainment is above the national average in a range of different subjects. Progress is rapid in many subjects. It has been slower in physical education (PE) and religious studies (RS) and variable in mathematics.
- Pupils who arrive at the school with low levels of prior attainment make good progress in a wide range of subjects.
- Teaching is good overall. However, the quality of teaching is variable. Some lessons do not challenge the most able pupils enough so these pupils do not make enough progress.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported. They make good progress.
- Leaders provide disadvantaged pupils with valuable support. While their progress is still below that of others nationally, it is improving.
- Pupils behave exceptionally well in lessons and during the school day. They are courteous and polite, and are committed to working hard.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe is effective. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong.
- All pupils have access to, and are encouraged to participate in, a wide range of subjects and extra-curricular activities, which enrich their learning experience.
- Leaders have improved pupils' attendance. This is especially true for pupils who are disadvantaged or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Development plans are appropriately focused on priority areas and subject improvement plans are closely linked to support whole-school priorities.
- The governing body plays a vital role in school improvement. Information received from senior leaders is helping governors to raise pupils' achievement further.
- Post 16, students do not always make enough progress across the full range of courses. The progress made by girls and the most able is not as strong as the progress made by these groups nationally.
- St Michael's is a very inclusive school. There is a strong sense of equality. Pupils celebrate diversity and support one another.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by ensuring that senior and middle leaders:
 - reduce the variability between different subjects, so that rates of pupils' progress are consistently above the national average, with a particular focus on mathematics, PE and RS
 - improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
 - continue to narrow the differences in attainment between disadvantaged pupils in the school and others nationally
 - improve the progress made by the most able pupils across the full range of subjects
 - monitor and evaluate the progress of students in the sixth form, in all subjects, so that achievement gaps are closed and all learners make rapid and sustained progress.
- Improve the quality of teaching and eliminate the inconsistencies in learning by ensuring that all teachers:
 - demand more from all pupils
 - make more effective use of questioning to assess pupils' understanding and address misconceptions immediately during lessons
 - provide pupils with opportunities to engage in and be inspired by their learning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The current headteacher joined the school prior to its conversion to academy status. At the time of his appointment, the number of pupils on roll had been declining, the sixth form had been closed and the quality of teaching was weak due to the underperformance of a number of staff. Shortly after his appointment, the previous school was judged to be inadequate by Ofsted. Since that time, a new governing body has been put in place, there has been a high turnover of staff, underperformance has been tackled, leadership throughout the school has been restructured, an inclusive ethos of high expectations has been developed, the sixth form has reopened and standards of achievement and behaviour have steadily improved.
- Leaders and governors are supported by an extremely committed and conscientious staff. They speak very highly of the headteacher and of the vision he has worked with them to create for the school. Together they have developed a forward-looking school which has a good reputation in the community and to which parents want to send their children. Parents are welcomed into school, for example to workshop events, to enable them to have a clearer picture of how their child is learning and how they can best support their child at home. As a result, numbers on roll at the school are rising.
- In recognition of the improvements to St Michael's under the leadership of the current headteacher, Sefton local authority and the Liverpool Diocese have asked him to provide support for other schools to help them raise standards.
- Leaders' strengths are reflected in their accurate view of the strengths and areas for improvement of the school. Improvement plans are accurately targeted and actions are regularly reviewed until weaker aspects are resolved.
- The school provides a culture of ambition for pupils, some of whom arrive at the school with low prior attainment and low self-esteem and lack the confidence that they need to do well. The school supports pupils' emotional needs well, and the vast majority believe that they can succeed.
- The curriculum is constantly evolving to meet the needs of pupils who are currently in the school. Over time, pupils with low and middle prior attainment have made better progress in many subjects than the most able pupils. The amended curriculum and improvements in teaching and learning are leading to better progress for some groups of pupils, including the most able.
- The curriculum gives pupils of all abilities and aptitudes the opportunity to progress to appropriate placements when they leave. The school's records show that in four of the last five years there have been no pupils who have not progressed to education, employment or training.
- There is appropriate breadth and balance to the curriculum, including a good mix of academic and work-related learning options for pupils to choose from. It is supported by a broad range of extra-curricular activities. Parents value teachers' commitment to extra-curricular activities. The curriculum makes strong provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils are well prepared to take their place in modern Britain because pupils are

offered opportunities to learn about democracy and tolerance. The school does not shy away from teaching about potentially contentious issues to help pupils to understand the dangers of extremism.

