

St Michael's Academy

Grass Royal, Yeovil, Somerset BA21 4JW

Inspection dates

19–20 September 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The quality of teaching across subjects and year groups is too uneven and not good enough. Consequently, over time pupils have not achieved well, especially in reading and mathematics.
- Over time teachers' expectations have not been high enough, especially for the most able pupils.
- Disadvantaged pupils make steady, but not good, progress in reading, writing and mathematics. There are signs that these pupils are beginning to catch up but there is more to do in order to increase their rates of progress.
- Learning activities do not routinely meet the needs and interests of pupils with different abilities. Some work is too easy and other work too hard.
- Some adults do not follow the school's assessment policy when giving feedback to pupils. Pupils are therefore left unclear how to improve their work.
- Historically, leaders' expectations have not been high enough to ensure that pupils achieve well and the quality of teaching improves. Monitoring has not focused closely enough on pupils' progress.
- Over time, governors have failed to check that pupil premium spending is having the desired impact.
- Many middle leaders are new in post. They have good ideas and plans that show the potential to bring about the improvements necessary. Actions have not yet had time to make a difference to pupils' outcomes.
- Pupils' positive attitudes to learning and their ability to tackle unfamiliar challenges are not well established. At times, silly and immature behaviour interrupts some lessons.
- Pupils' attendance remains below average, especially for disadvantaged pupils.

The school has the following strengths

- Since the appointment of the headteacher in March 2017, tangible improvements are evident in pupils' conduct and their behaviour around the school.
- Senior leaders have a clear understanding of the school's strengths, weaknesses and next steps in its development.
- Steps to restructure staffing and leadership have been completed successfully. Staff are enthusiastic and excited about their role in planning for future developments.
- Teachers show passion and determination to improve their practice. The school is moving in the right direction.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching in order to raise achievement by:
 - making sure teachers have the highest expectations of achievement for all groups of pupils
 - using assessment information to plan activities that meet pupils' needs and build on their prior knowledge, skill and understanding
 - making sure that work is challenging enough to enable the most able pupils to reach higher standards
 - ensuring that feedback provided to pupils follows the school's assessment policy
 - improving teachers' subject knowledge in mathematics.
- Improve behaviour so that pupils develop good attitudes to learning and make better progress by:
 - raising expectations of pupils' attitudes to learning and pride in their work
 - ensuring that teaching interests and engages pupils in their work, motivates and helps them to make good progress
 - helping pupils develop the strategies and resilience required to overcome new or unfamiliar challenges and problems.
- Improve leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - rigorously checking that current improvement plans are having the desired effect on improving the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes
 - ensuring that checks on the teaching quality and work in books take full account of pupils' progress
 - supporting middle leaders in developing the skills and confidence they need to carry out their roles effectively to account for pupils' performance.
- Improve attendance for all groups of pupils and reduce the proportion of pupils persistently absent from school.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The school has not maintained a successful journey of improvement since the last inspection. Turbulence within the school's leadership and many staff changes have led to a decline in the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes. Current leaders are aware of the drop in standards and have effective plans in place to halt the decline.
- Subject leaders for English and mathematics, all year group leaders and the special educational needs coordinator are very new to their posts. They are yet to undertake formal monitoring in their areas of responsibility and are therefore unable to point to tangible impact of their work. Good plans are in place that show the potential to bring about necessary improvements to teaching, the curriculum and pupils' outcomes.
- Not enough attention has been given to the impact of the pupil premium funding on improving the achievement of pupils eligible for the funding. Consequently, their progress is too variable across the school.
- Staff and some leaders new to the school are yet to receive training on the school's system for tracking pupils' progress. As a result, assessment information is not always used with sufficient urgency to meet the needs of pupils in a timely manner.
- For example, information on the performance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is yet to be used to plan the additional support required for these pupils this term. Additional funding is allocated for academic and emotional support appropriately. However, the impact of this funding is yet to be fully evaluated.
- Leaders have established a clear cycle for monitoring and evaluating the school's performance. They are aware that monitoring activities should place greater weighting and scrutiny on evaluating the impact of actions and the progress of key groups over time.
- The curriculum is appropriately organised to develop pupils' skills of literacy and numeracy. Links are made to other subject areas where possible. Leaders are accurately focused on ensuring that more pupils acquire the skills necessary in the core subjects so they are better prepared for secondary school. All at the school are aware that, above all else, the school must build on the work of the last six months to ensure greater consistency in curriculum delivery and teaching so that the new ways of working embed quickly and exert maximum influence on pupils' learning.
- Leaders use pupils' experiences of life outside school to improve the pupils' understanding of their place in the wider community and to enhance curriculum opportunities. Visits by the local police officer help develop pupils' understanding of the role of police in a modern society. Letters drafted to the local Member of Parliament (MP) expressing why pupils feel they would make a good local MP develop the concept of democracy effectively. Such activities help pupils to improve their understanding of British values alongside developing their social, moral, spiritual and cultural understanding.
- The additional funding for physical education and sports is used effectively. Training for staff, specialist teaching by sports coaches, sports clubs and extra resources are

increasing pupils' participation in sporting activities. Pupils enjoy taking part in competitive activities planned with local Yeovil schools.

