

St Michael's C of E Primary Academy, Handsworth

Piers Road, Handsworth, Birmingham, West Midlands B21 0UX

Inspection dates

22 to 23 January 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils did not make enough progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2, up to 2018, including those for whom English is an additional language.
- Too few pupils are working in greater depth or at a high standard in reading, writing and mathematics by Year 6.
- There is insufficient coverage of some subjects on the curriculum, including music and modern foreign languages in key stage 2.
- The interim executive board that has replaced the governing body has only been in place for a short time.
- Middle leaders do not have enough time to fulfil all of their roles.
- Teaching and learning have not been consistently good over time, particularly in key stage 1, where assessment is not yet accurate enough.
- The extent to which teaching meets pupils' different starting points varies. Feedback to pupils is not consistently in line with the school's policy.
- Attitudes to learning are not consistently good. There are some incidents of low-level disruption in several classes, particularly where low-attaining pupils find the work too hard.

The school has the following strengths

- Leadership and provision in early years is effective, enabling children to make good progress from their very low starting points, including those for whom English is an additional language.
- Senior leaders have secured stability in the teaching staff, particularly in key stage 2.
- The work of the trust has been effective in providing support to senior leaders and implementing changes to governance to secure improvements.
- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 in 2018 rose significantly compared to the previous year.
- Pupils' behaviour and rates of attendance are improving rapidly.
- The majority of parents and pupils spoken to were highly positive about the improvements secured and the welcoming ethos of the school.
- Safeguarding is effective.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership, management and governance by ensuring that:
 - senior leaders take a greater oversight of the curriculum provision so that there is greater planning for progression of skills and knowledge across each key stage and in each subject
 - pupils in key stage 2 study a modern foreign language
 - pupils have sufficient time to study a wider range of subjects, including music
 - there is a wider distribution of leadership roles so that middle leaders have sufficient time to fulfil their roles
 - the interim executive board ensures that all policies are up to date and are published on the school's website.
- Improve outcomes by ensuring that:
 - the progress of pupils in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2, including those learning English as an additional language, at least matches that of all pupils nationally
 - a greater proportion of pupils are working in greater depth or at a higher standard in reading, writing and mathematics by Year 6.
 - pupils in key stage 1 have more opportunities for extended writing.
- Improve teaching and learning by ensuring that:
 - teaching in key stage 1 enables pupils' learning to build on the good start they make in early years
 - teacher assessment is accurate in each year group in key stage 1
 - there is sufficient stretch and challenge for most-able pupils
 - work set for low-attaining pupils is appropriately set to take account of their starting points
 - feedback is consistently in line with the school's policy and enables pupils to know how they can improve their work
 - teachers are well trained to meet the different needs of pupils learning English as an additional language.
- Improve behaviour by ensuring that:
 - low-level disruption, especially of low-attaining pupils, is minimised by ensuring that those teaching and supporting them have adapted work appropriately to ensure their engagement and interest
 - teachers and additional adults are consistent in the use of sanctions and rewards for behaviour
 - all reported incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively to prevent repetition.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The school fell into rapid decline very soon after the last inspection, which led to a sharp decline in progress and standards in key stage 2 up to 2017. The new trust has taken swift and effective action to secure new, stable, senior leadership and is providing effective support for them. They have also taken action to disband the governing body, but it is too soon to evaluate the impact of the new interim executive board which has replaced it.
- Since the headteacher and, more recently, deputy headteacher were appointed, there have been significant improvements from a very low starting point. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of year 6 improved in 2018, as leaders secured a more stable teaching staff. Parents and pupils spoken to all reported that behaviour is much improved, although some well-founded concerns still remain. The rate of attendance, which has been a whole-school key priority, is rising rapidly for all groups of pupils, including for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils. Senior leaders have demonstrated that they have the capacity to make further improvements.
- Leaders know that there is still much to do through their accurate identification of strengths and weaknesses in the school. Progress and standards are still not high enough by the end of Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics. Teaching is not yet good enough in key stage 1.
- Senior leaders do not take sufficient, overall lead for the curriculum and planning for progression in subjects across key stages. As a result, too much curriculum planning is left to individual teachers. This leads to some strengths in English, mathematics, geography, history and science, but insufficient coverage in other subjects, including music and modern foreign languages, which are not taught at all in key stage 2.
- Leaders have successfully addressed most of the previously identified inaccurate and overgenerous teacher assessments, although some still persist in key stage 1. A new system of tracking progress by year and pupil group has enabled leaders to identify where progress is strong and where further improvement and support are required. Leaders hold individual teachers to account through regular pupils' progress meetings.
- Support for individual teachers has led to improvements in teaching and pupil progress. Previously identified inadequate teaching has been eradicated. Leaders have now secured a more stable teaching staff in key stage 2 after a period of high staff turnover and absence.
- There is an unequal distribution of leadership responsibilities. This leads to some middle leaders not having sufficient time and capacity to carry out all their roles effectively enough, especially where they have numerous roles.
- The majority of parents spoken to at the gate were very positive about the school. In particular, they commended the impact of the senior leaders on the ethos and welcoming environment of the school.

