

# St Michael's Academy

Grass Royal, Yeovil, Somerset, BA21 4JW

**Inspection dates** 4–5 June 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	N/A
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is good school

- Good teaching is effective in helping pupils make good progress, achieve well and be well prepared for the next stages of education.
- Behaviour is good and pupils are very well cared for in a safe, stimulating environment.
- The school is well led and managed at all levels, with governors successfully supporting the headteacher's outstanding vision and decisive leadership. The opening of the school as an academy has been particularly well managed.
- The high proportion of pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs make good and sometimes better progress because of the outstanding way provision for them is led and managed.
- The growing proportion of pupils new to the country and those who speak English as an additional language are well supported and fully integrated into the school.
- Good support for Gypsy Roma pupils enables them to make good progress when they attend the school.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching is outstanding. In a few lessons, staff do not use time well enough, and very occasionally, a little of the work set does not challenge pupils of different ability levels sufficiently rigorously, and then they do not always make the progress of which they are capable in lessons.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 18 lessons taught by 11 teachers. Of these, three were carried out jointly with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher.
- The inspection team met with groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and members of staff, and spoke to a School Improvement Partner on the telephone.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work and heard pupils from Years 3 and 6 read.
- The team took account of the 15 responses to the online Parent View survey.
- Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at school documentation, including data on pupils' progress, evidence of self-evaluation and monitoring records.
- They analysed 31 questionnaire responses from staff.

## Inspection team

Michael Burghart, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Andrea Curtis

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is an average-sized junior school. It converted to an academy on 1 October 2012. When its predecessor school was inspected by Ofsted under its previous name of Grass Royal Junior School in March 2011, it was judged to be satisfactory.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. A growing, and now above-average, proportion speak English as an additional language. The largest minority ethnic group represented is from Poland, and many of these pupils join the school after the start of Year 3.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils who are looked after by the local authority, known to be eligible for free school meals and the children of service families) is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported by school action is well above average and the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- A small group of pupils from Gypsy Roma Traveller families attend the school when they are based in Yeovil.
- Four teachers are in their first full year of teaching and, during the inspection, one of the senior teachers was on maternity leave. Her responsibilities are currently shared between other members of the leadership team.
- A breakfast club is available free of charge to all pupils. It is managed by the governing body and therefore formed part of this inspection.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on the best practice already in the school to increase the proportion of outstanding teaching and ensure that it is at least good by:
  - reducing the time teachers spend explaining tasks at the start of lessons so that pupils get to activities sooner
  - making sure that the small proportion of work that as yet does not fully challenge some pupils is even more consistently set for different ability
  - developing the subject knowledge of the small minority of teachers who lack confidence, most notably in mathematics, by providing extra training opportunities.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' work, lessons observed, parents' and carers' comments, and staff records show that pupils, whatever their starting points or backgrounds, make good progress. Rates of progress, as demonstrated by the school's detailed and well-presented assessment data, compare favourably with the national profile in all year groups and, even in the short time the academy has existed, have been improved.
- Following accurate analysis by staff that too few pupils were reaching above-average levels, swift action was taken to revise planning and improve teaching. Rapid improvement has very successfully ensured that this is no longer the case. For example, the proportion of pupils on course to attain the higher Level 5 in mathematics at the end of Year 6 has been improved to better than the national average.
- Staff evaluation of tracking data revealed that girls were not doing as well as boys. Better targeting and deliberately created opportunities for girls to take a more active part in discussions and lessons has improved the situation with positive effects on achievement.
- Very occasionally, pupils' progress is restricted when work is not appropriately challenging for different abilities, for example on the very rare occasions when the same work is set for everyone or extension activities are simply repetitive.
- Pupils are keen to read and write. Standards are broadly average. However, taking aside those who are very new to English as a language and to the country (who nevertheless make good and rapid progress), the attainment profile appears above average.
- Those pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs make good, and frequently outstanding, progress. A notable strength is in how those who find it hard to concentrate and behave are being helped to stay focused on their work. This is having a marked impact on how well they achieve.
- Good support for pupils from Traveller families is very successful in helping them to do well. School records show that such pupils regularly reach average standards despite time out of school.
- The well-above-average proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium initiative make good and sometimes better progress because they are well catered for and well taught. As yet, the academy has no validated results from national tests to make comparisons using average point scores. However, school data show that in English and mathematics the gap between the predicted attainment of those in the pupil premium group at the end of Year 6 and others of the same age in the school is likely to be small and narrowing compared with pupils in other schools.
- The small group of pupils who spend time, accompanied by a teacher from the academy, at the local special school for a mix of activities such as swimming, reading and writing, benefit from the opportunity and make good progress.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is typically good, which is why all pupils, including those from Traveller families, are making good progress. Staff are successful in ensuring that pupils' academic as well as emotional needs are well catered for. Expectations of work and behaviour are high, and this is paying dividends in helping pupils to achieve well and enjoy learning.
- Parents and carers, pupils, staff and the School Improvement Partner are adamant that teaching is good and that teachers work effectively to make learning interesting. The topic work approach is very popular.
- Strengths of teaching include questioning, which effectively prompts pupils to explain their reasoning, and express their opinions. Pupils relish these opportunities and this feeds their creativity. In a session in Years 3 and 4, outstanding teaching gripped pupils' imaginations while writing poetry. Although some pupils forgot they were supposed to be finding rhyming words,

they reached levels in writing above average for their age and began to explore blank verse.