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have a clear picture of the school's strengths and areas requiring improvement. They are realistic about where the school is on its journey of improvement and the next stages of its development. Together, they provide good role models for staff and pupils. There is a positive culture of respect and tolerance, where both staff and pupils feel well supported.
- Leaders at all levels are ambitious and excited about the future improvements which are planned. Staff contribute well to developments and as a result understand the part they play in securing improvements.
- All those who spoke with members of the inspection team, including parents, commented on the positive changes to pupils' conduct and behaviour, communication and ethos at the school since the appointment of the headteacher.

Governance of the school

- Governors have been slow to challenge leaders with sufficient rigour to ensure that the quality of teaching improves and that pupils make rapid and sustained progress. They are knowledgeable about their role and the contribution they should be making to the overall leadership of the school, and show ambition for the school to improve. However, governors have not systematically gained enough information to evaluate the impact of initiatives, such as how the pupil premium funding is improving the achievement of pupils who are eligible for the funding.
- More recently, governors have used the findings from external reports to inform decision-making. Decisions to reduce class sizes in Year 6 and to appoint the headteacher and deputy headteacher are proving successful. Governors are now asking more probing questions about whether actions are having the desired impact. They are helped in their work by effective school improvement and subject improvement planning. Clear milestones and success criteria ensure that governors can benchmark progress towards the agreed goals.
- Governors are trained regularly and routinely check arrangements for safeguarding. Working with senior leaders, governors foster and ensure a culture of safeguarding at the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- A strong culture of safeguarding is evident across the school. Staff are well trained and understanding. As a result, pupils report they feel safe and can articulate in a meaningful way what being safe means. Pupils say that the use of any derogatory language is rare and if it occurs, it is dealt with promptly. Recent changes to the school security system and site security have been welcomed by pupils.
- The school is acutely aware of the documented deficiencies in Somerset local safeguarding children's board. Leaders therefore go the extra mile to cater, wherever possible, for the needs of those pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable.

Much credit should be given to the school for getting 'beyond the school gate', for example by using the 'school car' to pick up those pupils who are unable to get to school in the morning. Support for pupils' mental health and well-being is a particular strength.

- Despite significant disruption and changes to the administration staff and office location, the school's business manager ensures that procedures and record-keeping are secure and of high quality. Processes for ensuring the safe recruitment of staff, for staff training and for the induction of the many new members of staff are effective.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- There is too much inconsistency in teaching across the school and in different subjects. Not enough attention is given to building on what the pupils already know, understand and can do. While teaching is improving, the improvements are not yet making a sufficiently rapid impact on pupils' progress.
- At times, teaching 'plays safe' and is often organised with an eye to managing pupils' behaviour, rather than planned carefully to meet their learning needs. As a result, some learning becomes repetitive, pupils lose interest, their progress slows and behaviour deteriorates.
- Teaching is not helping pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and those who are the most able to make good progress over time. When the school's leaders visit lessons, or when pupils' work is scrutinised, the spotlight is not shined precisely enough on how well these groups are learning. Feedback to teachers does not place enough emphasis on teaching and its impact on pupils' progress.
- Pupils' books show some inconsistencies in how different teachers are trying to improve pupils' writing. Basic errors in spelling or handwriting are often repeated because of weaknesses in teaching. The most able, including the most able disadvantaged, show their true potential in some pieces of writing but this is not sustained over time to help them move ahead of the expectation for their age. Often these pupils report that their work is too easy.
- The teaching of reading varies across the school. Different methods and approaches mean that pupils' progress is inconsistent. Pupils report they enjoy reading and read regularly in school. However, the lack of an overarching structure for the teaching of reading and phonics, that is understood and followed by all, hinders pupils' progress.
- Teaching for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities reflects teaching seen elsewhere in the school and has mixed success. The wide-ranging, extra emotional support these pupils receive has not always been effective in helping their academic achievement. A new approach with more specific and targeted help to raise achievement is in development. While there are early signs that some pupils are moving on more quickly in Year 4, for example, it is too early to see the impact of the changes on the overall progress of all pupils.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language are supported with language acquisition in lessons. Where this support is effective and assessment information used carefully, pupils' progress is rapid.

