

Inspection of a good school: St Michael's Church of England High School

Curral Road, Rowley Regis, West Midlands B65 9AN

Inspection dates:

17 and 18 January 2023

Outcome

St Michael's Church of England High School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to attend this school and rightly so. Leaders' high expectations, together with the school's Christian ethos, have created a culture of mutual respect. Staff work hard to ensure that pupils feel safe and are successful in all aspects of school life. Pupils appreciate the time and effort they are given.

Pupils are well behaved and this contributes to a calm and orderly environment throughout. At breaktimes and lunchtimes, pupils sit together sensibly chatting with friends or playing together outside. In lessons, pupils listen carefully to their teachers and engage purposefully in learning activities. There are clear systems in place so that any bullying can be sorted out quickly.

The school curriculum is broad and varied. Pupils enjoy their learning in different subjects and the options available to them at key stage 4. In most subjects, pupils achieve well.

There are many ways that staff provide for pupils' wider personal development. The school's '21st Century Child programme' looks to raise awareness of the issues that affect young people and has been showcased nationally. This is successfully managed by the 'Student Voice' team who also work together to develop projects such as fundraising and working with elderly members of the community.

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

Leaders have put in place an ambitious curriculum. Subject leaders have structured the curriculum effectively so that topics are taught in a logical order. Alongside this, they have carefully considered the smaller blocks of learning to help pupils connect ideas and build on what they know.

The curriculum in languages has greatly improved, particularly at key stage 3. Topics have been judiciously selected and leaders have ensured that over time, pupils develop their understanding of phonics, grammar and vocabulary. Knowledge organisers are well used

in lessons to help pupils remember more of what they have been taught. The number of pupils opting to study languages at key stage 4 is increasing but remains relatively low. The introduction of a new language, Spanish, has proved successful. Nevertheless, leaders recognise there is more work to do to increase the number of pupils who study the subject at GCSE level.

Teachers are adept in the way they implement the curriculum. They structure lessons effectively so that pupils are given opportunities to recall prior learning and are introduced to new content gradually. Teachers model tasks skilfully so that pupils understand what they are being asked to do. They make good use of different forms of assessment to check what pupils know and understand. As a result, teachers quickly spot where pupils may need additional help. On a few occasions, teachers do not adapt learning activities as well as they could to meet the full range of abilities in their group. This can sometimes slow pupils' learning.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported. Leaders ensure that pupils who are part of the school's specially resourced provision for pupils with physical disabilities (specially resourced provision) are fully integrated into school life. There are clear mechanisms in place to identify pupils with SEND, and staff receive regular ongoing training about the most effective strategies to use in the classroom. Pupils with SEND have full access to the school curriculum and make good progress from their starting points.

Leaders have ensured that reading is a top priority. All Year 7 form tutors are English teachers. This helps to support pastoral sessions where pupils read together for pleasure. In addition, leaders have identified those who are struggling with their reading and have small-group interventions that take place with specialist literacy staff. This enables pupils to catch up.

The school's personal, social, citizenship and economic (PSCE) programme is clearly defined and helps build pupils' knowledge in a range of key themes. Each year, pupils develop their understanding of topics such as healthy relationships, drugs and money management. Pupils are given extensive opportunities to meet with outside agencies to supplement learning in the classroom. The school's careers programme is strong. Pupils are aware of the different pathways available to them when they leave school and participate in a range of college and university visits. As a result, the vast majority move on to positive destinations.

Staff are overwhelmingly positive about the school and the support leaders provide for managing their workload and well-being. They describe leaders as having an 'open door culture' and greatly appreciate 'well-being days'. Staff are proud to be members of the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that appropriate checks are carried out on adults before they begin

working at the school.

Leaders have a strong understanding of the school's local context. Staff receive annual safeguarding training as well as other sessions throughout the academic year. Safeguarding systems are well understood by staff who know where concerns need to be recorded and reported. Leaders act in a timely way to ensure pupils get the help and support they need.

Pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe through the school's PSCE curriculum which includes topics such as online safety and sexual abuse.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- At present, the number of pupils who choose to study a language at key stage 4 is low. This means that the proportion of pupils completing the suite of subjects which makes up the English Baccalaureate remains low. Leaders should continue to encourage and support more pupils to opt to study languages.
- On some occasions, teachers do not adapt learning activities to meet pupils' academic needs in their groups. This means some pupils are not given precise enough support to access tasks. Leaders should ensure that teachers consistently meet the needs and abilities of all pupils in their lessons.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 2017.

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	104019
Local authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	10256983
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,223
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Colin Nicholls and Kerry Thornton (Co-chairs)
Headteacher	Christina Handy-Rivett
Website	www.st-michaels.sandwell.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	1 to 2 November 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher was appointed in March 2022.
- The school use four registered alternative provisions.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for up to 20 pupils with physical disabilities.
- The school is part of the Church of England Diocese of Birmingham. The school's last section 48 inspection was in March 2019. The school's next inspection will be within eight years of the previous inspection.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, languages, geography and physical education. 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 reviewed a range of school documents. These included information about behaviour, the school curriculum and improvement planning. The school website was also checked.
- Inspectors talked to staff and leaders about safeguarding arrangements. They examined how leaders make employment checks on staff and scrutinised further safeguarding records. They also asked how incidents reported by pupils are recorded and analysed.
- Inspectors observed informal times of the day to evaluate safeguarding and pupils' behaviour.
- Inspectors held meetings with members of the governing body, the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders, teachers and pupils. They also talked informally to pupils and staff to gather general information about school life.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and free-text comments. Inspectors also considered responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

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