

November 2017

On behalf of the Governors, staff and students of St Michael's Church of England High school, I am delighted to publish our recent Ofsted Inspection report.

On Wednesday 1st and Thursday 2nd November, five inspectors observed pupils both in and out of lessons; scrutinised documents and questionnaires; met and talked to a large number of staff and pupils; visited assemblies and held meetings with a wide range of staff, Governors and Local Authority leaders.

It is wonderful to be able to confirm that Ofsted judged St Michaels to be a good and improving school in which pupils "*like and trust their teachers and other adults*" and staff value the "*strong leadership and share its vision for an inclusive school where pupils are cared for and are successful academically*". Most impressively, Ofsted has acknowledged that St Michael's "*work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is OUTSTANDING*".

The report states that, "*The headteacher and senior leaders are relentless in their determination to provide the best possible education for pupils*"; that all staff said that they are "*proud to work at the school and morale is high*" and that pupils "*behave well in lessons and at other times of the day. They are smartly dressed, polite and courteous. They are very proud of their school*".

These are just a few of the very positive comments made by the inspection team, which deemed the quality of the Leadership and Management within the school to be strong:

- ✓ "*Leaders, including governors, know the school well, including its many strengths and few weaknesses. They take effective action to address weaknesses. Consequently, the school continues to improve*
- ✓ "... *the governing body has a good level of knowledge and expertise... Statutory duties are carried out with diligence*
- ✓ "*The headteacher and senior leaders provide strong leadership which is valued by pupils and staff*
- ✓ "*Middle leadership is strong across the school*
- ✓ "*Middle leaders form a committed and hard-working group*
- ✓ "*Subject and pastoral leaders, supported well by senior staff, lead the development of their areas well*".

The curriculum is described as, "*thoughtfully planned*" and it is recognised that it "*contributes well to pupils' academic progress and personal development*". Also, it is pleasing that the "*rich array of opportunities for pupils to lead and contribute to the school and local community*" has been documented, alongside the "*high-quality careers education programme [that] runs throughout the school*".

Teaching, Learning and Assessment were judged to be good: the inspectors noted many strengths in teaching, including planning; levels of challenge; questioning and relationships in classrooms. Teaching is described as "*consistently strong across subjects*" and our teaching assistants were praised for providing "*skilful and well-planned support in lessons*".

Classrooms are seen to be "*calm places of learning*" in which relationships "*are warm and respectful*". It is evident that "*Pupils trust their teachers and value their support and that of their peers. Consequently, pupils are confident learners*".

Ofsted has recorded that the school's work to promote "*Pupils' personal development is OUTSTANDING*". Many aspects of the school's provision led to this judgement, including the following:

- ✓ "*High-quality pastoral care and support for pupils is evident throughout the school. The leadership of /Safeguarding] is strong*
- ✓ "*Members of staff take their responsibility to care for and keep pupils safe very seriously*
- ✓ "*... bullying is very rare and any that does happen is dealt with well by adults. Pupils trust the school's staff to deal with bullying or any other problem they might have*
- ✓ "*[Pupils are keen to do well, they work hard and take pride in their work]*"

The school is described as, "*calm and orderly throughout the school day*". Behaviour was classed as good: during the inspection, as they always do, our magnificent pupils conducted themselves impeccably. They "*behave well in lessons. They listen attentively to their teachers and to each other*" and they "*support and encourage their classmates*". At break-time and lunchtime, the inspectors noted that our children "*behave maturely and show consideration for others*". They are described as, "*confident, mature and articulate young people, very well prepared for life after school*".

The relationships between adults and pupils was recognised as being "*very positive*": "*Pupils demonstrate caring and welcoming attitudes to each other, to staff and to visitors*" and, "*Pupils value the care and support of the school's adults*".

Published data for GCSE results in 2017 does not take into account the 66 upgrades that our students were awarded, following appeals against results. These include 44 increased grades in English and five in maths. Despite this, we were able to demonstrate significant improvements: 65.4% of subjects were above the national average, and 80.8% of subjects were at or above national figures. Geography improved by a staggering 21.4%. Whilst the remaining five subjects have all improved this year (History, by 14.1%), this small number of subjects, including Maths, has failed to reach national levels of attainment and progress since 2014. Consequently, the historical data has resulted in a Requires Improvement judgement for 'Outcomes for Pupils' and we have been tasked to "*Improve outcomes at the end of Year 11 in subjects where pupils' progress has been slow*".

Whilst it is frustrating that historical, published outcomes in a very small number of subjects have compelled this judgement, the report acknowledges that the current "*Strong leadership of mathematics is one of the key reasons that pupils' progress in the subject is improving rapidly*" and as a result, "*pupils currently in the school are making much better progress*". Indeed, the inspection team recognised that current pupils "*are making good progress across most of their subjects*" and that this is because "*New, high-quality, leadership and stable staffing from September 2016 has seen the quality of teaching and pupils' progress improve considerably*".

The report states that, "*Pupils' progress is strong across all subjects in key stage 3*" and that, "*Historic weaknesses in teaching in some subjects have been eliminated*", ensuring that "*Pupils in key stage 3 are now making good progress*".

The lead inspector stated that it was really clear that we are currently a good and improving school. Consequently, the inspection team decided that they would apply the 'exceptional descriptor' that allows Ofsted to judge the 'Overall Effectiveness' of a school to be good if one of the categories requires improvement. They recognised that the "*trajectory [of pupils' outcomes] towards being good is both rapid and secure*". We were able to prove that we know what we need to do to take the school to outstanding and it is pleasing that the report acknowledges this: "*Leaders know the school's strengths and weaknesses well. They address weaknesses quickly and effectively. For example, they have addressed historically weak leadership and teaching in a small number of subjects... [They have] successfully eliminated the small amount of weaker teaching that was previously apparent in some subjects. Consequently, current pupils are making good progress in most subjects and years*".

Ofsted's judgement is that the progress of pupils and groups of pupils across the school is "*strong and improving*". Nevertheless, we are acutely aware that the 'Good' 'Leadership and Management', 'Learning and Assessment' and 'Behaviour' judgements are all inextricably linked to pupils' outcomes and therefore, for the next three years, we will be doing everything we can to ensure that these are outstanding. In the meantime, let us celebrate the fact that, despite this very difficult climate of considerable change in terms of examinations, expectations and requirements, all of these successes have culminated in Ofsted's recognition that St Michael's staff "*form a united team, committed to providing the best possible education for pupils*" and that we "*provide high-quality, individualised care and support for pupils, especially for those who are vulnerable*". Consequently, pupils "*feel safe and well cared for in school*", leading to their judgement that our provision for the personal development and welfare of our children is "OUTSTANDING".

Thank you to every student, every member of staff and everyone in our wider community who helped us to achieve this exceptional result.



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Headteacher