- Parents also said they liked the diverse nature of the school. They confirmed that senior leaders are highly visible and accessible to parents whenever they have concerns.
- Leadership and training for teachers on English as an additional language are underdeveloped. As a result, those pupils needing to learn English make less progress than other pupils nationally by the time they leave school.
- There is now secure leadership for the pupil premium funding, which is evaluated thoroughly. There have been improvements in outcomes for disadvantaged pupils as a result of actions taken by leaders to diminish the difference in progress with other pupils nationally.
- There is limited capacity for leadership of special educational needs. Progress of pupils with SEND is variable, with some doing well and others not making enough progress. Some effective support is in place, but the impact of additional funding has not yet been evaluated by the newly established interim executive board.
- The physical education (PE) and sport premium is deployed effectively to ensure that pupils have access to a number of different healthy activities, including swimming, football and dance. All pupils in key stage 2 now have access to swimming lessons, in a drive to raise the previously low percentage of pupils leaving school who could swim at least 25 metres.
- Leaders promote British values to ensure that there is a strong culture of respect for the diversity of the school and knowledge of pupils' different faith backgrounds. Pupils' cultural development is more limited because of the mixed opportunities that pupils have through the curriculum. Pupils spoken to said that they wanted more trips and visits and an opportunity to learn a new language, such as French or Spanish.

Governance of the school

- The newly established interim executive board has not been in place long enough to demonstrate its impact, but has put in place a suitable programme, in partnership with the trust, to secure additional support and challenge for the school. Newly appointed members of the board are highly skilled and knowledgeable in school improvement, and they have an accurate view of the school's strengths and of further improvements required. They have ensured that the school's designated leaders meet their requirements for ensuring the safety of pupils in the school. They have put in place procedures to ensure the safe recruitment of staff. Although the board has not yet met under the newly appointed chair, they have received detailed information about the current progress of pupils. Consequently, they know where pupils are doing well and where they are not. They are also aware of where there are ongoing concerns about the behaviour of some pupils.
- Members of the board have not yet evaluated the impact of SEND funding, nor have they ensured that all the policies that were out of date have been updated, such as the accessibility and equality plans. They have not yet ensured that the website meets the requirements set by the Department for Education (DfE) on what the school should publish. This includes information on the curriculum, SEND, equality and accessibility.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Designated leaders carry out their roles diligently and conscientiously to make sure that pupils are safe in school and are prepared to keep themselves safe outside of school. They are well trained for their roles, including on the 'Prevent' duty, and they keep up to date with the latest guidance and policies from the DfE.
- Staff know what to do should a safeguarding incident arise, although these incidents are rare.
- Leaders engage well with external agencies, including the local authority, and are ready to seek advice whenever needed. Any concerns are followed up rapidly, reported fully and recorded securely.
- The large majority of pupils spoken to said that they felt safe. However, a small minority of pupils and parents said that there are some incidents of bullying, not all of which have yet been fully resolved. Most pupils said they feel confident in reporting incidents. The large majority said that, where incidents are reported, they are dealt with well by staff. Pupils said that bullying is being addressed through special assemblies and in the curriculum. This included cyberbullying, and pupils said that they knew what to do should they experience it. They also knew how to keep themselves safe on social media, on the road and at fireworks night.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching, particularly in key stage 1, is not yet good. There are too many instances where teaching is not planned sufficiently to meet the range of pupils' different starting points and abilities. Where all pupils in a class have a task of the same level of difficulty, some low-attaining pupils become disengaged and switch off. Teachers and additional adults then spend time trying to keep them on task rather than modifying work to ensure that they can access it. Where extension tasks are not sufficiently challenging, most-able pupils are not fully stretched and so a ceiling is placed on what they can achieve.
- Teacher assessment is not yet fully accurate in each year group in key stage 1. The school information indicating that almost all pupils in key stage 1 have made what the school regards as expected progress is not borne out in pupils' books. Elsewhere, in other key stages, assessment is accurate.
- There are still some inconsistencies in how teachers and additional adults manage behaviour, especially where the regular teacher is not taking the class and expectations of behaviour sometimes fall.
- Teachers do not consistently ensure that pupils have access to a full range of subjects in key stage 2. Pupils spend considerable time on English, mathematics, science, geography and history, but there is little coverage of some other subjects. For example, art and music are not systematically taught. The breadth of the curriculum is more limited in key stage 1.
- Teaching is improving in key stage 2, where a stable teaching team is in place. Where