- Shared values are communicated effectively through form groups, assemblies and most activities. Pupils understand the difference between right and wrong. They willingly take part in activities to support a range of charities. Pupils value the opportunities they have to develop leadership skills and they take their responsibilities seriously.
- The overall quality of subject leadership is strong. Subject leaders are aware of the strengths and areas in need of further development in their areas. Department plans are accurately targeted at areas for improvement and closely aligned to the whole school improvement plan. Where leadership has been less effective, for example in mathematics, PE and RS, appropriate support has been put in place.
- Additional funding to support pupils who join the school with attainment below average is being used to remove the barriers that can stop these pupils from doing well. For example, there has been a drive to improve pupils' reading and writing and their numeracy skills.
- Leaders make effective use of additional funding to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. They have ensured that teaching assistants who support pupils who require additional help have appropriate expertise. As a result, this group of pupils makes good progress.
- The achievement of disadvantaged pupils is steadily improving as leaders have begun to ensure that the pupil premium funding is directed towards their specific needs. Leaders are aware that there is still work to be done in this area to ensure that the gaps between disadvantaged pupils and others nationally are closed completely.
- Overall, teaching and learning are good and the leadership of teaching and learning is strong. Leaders have worked hard to secure accurate and reliable assessment information. Their commitment to ongoing improvement of the quality of teaching and learning was clear during meetings with staff. The school works with a wide range of partners, including the Liverpool Diocese, the Crosby partnership of schools and a Teaching Schools Alliance of the Range School, Formby and Meols Cop School, two local outstanding schools. Subject leaders regularly attend local subject networks and this has supported them in developing schemes of work for the new syllabuses. Strong teaching is evident in a number of subjects, including in English, science and Spanish.
- Leaders manage teachers' performance rigorously and work hard in their endeavour to secure consistency in the quality of teaching. When leaders have concerns about standards being achieved by individual subjects or teachers, they provide high-quality support and challenge.
- As expectations have risen, more of the most able pupils are making better progress. However, leaders have identified that this is still an area for further improvement.
- School leaders have made sure that parents are kept well informed about their children's education. Parents are able to access helpful information about their children's experience at school through the school's website.
- Leaders are aware that outcomes in the sixth form are not yet good. The systems that they have in place to monitor and track the progress of students are not as rigorous as they are in the rest of the school. Information has not been used systematically to

identify and close the gaps that exist in the progress of different groups of students.

Governance of the school

- The governing body was formed when the school converted to academy status. Governors are keen to ensure that their skills are regularly updated and engage in appropriate training. Several have professional backgrounds in the education sector and others have experience in a range of complementary and appropriate professions, including finance and human resources.
- Governors are kept well informed. They commission external reviews of aspects of the school's work and sample the work of the school, through visits to school, discussions with staff, pupils and parents, and scrutiny of documents. This enables them to provide highly effective support and robust challenge to leaders.
- Regular sub-committee meetings take place and governors systematically challenge senior and middle leaders, so that the effective deployment of staff and resources, including special educational needs and/or disabilities and Year 7 catch-up funding, secures good outcomes for pupils.
- Governors are prepared to challenge leaders about variations in outcomes for pupil groups, especially the current need to review progress of the disadvantaged and other pupils and the most able.
- The headteacher and other senior leaders meet with the governors and a diocese/local authority monitoring group every term to discuss the school's progress towards addressing key priorities.
- Governors know the school's context well. They are determined to ensure that all pupils who are educated at St Michael's are supported in becoming confident, self-assured young people who have a clear sense of their rights and responsibilities towards others as well as achieving well academically.
- Governors supported the headteacher in reopening the sixth form. They are committed to providing effective post-16 education for students of all levels of ability and from a wide range of social backgrounds. They are aware that outcomes post 16 are not good enough and this remains a priority area for improvement. So far, they have ensured that all sixth-form students progress from St Michael's with the skills that they need to enable them to be successful in their chosen routes. All students progress to employment, training or higher education when they leave.
- Governors receive accurate information about the performance of the school. They ensure that the performance management process for staff is rigorous and fair and that teachers' pay progression is linked to outcomes for pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's record of safer recruitment checks meets requirements. Staff are trained appropriately and are knowledgeable about the latest guidance in relation to keeping children safe in education. Training has included how to protect pupils from the dangers of extremism and what to teach pupils about e-safety. All staff know what to

do if they have a concern about a pupil.

