

Inspection of St Michael's Catholic Grammar School

Nether Street, North Finchley, London N12 7NJ

Inspection dates: 9 and 10 November 2022

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
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The quality of education	Outstanding
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Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
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Personal development	Outstanding
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Leadership and management	Outstanding
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Sixth-form provision	Outstanding
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Previous inspection grade	Outstanding
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Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged as outstanding at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected since February 2008.

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders have very high expectations of pupils. Pupils embrace these alongside the school aim of 'academic curiosity'. For example, pupils voluntarily investigated the Radical Design movement as preparation for a design and technology module.

Pupils feel safe and happy. They know that staff will help them if they need support. Pupil behaviour is exemplary. They get on very well with each other. Bullying is rare and if it does occur it is dealt with quickly. Older pupils support younger pupils. For example, they act as mentors for new pupils and as 'transport buddies' for the journey to and from school.

Of particular note is the ethos created by leaders, which encourages pupils to take action on issues they care about. For example, leading campaigns in school about male mental health and violence against women. Pupils also take practical steps to change things, such as creating a Peace Garden as a calm space to support the mental health of others.

Pupils take part in a wide range of visits locally and overseas. Leaders ensure that all pupils are able to take part in these visits. On a recent visit to France, pupils were able to practise their language skills and to learn about daily life in France.

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

Leaders have created a curriculum that makes pupils think hard. They have identified the important knowledge pupils need to learn. Leaders have ensured that what pupils learn goes beyond what is expected by the national curriculum. For example, pupils in key stage 3 study two modern foreign languages and Latin.

Leaders have thought carefully about the order in which they teach subject content. They revisit content often to help pupils remember what they have learned before. This ensures that over time pupils build up their knowledge. Where similar knowledge is taught in two subjects, leaders have ensured it is taught in the same way. For example, using equations is taught in the same way in mathematics as in chemistry.

Teachers explain ideas clearly. They are enthusiastic experts in their subjects. This inspires pupils to want to learn more. Teachers ask questions that encourage pupils to think deeply about what they have just learned. Pupils listen respectfully to each other when they discuss their responses.

Teachers frequently check that pupils understand what they have been taught before teaching new knowledge. Pupils feel confident to ask for help when they need it. Regular assessment identifies pupils who need extra support. Staff then provide extra help until it is no longer needed.

Leaders have ensured that teachers adapt their approach for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teachers use the clearly thought-out strategies that are set out for each pupil. This is highly effective in ensuring that pupils with SEND reach the same goals as their peers.

Weaker readers receive targeted support. Reading is promoted in all subjects. For example, in economics, pupils read specialist magazines and books and discuss these in lessons.

Pupils' work is of a very high quality. Pupils can explain how previous learning helps them make progress. For example, pupils in English described how they were analysing a play using knowledge about Shakespeare they had previously learned.

Low-level disruption in lessons is very rare. Pupils are highly motivated to learn. They are resilient. When tasks are difficult pupils stick at them.

Personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) is expertly planned. As part of this, leaders consult pupils to ensure their needs are met. Pupils learn about important topics. These include healthy relationships, mental health and drugs. Pupils develop their understanding of equalities and inclusion very well. For example, student council members are working with former pupils and staff to help leaders develop the curriculum.

Leaders plan a wide range of extra-curricular clubs, such as netball, jazz band and chemistry clubs. Pupils value these clubs because the activities are interesting. Pupils explained how a well organised Year 7 dance club helped them make friends and become happier. Sixth-form students play an active role in the life of the school. They lead charity events, some clubs and the student council.

Leaders have thought carefully about careers education. Pupils learn about higher education and apprenticeships. There are frequent trips and events, where pupils find out about different careers, for example finance and careers in the National Health Service. Work experience in Year 10 is matched to pupils' career aspirations. This helps pupils select subjects for study in the sixth form in line with their ambitions.

Staff enjoy working at the school. Leaders consider the workload and views of staff. Governors have a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Governors hold leaders to account and carry out their statutory duties.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established a strong safeguarding culture. Staff and governors receive regular safeguarding training. There are clear procedures for staff to report any concerns. Pupils feel safe and know who to talk to if they have a concern.

Leaders ensure that concerns are followed up. They work closely with external agencies to secure help for pupils. Leaders keep detailed records of the actions they take.

Pupils value the support they receive from the school's pastoral staff and counsellors. They learn how to stay safe outside of school, for example, when online or on public transport.

Leaders carry out relevant checks on the suitability of adults working at the school.

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	101361
Local authority	Barnet
Inspection number	10211795
Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	857
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	244
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Alison Gartlan
Headteacher	Michael Stimpson
Website	http://www.st-michaels.barnet.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	10 December 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2010

Information about this school

- St Michael's Catholic Grammar School is a secondary school. The school had its last section 48 inspection in November 2018.
- This school is a selective grammar school for girls. Some boys are admitted to the sixth form.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school currently uses one registered alternative provider.

Information about this inspection

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

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other school leaders, teaching staff and non-teaching staff. Inspectors held a discussion with six members of the governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: design and technology, English, geography and languages. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also visited lessons and discussed the curriculum with subject leaders in a range of other subjects, including history, economics, mathematics, PSHE education and science.
- Inspectors held meetings with school leaders about behaviour, careers education, SEND and sixth form provision.
- Inspectors observed behaviour in lessons and around the school. Inspectors held formal and informal discussions with groups of pupils from different year groups.
- Inspectors spoke with leaders, pupils and staff about the arrangements for safeguarding and reviewed safeguarding records and documentation. Inspectors also checked the single central record of checks made on the suitability of staff.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's pupil survey, responses to the staff survey and responses to the online survey for parents, Parent View.

Inspection team

Gary Phillips, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Heidi Swidenbank	Ofsted Inspector
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Sophie Cavanagh	Ofsted Inspector
Luke Stubbles	His Majesty's Inspector
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