leaders have provided training and support, it has led to rapid improvements.

- Work seen by inspectors in pupils' books indicates that in key stage 2 there are good examples of teachers planning work in English and mathematics that enables pupils from different starting points to make good progress. Strong teaching in Year 6, for example, ensures that pupils are progressing well.
- Teachers have not been sufficiently trained on meeting the full range of needs of pupils for whom English is an additional language. Effective activities are in place to support those pupils new to English, but there are insufficient opportunities to stretch those more advanced and developing bilingual learners.
- Additional support for low-attaining pupils and those with SEND is variable. At times, it is effective in moving pupils on with their learning, but elsewhere it is more about keeping pupils focused on getting through the task.
- The extent to which pupils are taught well to read fluently in key stage 1, using the phonics skills they acquired in early years, is variable. Pupils are taught in age-appropriate phases. At its best, there is effective modelling, sounding and blending, but this is not achieved consistently well in all groups. There are opportunities to develop wider reading across the curriculum in some subject areas, including history and religious education.
- Teaching of writing in key stage 2 enables pupils to write in a range of styles and genres, including diary, biography, factual report, stories and balanced argument. In some curriculum areas, such as history, this is reinforced, for example in work on the Second World War and biographies of historical figures such as Martin Luther King. There is a shortage of sustained writing opportunities in key stage 1, however.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- The large majority of pupils said that they felt safe in school, and this was confirmed by most parents spoken to. There was a small minority of parents and pupils, however, who expressed well-founded concerns around bullying, including cyberbullying. Most said that they were confident to speak to adults and that leaders dealt with incidents well. However, some said that they had either reported incidents which were still happening or were afraid to report it.
- Most pupils spoken to said that they enjoy school, and this was confirmed by parents.
- Respect and tolerance for pupils from different backgrounds is a strength of the school. Pupils from different minority ethnic and faith backgrounds work well together. Any bullying incidents that do occur are not driven by race or faith prejudice.
- The school places a strong emphasis on securing the emotional well-being of pupils and on support for families. Pupils are well informed about the next steps in their education.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Although pupils and parents reported that behaviour has much improved, there are still some incidents of low-level disruption in a number of classes. Pupils reported that behaviour is 'terrible' when cover teachers take classes. Inspectors did not see evidence of this during the inspection as most pupils generally conducted themselves well in lessons and around the school.
- However, there were well founded concerns expressed by pupils around recent misbehaviour in one year group which has led to a small number of fixed-term exclusions. The behaviour of pupils in key stage 1 is not consistently good inside classes and around the school.
- Low-level disruption seen by inspectors was typically connected to the work that pupils were set. Where it was too difficult, some switched off and became easily distracted.
- Pupils were able to explain the red and yellow card system and the consequences of poor behaviour. However, they did not think cards were consistently applied fairly as they were 'handed out like sweets' in one class.
- There is generally a calm atmosphere around the school, and pupils use the stairs sensibly most of the time.
- The rate of pupils' attendance is improving rapidly for all groups of pupils. Over time, the rate of persistent absence has fallen sharply. Leaders are highly focused on improving attendance. Rewards, for example a bicycle for pupils and supermarket vouchers for parents, are having a positive impact on more regular attendance. Leaders monitor trends and patterns closely, including by pupil group.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Although they improved in 2018, pupils' progress and standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 were below average compared to other pupils nationally, and this includes disadvantaged pupils, those with SEND and pupils for whom English is an additional language. Leaders have uncovered evidence that previous inaccurate assessments had exaggerated their outcomes for when this cohort was in key stage 1, four years previously.
- Work seen by inspectors in pupils' books indicates that, since September 2018, pupils in most year groups have made accelerated progress in key stage 2 but not in key stage 1. This is linked to the variability in the quality of teaching in key stage 1.
- Pupils in Year 6 are making more sustained progress where they are working in three small groups for English and mathematics. However, there are large gaps in their topic books, indicating that a disproportionate amount of their time is being spent on English and mathematics in order to secure higher standards in these subjects.
- A small number of pupils in Year 6 are already working in greater depth or at a high standard in English, mathematics and writing combined. No pupil achieved this in the previous three years up to 2018.