- Leaders have well-developed systems for monitoring the welfare of any pupil that they are concerned about. This is very effective at making sure that those involved in keeping pupils safe keep a watchful eye on issues, both in and out of school, that are relevant to the safety of individual pupils.
- The school works closely with parents to ensure the safety of pupils who may be classified as being particularly vulnerable.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent and this supports good learning. During the inspection, many pupils told inspectors how much they appreciate the support that they receive from their teachers.
- Teachers use a variety of information about pupils to plan learning activities and resources that meet the needs of individuals, especially those who are low and middle prior attaining pupils. Some of the most effective teaching can be seen in English, science and languages where teachers provide activities that stretch and challenge all, including the most able. Where pupils are appropriately challenged, they make good progress. However, inspectors observed some lessons where pupils were insufficiently challenged, including in mathematics and RS, and, in these lessons, teachers could demand more of their pupils.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan learning in context so that pupils see its relevance. In science, Year 7 pupils learn about organisms found in ponds. A range of interesting activities, and a variety of resources, helped to bring pupils' learning to life.
- Teachers place a strong focus on promoting pupils' literacy skills. They provide lists of key words and encourage pupils to use the correct terminology when responding to questions, both in writing and orally. They insist that pupils correct words that they have misspelled. The school's marking and feedback policy supports the development of pupils' vocabulary and other literacy skills.
- The vast majority of parents are extremely satisfied with the quality of teaching that their children receive. Many parents who responded to the online questionnaire commented positively about the amount of support that children receive from their teachers.
- Teachers use information about pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to plan activities that both challenge and support them to learn well. Overall, they make good progress.
- Teachers promote reading for pupils of all abilities. Pupils are encouraged to read during form time. Pupils whose reading skills are weak on entry to Year 7 receive support to help them improve.
- Teachers often use questioning to encourage deeper thinking and enable pupils to find the answers for themselves. For example, in a Year 7 textiles lesson in which all pupils were working on their own pieces, the teacher was questioning individuals about what they might learn from their mistakes. Pupils were required to think about how they could 'fix a problem' and come up with a solution. The teacher's precise and relentless

questioning enthused pupils to persevere. They were obviously keen to succeed as a result of the climate for learning that the teacher had created. Some teachers do not use effective questioning techniques to assess pupils' understanding and address misconceptions quickly enough.

- Teachers are increasingly using information about disadvantaged pupils to plan activities that both challenge and support them to learn well. However, although it is improving, their progress is still not in line with the progress of other pupils nationally.
- Teachers set homework regularly in accordance with the school's policy.
- Although teaching continues to improve and is mainly good across the school, there are still some inconsistencies left in mathematics, PE and RS. There are also times when pupils are not fully engaged in their learning and when teaching does not inspire them to find things out for themselves.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding and lies at the heart of the school's ethos. Staff reported to inspectors that all decisions are made with the best interests of pupils collectively and individually in mind. All staff take their responsibilities in this respect extremely seriously. The care and consideration given to pupils are evident in every aspect of daily interactions.
- Pupils appreciate the care, consideration and support given to them by adults. In response to this, pupils are committed to doing their best at all times, both academically and in personal interactions. Pupils of all abilities demonstrate resilience in lessons. They persevere when they find things difficult and respond well when teachers explain things in different ways to support their learning.
- Pupils unanimously express that they feel safe in school and parents agree that the school keeps their children safe. Pupils are confident that if problems arise, they know whom to turn to and trust staff to help and support them.
- Pupils discuss and debate things in a considered way, showing respect for others' ideas and points of view. Topics covered in lessons, assemblies, on theme days and in tutor time include anti-bullying, radicalisation, stranger danger and social networking and a range of other topical issues. This equips pupils with the skills and knowledge necessary to keep themselves safe. Sessions have been delivered to parents on how to keep their children safe online. Pupils are also helped to develop an age-appropriate understanding of what constitutes healthy relationships.
- Pupils say that bullying is very rare within the school. Pupils say that they know whom to speak to if they encounter bullying and they are confident that members of staff will resolve any issues effectively.
- The school's work to promote equality is excellent and strengthened by features such as a club to promote sexuality and gender acceptance (SAGA) which is run by the school chaplain.

