

Inspection of St Michael's Catholic Academy

Beamish Road, Billingham TS23 3DX

Inspection dates:

14 and 15 September 2022

Overall effectiveness

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

St Michael's Catholic Academy is a caring and welcoming school. The religious ethos is evident throughout the school. Leaders seek to develop in pupils the school virtues, such as respect and compassion. Pupils are polite and courteous.

There are harmonious relationships between staff and pupils. As a result, pupils feel safe and looked after. They know who to turn to if they need help and support.

Most pupils do not think bullying happens often, but say that if it does, it is dealt with quickly. The anti-bullying initiative has a large number of pupil volunteers that work with the pupil leadership team on positive campaigns in the school. As a result, anti-bullying has a high profile in the school.

Pupils are well behaved around the school. Lessons are calm and orderly. This creates a positive environment in the school. Staff demonstrate a consistent approach to managing routines. There are a small number of pupils who do not behave as well as expected. Leaders recognise this and have strategies in place to improve the behaviour of these pupils.

Pupils benefit from a strong personal development curriculum. They take part in a range of extra-curricular activities to develop their interests, for example the musical theatre club and debating. Pupils also have opportunities to develop leadership qualities through recycling initiatives and projects about the importance of healthy relationships.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have created well-designed curriculum plans. These plans identify the most important content that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), need to know and in what order it is to be taught. This, in part, ensures that pupils can recall prior learning and are well prepared for future learning. For example, in English, Year 7 pupils are introduced to the tragedy genre through studying the text 'Romeo and Juliet'. The knowledge of this genre is then built on effectively in subsequent years.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They present information clearly. The majority of teachers plan appropriate activities in lessons to enable pupils to gain an understanding of important content. For example, recall and retrieval tasks are used appropriately to check pupils' knowledge. Nearly all teachers question pupils well. However, there are still times when assessment is not precise enough. As a result, gaps in pupils' knowledge are not fully identified and pupils' misconceptions develop.

Teachers adapt lessons to ensure that pupils with SEND follow the same learning as their peers. In some subjects, such as science and history, teachers consider the detailed pupil information within 'learner profiles' effectively to help make the curriculum more accessible. New leaders have identified how systems to record

information about pupils with SEND could be improved further. Leaders are aware that this is necessary to ensure that pupils' learning needs are fully understood by all staff.

Pupils are well informed and prepared for their next steps in education, employment or training. Year 10 pupils told inspectors that they enjoyed the experience of 'College Discovery Week'. They say that this supports their future post-16 applications to colleges. Pupils' personal development is important to school leaders. They have ensured that a comprehensive curriculum is in place that details learning in areas such as the dangers of knife crime, risks associated with social media and mental health.

Leaders place a priority on supporting the school's weakest readers. Recently, leaders have developed plans relating to staff training in phonics. At the time of the inspection, phonics training had not been implemented with all the relevant staff. There is more work to do to support the weakest readers.

Pupils behave well. Clear policies and expectations for behaviour are well understood by teachers and pupils. As a result, pupils behave with respect and courtesy towards each other. Effective systems and procedures exist to monitor and evaluate pupil attendance. Most pupils attend school regularly.

Leaders, including governors and trustees, have a clear vision for the school. They know what to do to improve the school further. Effective plans have been developed to inform their actions. Governors know the school well and fulfil their statutory duties. They are knowledgeable about the school's priorities and hold leaders to account. Staff told inspectors that leaders help them manage their workload effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have a good understanding of the local community and the safeguarding risks that pupils may face. The personal development curriculum ensures that pupils are taught about these dangers and risks.

Staff are well trained to identify and report on any safeguarding concerns they may have. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding are knowledgeable. They make sure that they follow up referrals to external agencies swiftly and case file notes are comprehensive, supporting pupils' welfare well.

The strong relationships developed between the school and external agencies mean that pupils and families receive timely and appropriate levels of support if it is needed.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- While there are clear curriculum plans, some teachers do not implement the curriculum consistently well or check on what pupils know effectively. As a result, some pupils do not gain strong knowledge of the most important curriculum content. Leaders should ensure that all teachers use assessment consistently and with purpose so that they are clear on what pupils know and remember, adapting future learning to meet each pupil's needs.
- Plans to support the weakest readers are in place but are in their infancy. Leaders must ensure that the reading plans are fully implemented, and that relevant staff receive training swiftly. This will support the weakest readers to confidently access the curriculum.
- Leaders do not sufficiently evaluate the information they collect or analyse management information in enough detail. There is more to do to ensure that staff are given the information they need to improve their work. Senior leaders should ensure that leaders at all levels have the right support to analyse, evaluate and share the information available effectively.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	139656
Local authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	10240460
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1038
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Maria Matthews
Principal	Helen Keough
Website	www.stmichaels.bhcet.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	7 and 8 June 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Bishop Hogarth Catholic Education Trust.
- The school is an average-sized secondary school.
- The majority of pupils at the school are White British.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide students in Years 8 to 11 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, curriculum leaders and other staff.
- Inspectors met with governors, the chief executive officer and the chair of the board of trustees.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science, history and mathematics. For each deep dive, inspectors met with curriculum leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding lead to discuss the arrangements in place to safeguard all members of the school community. Inspectors scrutinised the checks that leaders make on the suitability of staff, and other safeguarding records.
- Inspectors looked at staff's, parents' and pupils' responses to Ofsted's surveys.

Inspection team

Julian Appleyard, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Adam Ryder	Ofsted Inspector
Gordon Watts	Ofsted Inspector
Michelle Farr	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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