- Leaders' analysis of standards and progress for different groups of pupils currently in school indicates that there is again variability, depending on the quality of teaching and additional support. Consequently, there is a mixed picture from year-to-year on the current progress of pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in phonics at the end of Years 1 and 2 was below the national average in 2018. A high proportion of pupils whose first language was not English did not achieve the standard because they arrived late in the start of their schooling in the UK. As a result, they were at the early stage of learning English.

Early years provision

Good

- The proportion of children achieving the early learning goals is below average, although children make good progress from their very low starting points as a result of effective teaching.
- Leadership is strong. Arrangements for transition from the 13 nursery providers are highly effective and engage new parents effectively. The parents of Reception children to whom inspectors spoke were full of praise for the provision. They especially appreciated the way that children are learning so rapidly, including those who spoke no English when they first enrolled but who are now speaking English fluently.
- Leaders have ensured that assessment is now accurate, having identified inaccurate outcomes in previous years. Checks are made with other schools to ensure the accuracy of their assessments.
- During free flow activities, both inside and outdoors, children are engaged in appropriate child-initiated activities. Curriculum areas are clearly set out to ensure that children have a wide range of experiences. Additional adults ask appropriate questions to move children on with their learning.
- Children quickly learn suitable behaviour routines and work well with children from different backgrounds.
- Teaching of phonics is effective, which ensures that pupils get off to a good start in developing their reading skills. Teachers and additional adults provide effective modelling for pupils.
- By the time they leave Reception, the majority of children are well prepared for key stage 1.

School details

Unique reference number	138433
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10058544

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 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	197
Appropriate authority	Interim executive board
Chair	Mrs Samantha Cosgrove
Headteacher	Mrs Rachel Sale
Telephone number	0121 554 7818
Website	www.stmich21.bham.sch.uk
Email address	enquiry@stmich21.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	1 to 2 July 2014

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- There is a very high rate of mobility. Fewer than half of the pupils currently in Year 6 had assessment information for the end of key stage 1 because many were new arrivals to schools in the United Kingdom.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well above average.
- Almost all pupils are from minority ethnic groups.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is very high.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is just below average and has fallen significantly over the last four years
- The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan is above average.
- The school was previously a stand-alone academy supported by an outstanding school.

In September 2017, it became one of six schools in the newly established Birmingham Diocesan Academies Trust. The trust disbanded the governing body in September 2018 and replaced it with an interim executive board overseen by the trust. The current chair was appointed in December 2018. At the time of the inspection visit, the board had not met since her appointment.

- The headteacher was appointed in April 2018, having previously been the acting headteacher since November 2017.
- The trust appointed a strategic leader from a local school for half a week from January 2018 to support the then acting headteacher. This support was still in place at the time of the inspection visit.
- The deputy headteacher was appointed in September 2018.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed nine lessons or parts of lessons, of which, all were jointly observed with the headteacher or a representative from the trust. In addition, inspectors made other short visits to lessons and other activities.
- Inspectors heard pupils read during lessons, and scrutinised their written work in English, mathematics and other subjects.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, other leaders and members of staff, and spoke to two groups of pupils. Inspectors met the chair of the interim executive board, the chief executive officer of the trust and the strategic lead headteacher.
- There were too few responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the Parent View free-text service to take account of them. Inspectors spoke to 17 parents at the school gate. There were also too few responses to the staff survey and no responses to the pupils' survey.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised a number of documents, including those relating to the school's self-evaluation, improvement plans and the school's information on pupils' recent attainment and progress.
- Inspectors considered behaviour and attendance information and policies and procedures relating to SEND, pupil premium funding, the PE and sport premium, safeguarding and child protection.

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

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