- Leaders have effectively prioritised the promotion of pupils' physical and emotional well-being. They utilise the support of mentors and external agencies to support vulnerable pupils.
- The school works closely with alternative providers to ensure that pupils in alternative provision are safe and well looked after and that they behave in accordance with St Michael's expectations.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are courteous and polite to visitors, adults and each other. They conduct themselves in an orderly manner around the school. Pupils arrive at school on time and are punctual to their lessons.
- Leaders' and teachers' efforts to secure high standards of behaviour are paying off. School records of incidents of poor behaviour show a declining trend. The number of fixed-term exclusions has decreased over time. Pupils who have been at the school for several years told inspectors that behaviour has improved over time.
- Staff, parents and pupils who responded to questionnaires during the inspection, and those who took part in discussions with inspectors, told us that behaviour in and around school is good. Members of the local community supported this.
- Pupils like coming to school and this is reflected in high levels of attendance. Attendance has improved over time and has been close to the national average for the past three years. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has also improved.
- The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school is slightly higher than the national average. This is attributable to a small number of disadvantaged pupils, and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, who are frequently absent from school. Leaders are working hard to address this.
- In the vast majority of lessons, pupils show very positive attitudes to their learning. Pupils arrive ready to take part in the activities that teachers set. They respect and listen to one another and work well together.
- On the occasions when teaching does not fully engage pupils in their learning, pupils' concentration wanes. However, pupils rarely exhibit behaviour which disrupts learning for others.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils make good progress at St Michael's. Their progress in English has been consistently strong over the past three years. Their progress in mathematics has been more variable but is improving.
- Overall, pupils' GCSE grades in English have been above national average for the past three years. In mathematics, although they dipped to below national average in 2016, over time they have been broadly in line with the national average. Unvalidated outcomes for 2017 show a similar picture.

- Pupils make good progress and attain highly in a range of different subjects. Progress is strong in Spanish, core and separate sciences, textiles, resistant materials and art.
- Leaders are working to improve subjects where pupils' progress has not been good enough or where there has been variability, for example in mathematics, PE and RS. Leaders' efforts to improve outcomes have been underpinned by the school's positive and ambitious ethos, which has instilled within pupils a tangible commitment to doing their best. While outcomes in these subjects have not been consistently good, they are improving.
- An unusually high number of pupils have joined the school at different points during recent academic years. Many of these pupils have been vulnerable and have joined the school after periods of disruption to their education. The school provides intensive support for these new arrivals and most have made good progress between starting the school and finishing Year 11.
- In 2016, disadvantaged pupils' progress was slower than that of other pupils nationally. While their progress improved in 2017, there was still a gap between the progress made by this group of pupils and others nationally. The school's current assessment information suggests that disadvantaged pupils' progress, while not yet consistently good, is steadily improving.
- The progress of the many pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is good across a wide range of subjects as a result of the careful planning that goes into meeting their specific needs by their teachers and other adults.
- The most able pupils have not been making the same progress as similar pupils nationally. Work has not been sufficiently demanding for these pupils in some lessons, so they have not made enough progress. The school's current assessment information shows that they are now achieving higher standards in many subjects. For example, as a result of more pupils successfully completing separate sciences at GCSE level in 2016/17, there is a large cohort of students in the current Year 12 studying A-level sciences.
- Currently, pupils select their key stage 4 options in Year 8. The number of pupils who have studied the English Baccalaureate has been lower than the national average. Changes to the courses that pupils can study, alongside improvements in teaching, are leading to an increasing proportion of pupils who achieve the English Baccalaureate.
- The high proportion of pupils who arrive in Year 7 with very low-level skills in literacy and in numeracy receive intensive and wide-ranging additional support. This enables them to make good progress and to achieve success.
- Pupils benefit from extensive careers guidance. They receive valuable information about the different options available to them when they leave school and have individual meetings with a careers adviser. As a result of this work, and the wider efforts of the school, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
- Leaders work in close partnership with alternative providers who work with the small number of pupils that are educated off-site. As a result, these pupils are well cared for, gain relevant qualifications and go on to meaningful next steps.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- Leaders have a clear vision for the sixth form at St Michael's and high aspirations for post-16 students. They are aware that the improvements that they have made in the rest of the school, which have resulted in good teaching and outcomes for pupils in Years 7 to 11, have not resulted in consistently good outcomes in the sixth form.
- The sixth form opened in 2012 and offers a range of academic and vocational courses. Until recently, numbers of students opting to stay on or join the sixth form have been low. In September 2017, as a result of improved outcomes in Year 11, numbers in the sixth form rose and more students opted to study academic courses alongside the popular and successful vocational courses.
- Over time, the average level of attainment of students embarking on academic courses has been below the national average and there has been a marked difference in the amount of progress that students have made on academic and vocational courses. This is changing. In 2017, unvalidated data shows that half of the pupils who studied A-level mathematics achieved a grade A and, in the current Year 12, almost 30 students are studying A-level science subjects.
- The quality of teaching in the sixth form is not yet consistently good. Teachers' subject knowledge is secure but not all teachers have appropriate expectations of what students can achieve. Therefore, students do not consistently complete work that challenges them to make the fastest possible progress from their relative starting points. The gaps between the progress made by female students and the most able, when compared with others nationally, have not yet closed.
- Rates of attendance have improved over time and are in line with the rest of the school. The proportion of students completing their studies compares favourably to national averages.
- Students speak positively about their experience in the sixth form. They value the personalised support that members of staff give them. Students also value the careers advice that they receive and past students have advanced to a range of appropriate destinations.
- Students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are provided with high-quality personal and academic support. They are enabled to succeed and progress to higher education, training or apprenticeships.
- A very small number of students enter the sixth form without attaining at least a standard pass in English and/or mathematics. These students receive appropriate teaching and support. The success rates when these students retake these examinations are above national figures.
- The sixth form meets the requirements for 16 to 19 study programmes, including appropriate opportunities for students to gain work experience and participate in enrichment activities.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders provide students with opportunities and experiences that enable them to develop a wide range of skills. This includes a strong personal, social, health

