

St Michael's School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	850/6062
Unique Reference Number	116594
Social care URN	SCO12016
Inspection number	322077
Inspection dates	30 April–1 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Elisabeth Linley HMI
Social Care inspector	Brian McQuoid

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

Inspection of social care (welfare) was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005. The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided and to inform the Secretary of State at the DCSF as to the school's continued suitability for registration as an independent school.

This report details whether the school meets the requirements for educational provision and outlines the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

Information about the school

St Michael's School began in 1991 in order to meet the needs and demands of the followers of the Society of St Pius X. The school is a registered charitable trust and its goals reflect those of the Catholic Society to which it belongs, which are the preservation and continuation of the Catholic faith and tradition. The strong Catholic ethos of the school unifies the pupils and the staff. The school aims to instil in its pupils knowledge, virtue and responsibility. There are currently 51 boys and girls on roll, of whom 16 boys are boarders.

Evaluation of the school

The quality of education provided by St Michael's School is good. The school meets most of the regulations for education and very successfully meets its aims. The school makes good provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety. The quality of the boarding is good overall; education and care staff work well together for the benefit of all pupils. Teaching is good and as a result, pupils are helped to make good progress. The curriculum is satisfactory. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are outstanding and contribute very well to their personal development.

Quality of education

The curriculum provided is satisfactory. It is based on the National Curriculum, following all subjects with the exception of information and communication technology (ICT). In accordance with school policy, pupils have access to computers in school; however, this is controlled by the staff and headteacher. Latin is taught from Years 5 – 8 and French is taught in the senior school. The curriculum in the junior school covers the Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. Schemes of work have been developed to cover most subjects and national guidelines are followed to support the planning and teaching of literacy and numeracy. In the teaching of English, there is a strong focus on grammar, comprehension, reading and poetry. Currently, opportunities to write creatively are limited and the

headteacher of the junior school has plans to develop this aspect of the school's work across the curriculum.

In the senior school, schemes of work provide a broad outline for what is to be followed in the different key stages. In Key Stage 4, pupils mainly follow the GCSE syllabus for the subject studied. However, in Key Stage 3, there is a lack of detailed expectations for the different year groups. In addition, the school does not provide for its senior pupils' needs in terms of access to formal careers advice or work experience. For all pupils, junior and senior, the curriculum is enhanced by an interesting range of visits. Additional activities for boarders are also well planned, covering sporting, musical and artistic opportunities. All pupils have the opportunity to attend 'prep' after school, however, there are no after school activities for day pupils.

Teaching and assessment are good overall. In lessons where teaching and learning are good, teachers ask searching questions and encourage pupils to participate fully through discussion and/or practical tasks, which inspire and fire their imagination. All pupils show excellent independent learning skills, but lessons do not always allow these to be fully utilised. This is especially so in the satisfactory lessons.

Teaching resources are generally adequate, although dated in some areas and not always in sufficient quantity. Specialist facilities and resources are enjoyed by the senior boys on the main site. However, this is not the case for the senior girls. For example, the girls do not have access to a science laboratory on their site and the one available for the boys is not timetabled for their use.

Given that there are very small classes in the school, staff know the pupils very well and they adapt lessons to meet their individual needs effectively. This is particularly evident in the support provided for pupils who have English as an additional language or learning difficulties. As a result, pupils make good progress. During lessons it was clear from listening to the teachers' explanations, comments and questioning that they are constantly assessing pupils and have a very good understanding of the levels they are working at. Pupils are also assessed regularly by tests and through past examination papers; these are used effectively to plan for pupils' next steps. However, marking of pupils' work is inconsistent in quality and does not provide pupils with sufficient detail and constructive comment. Similarly, targets are not used to help pupils know what to strive for academically.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils' personal development is a strength of the school. The school's ethos underpins the emphasis given to the pupils' spiritual development. Pupils' commitment to their faith is developed through religious education lessons, school assemblies, prayers and Mass in the school chapel, all of which are fundamental to the everyday work of the school. Pupils are encouraged to be mindful of others, developing tolerance and understanding. They learn about other cultural traditions through the subjects they