- Teaching for those new to the country and those who speak English as an additional language is good. Activities are well planned to extend vocabulary and sentence construction while encouraging practical skills and problem solving, for example in mathematics and design and technology. Pupils achieve well as a result.
- Teaching assistants play a very strong part in supporting pupils with disabilities or special educational needs and those eligible for pupil premium-funded support. They work very well with teachers and are skilled in developing work for individual pupils. Relationships with colleagues and pupils are outstanding, and the work that is carried out in intervention groups makes a significant contribution to pupils' learning.
- A small minority of teaching requires some improvement. When teachers over-explain objectives, or on the very rare occasions when work is not well suited to the different ability levels in the class, pupils make less progress. A few teachers lack confidence, most notably in aspects of mathematics. Sometimes, they play it safe with activities that do not extend pupils' knowledge and understanding enough. To their credit, pupils remain well behaved but their attention sometimes wanders when they are then not actively involved in learning.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- This is a happy school where pupils behave well in and out of class and during activities such as the popular and efficiently run breakfast club. This is because they are well cared for and feel safe. Relationships between staff and pupils are outstanding and pupils respond with positive attitudes to learning. Pupils of all ages and backgrounds get on well together and those new to the school from abroad are welcomed without discrimination.
- The school rightly prides itself on treating pupils equally, and is successful in being fair to everyone.
- Parents and carers, staff and pupils are keen to say that pupils are nearly always considerate to each other, that bullying is rare, and even then soon dealt with.
- The minority of pupils who could, and sometimes do, present behaviour problems are particularly well managed and any disruption to learning is kept to a minimum.
- Pupils work well with each other and, although those in Years 3 and 4 have less opportunity than pupils in Years 5 and 6 to discuss what they are doing, they are well prepared for life in general, sharing ideas and looking for solutions to problems. An excellent example is in Forest School sessions, where pupils are expertly challenged to follow a theme, design, make and evaluate on a grand outdoor scale. Making and floating Spanish sailing boats presented an exciting challenge!
- Pupils have a clear understanding of how to stay safe, for example on the internet as well as on the road. They know who to turn to when they have problems and have confidence in staff, trusting their guidance as much over personal development as targets set when their work is marked.
- Pupils are punctual and their attendance is consistent with the national average overall. Rates are slightly lower for some who are eligible for free school meals but, even in the short time the academy has existed, improvements have been well managed with positive results.
- When they are based in Yeovil, Traveller pupils attend regularly.

### **The leadership and management are good**

- The headteacher has led and managed the opening of the new academy particularly well. Her outstanding vision and ambition are infectious, and she is very well supported by senior staff and governors. Together, through accurate self-evaluation of strengths and weaknesses, they have developed an acute understanding of how the school can be improved.
- That leadership and management are not judged better than good is because teaching and

pupils' achievement are not yet outstanding. The academy, only in its ninth month, is well on track to make sure they will be in the future. Strengths in the gathering of information, and effective analysis, underpin ongoing improvement.

- The curriculum is broad, balanced and interesting, and considerably enhanced through extra-curricular activities and visits. Year 6 will never forget staying in a hotel in London.
- The school makes a very strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and is instrumental in helping pupils to grow up as sensible, caring individuals.
- Even in the short time it has been in existence, the academy has demonstrated that it has the capacity to improve. Highlights include:
  - increased progress rates as the result of accurate use of assessment to identify what pupils know, can do and understand
  - the quality of teaching, where objectives are clearly planned and work is well marked to show pupils how they can improve
  - the streamlining of the teaching assistant workforce, focusing on efficiency and high quality
  - well-managed improvements to provide a stimulating learning environment, inside and out.
- Subject and aspect leaders make a good contribution to the way the school is run. They represent a range of different experience and expertise, and some, as is the case of special educational needs, have an outstanding impact on pupils' personal development and achievement. Others, although successful in promoting their subjects, for example in mathematics and English, are not yet fully involved in observing teaching, and this sometimes restricts the development of their understanding of the strengths and aspects in need of improvement in their subject areas.
- Teaching and learning are well monitored by senior leaders and increasingly by governors. Performance management is well used to guide improvement. Governors are seeking to reward and encourage good practice and initiative through salary enhancement.
- Links with parents and carers, and other schools, are good, and arrangements for pupils to work off-site are risk assessed and well managed.
- **Governance of the school:**
  - Governors are well informed and are committed to improving their skills and understanding, through training. They use data effectively to compare the school's performance with similar and all schools nationally. They are well supported by the business manager in making good use of the budget. Governors evaluate the impact of their decisions on pupils' progress and are actively involved in the appointment of staff. They have an acute awareness of how effectively pupil premium funding is spent to keep class sizes down and provide one-to-one and group support. Arrangements to ensure pupils' safety and well-being are very effective. Pupils, and parents and carers, comment on how well the school takes care of children.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	138843
<b>Local authority</b>	Somerset
<b>Inspection number</b>	409880

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	204
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Graham Oakes
<b>Headteacher</b>	Judith Barrett
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01935 423863
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