and citizenship education programme, 'Learning for Life'. Students participate in relevant work experience and have access to a well-rounded enrichment programme.

- Students are proud of the sixth form. They choose to stay at St Michael's because of their positive experiences in Years 7 to 11. Students value the support that they receive from their teachers and other adults. Sixth-form students are good role models for younger pupils, say that they want to give something back to the school and willingly take on additional responsibilities and provide support for younger pupils.

School details

Unique reference number	141338
Local authority	Sefton
Inspection number	10036592

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy convertor sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	685
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	68
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Mrs Christine Roberts
Headteacher	Dr Simon Hulme
Telephone number	01519 246778
Website	www.stmichaelshigh.com
Email address	headteacher@stmichaelshigh.com
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- St Michael's Church of England High School is a smaller than average-sized secondary school. In November 2014 the school converted to academy status, sponsored by the Diocese of Liverpool.
- The school has undergone a staff restructuring programme in recent years and there have been a number of staffing changes.
- Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is small. The school has a higher proportion of boys than most schools.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well above average. A significant number of

pupils are supported by the Year 7 catch-up premium.

- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average. The proportion with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.
- A small number of pupils are taught in off-site alternative provision including Alder Hey children's hospital and Harmonise.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of information about its use of the additional catch-up funding on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in 34 lessons. Eight lessons were jointly observed with the school's senior leaders.
- Discussions took place with school staff, members of the governing body, trustees and parents.
- The inspectors met with three groups of pupils. They also observed form time and an assembly and talked with pupils informally at breaks and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors listened to pupils in Year 8 read their chosen books. They also listened to pupils of different ages reading in lessons.
- A broad range of evidence was taken into consideration. This included: the school's own analysis of its strengths and weaknesses; planning and monitoring documentation; work in pupils' books; records relating to attendance and behaviour; and the school's information on pupils' current attainment and progress in a range of different subjects.
- Inspectors took into account the 58 responses submitted by parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including the 56 free-text responses. They also reviewed the school's own parental, pupil and staff surveys and took into consideration the 23 responses to an online survey taken by pupils and the 48 responses to an online survey taken by staff.
- The school's child protection and safeguarding procedures were scrutinised.
- A review of the school's website was made to confirm whether it met the requirements on the publication of required information.

Inspection team

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