study. Although this aspect of the school's work is developing, it is not yet planned consistently throughout the school. Pupils know right from wrong and have a clear understanding of the school's expectations in terms of their behaviour and attitudes, which are outstanding. Very good relationships exist between pupils and staff and between each other. There is a strong sense of community at St Michael's School. Pupils were observed on numerous occasions supporting and encouraging each other to achieve their best. Pupils are mindful of the responsibilities they hold, for example, to care for the building and belongings, and they enjoy being 'crew' and 'team' captains and prefects as they get older. Attendance is good.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The school makes good provision for students' welfare, health and safety. Procedures and policies are in place, for example, to aid the effective dealing with bullying if it should occur. Risk assessments are carried out for visits out of school, and policies and procedures for safeguarding are rigorous. The headteacher is relatively new to the school and, as a result, has yet to complete his child protection training; however, this has been planned. All other staff have received the required training. Pupils report that they feel safe and know that they can approach a member of staff should they need support. Although personal, social, health and citizenship education is not formally taught, pupils report that health and safety issues are covered through discussion with staff.

The school has planned effectively to increase accessibility and will be drawing up a further plan to review the possibility of improving access to both the curriculum and buildings.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school meets the requirements for both education and welfare. The school's recruitment procedures are in accordance with the National Minimum Standards (NMS) and provide appropriate safeguards for the welfare of children. Effective procedures are in place for the recruitment of staff. The school keeps a single central record. All checks are carried out on staff, including a check with the criminal records bureau that they are suitable to work with children.

School's premises and accommodation

The main site of the school is set in a spacious and rural location. On this site the buildings provide a good standard of accommodation for junior aged pupils and for the senior boys. Boarding premises also meet the boys' needs appropriately. On this site there is a large gym, a tennis court and swimming pool. Other specialist facilities are available, for example for science and for design and technology. The site which is used for the education of senior girls is also the home for the oblate sisters. These premises are less well equipped and no specialist facilities are available for pupils' use.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

A wide range of information is available for parents. This includes an informative handbook, prospectus and regular newsletters about the work of the school. Reports on the pupils' progress are sent home twice a term and there are opportunities for parents to discuss their child's progress with staff. However, parents are not made aware that they may request details on the number of staff employed at the school and a summary of their qualifications. Also, that in relation to the preceding academic year, they are not told they can request information about the school's academic performance, including the results of any public exams, and also the number of complaints registered under the formal complaints procedure.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school's procedures for handling complaints meet almost all requirements. However, in respect to NMS for boarders, the complaints procedure does not yet include the contact details for Ofsted.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the curriculum (standard 1) and must:

- establish a curriculum policy set out in writing that is supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work that are implemented effectively (paragraph 1 (2))
- provide appropriate careers guidance for secondary age pupils (paragraph 1 (2)(g)).
- ensure that classroom resources are adequate in quality, quantity and range and they are used effectively for the benefit of all pupils (paragraph 1(3)(f)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

- ensure that written policies to safeguard and promotion of the welfare of pupils at the school are implemented in respect of the headteacher's training (paragraph 3(2)(b)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information for parents, carers and others (standard 6) and must:

- ensure that parents are aware they can request particulars of academic performance during the preceding school year, including the results of public examinations (paragraph 6(2)(i)).
- ensure that parents are aware they can request details of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding year (paragraph 6 (2)(j)).
- ensure that parents are aware of the number of staff employed at the school, including temporary staff, and a summary of their qualifications (paragraph 6 (2)(k)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of procedures for handling complaints (standard 7) and must:

- ensure that the complaints procedure complies with standards 5 of the NMS (paragraph 7(l)).

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- develop the use of setting targets for pupils throughout the school, and improve the consistency of marking to help pupils improve their work and, as a result, the standards they attain.

Evaluation of boarding provision

The quality of boarding at St Michael's is good and the school meets all of the key National Minimum Standards. The school's overall management structure and the strong sense of community that exists within the school contribute effectively to the protection and promotion of pupils' welfare. Clearly-written policies and procedures underpin the school's practice and there is good information provided for boarders and their parents. These are both areas of improvement since the school's previous inspection. There are no outstanding recommendations from the school's previous inspection report.

Boarders feel safe at the school, get on extremely well as a group and are supportive of one another. Overseas pupils are integrated into the boarding community and feel well supported. Bullying is not a problem at the school. All staff except the recently appointed headteacher have received appropriate child protection training and are suitably aware of the relevant reporting procedures.

There is good provision at the school for identifying and addressing the routine health needs of boarding pupils. The school has a good working relationship with the local surgery where boarders are registered, and qualified first aid staff are always available on site. Clear procedures are followed for the management and administration of medication and appropriate records are kept. Boarders are well looked after when ill. Although stored securely, medication is currently not stored in cabinets designed for the purpose and there is no centralisation of recording relating to medication.

There is good provision for ensuring that boarders are able to maintain appropriate contact with their families. A payphone is easily accessible on site, mobile phones are able to be used, e-mail facility is available upon request and the school's fax machine is also available to boarders.

Boarders and staff at the school enjoy mutually respectful relationships. The boys feel fairly treated, they are able to approach staff with concerns or personal problems, and they feel 'listened to'. Formal consultation takes place weekly at meetings between staff and prefects, and a recent survey was carried out to ascertain boarders' views on the food provided by the school. The overall standard of pupil behaviour at the school is excellent. Boarders are permitted to keep their own money and some of the older boarders are allowed off the premises after school and at week ends.

Boarding accommodation at the school is of a good standard with all boys having either their own room or space within a dormitory. The accommodation and facilities provided both afford appropriate levels of privacy and are well suited for the needs of boarding pupils. Boarders have responsibility for maintaining cleanliness within their accommodation and perform the task well. Staff respect the privacy of boarders appropriately, however there are currently no written guidelines for staff in relation to privacy and confidentiality.

Levels of staffing at the school are appropriate and enable the needs of boarders to be well met. Newly appointed staff are well supported and undertake an induction programme which includes guidance on child protection. Communication between staff across the school is good and contributes effectively to the welfare of pupils. After school activities include a cadet group and the use of the school sports hall. The school swimming pool is available during the summer months and there is an organised programme of off- site activities and trips for weekends. There are regular opportunities for boarders to undertake physical activities.

There is good provision for the effective monitoring of matters relating to the welfare of boarders. This includes internal monitoring by the school's headteacher and housemaster, and regular visits by the school's independent persons who talk with the boys and provide a written report to the headteacher.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendations:

- centralise the storage and recording of medication to boarders; include a single book for recording and store medication in cabinets designed for the purpose **(NMS15)**
- draw up guidelines for staff in relation to privacy and confidentiality **(NMS 37)**
- devise procedures for the management and supervision of visitors to the school (NMS 39).

School details

Name of school	St Michael's School		
DCSF number	850/6062		
Unique reference number	116594		
Unique reference number (social care)	SCO12016		
Type of school	Independent		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	29 September 1991		
Age range of pupils	4-18		
Gender of pupils	MI		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 24	Girls: 27	Total: 51
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of boarders	Boys: 16	Girls: 0	Total: 16
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£6150 - £6750		
Annual fees (boarders)	£7500 - £8400		
Address of school	Harts Lane Burghclere Newbury Berkshire RG20 9JW		
Telephone number	01635278137		
Fax number	01635278601		
Email address	fatherssummers@gmail.com		
Headteacher	Father Summers		
Proprietor	Society of St Pius X		
Reporting inspector	Elisabeth Linley HMI		
Social care inspector	Brian McQuoid		
Dates of inspection	30 April–01 May 2008		