- The use of additional adults to support pupils' learning over time is variable across the school. In some cases, adults provide specific, targeted intervention for individual pupils to accelerate their progress. At other times, too much attention is given to pupils completing tasks, rather than on using effective questioning to check pupils' understanding thoroughly.
- Not all teachers check pupils' work in line with the school's assessment policy, and this is hindering pupils' progress. At times, extra challenges are provided to pupils once they have fully grasped the concept being taught. In other instances, information from marking and feedback is not used to inform teachers' planning and to guide pupils' next steps carefully enough.
- A new system for setting pupil targets is established across the school. Targets set are generally appropriate and show pupils what they are aiming for to improve their work. However, too many pupils are not being helped to build the knowledge and strategies needed to fully understand how to reach their next target.
- Ongoing training is improving teachers' questioning and subject knowledge in mathematics. Pupils' deeper understanding of place value in Year 6 is now improving due to a sharper focus on developing their reasoning skills.
- It is clear that the quality of teaching is on an improving trajectory and more pupils are making better headway in their learning. However, there is still too much variation in the quality of teaching across year groups and classes. Where effective teaching occurs pupils thrive, take greater pride in their work and presentation and make better progress. Where teaching is less effective, pupils' progress slows and their achievement is too low.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Because teachers' expectations are sometimes too low, not all pupils take sufficient pride in their work. Similarly, pupils' attitudes to learning and doing their best are hindered when they are not given clear enough guidance about what they should be doing.
- Pupils are beginning to act out the values the school is determined to promote. They generally apply themselves in a compliant manner to complete familiar work when asked. However, when presented with unfamiliar challenges or concepts without sufficient teaching support, their confidence and resilience drop quickly, limiting their progress. Not enough pupils demonstrate the self-discipline to actively seek out new work and challenge themselves to improve because of weaknesses in teaching.
- Pupils have a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe outside school and when using the internet. They talk confidently about using passwords and protecting personal information.

- Staff provide sensitive support for those pupils who become troubled or upset. They administer first aid appropriately and ensure that pupils are comforted and able to return to their learning or play.
- This is a school where care for pupils has a high priority. Pupils are supported effectively and known well by adults. They feel safe. Pupils who may be facing difficult times at home are given particularly good care.
- Pupils' attendance has fallen below the national average since the last inspection, particularly for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. This year, attendance rates are beginning to pick up as a result of the steps being taken to work with parents. There is further to go before attendance rates overall, and for disadvantaged pupils, reach at least average.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Low-level disruption occurs in some classrooms. In these instances, pupils lose focus, do not follow instructions, or chatter and doodle while the teacher is talking. This interrupts learning and slows progress. In discussions with pupils, they state that they can find it hard to concentrate at times because of the disruptions that occur.
- School leaders have recently introduced a new behaviour system which has dramatically reduced the number of serious behavioural incidents. Pupils who spoke to the inspector felt that behaviour had improved markedly and incidents when learning was interrupted were far fewer than previously. On the isolated occasions when 'silly' or 'immature' behaviour still occurs, pupils' learning falters.
- Instances of poor behaviour and exclusion are increasingly rare because adults also model how to act and treat each other. More pupils are emulating their actions.
- Pupils are therefore generally positive about the atmosphere in the school. Parents spoken to by inspectors echo this view of improvement.
- Pupils who attend the breakfast club are supported well to prepare for learning in the day ahead. Adults voluntarily give up their time to meet with pupils and help settle them into school a calming manner.
- Pupils report that incidents of bullying in the school have reduced and are confident that staff deal quickly with any issues, no matter how small; pupils feel they can go to an adult with their worries and they will be listened to and helped.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' attainment is showing signs of recent improvement and some pupils are achieving more successfully than in the past. However, too little has been done to maintain the standards in reading and mathematics reached at the time of the last inspection. Pupils' progress has slowed and their achievement is too low.
- While weak teaching has been tackled and pupils are beginning to make better progress, their achievement is not yet consistently good enough. The most able pupils

are not provided with enough challenge and depth of work for them to reach the standards of which they are capable.

- The two main reasons why outcomes require improvement are, first, the slower than expected progress in mathematics and, second, inconsistent progress in reading, particularly for the most able pupils. In some classes, pupils who are capable of recognising punctuation and its effects are not always expected to do so.
- In 2016, pupils' attainment in writing was in line with the national average. However, their attainment during 2016 and unvalidated outcomes in 2017 in reading and mathematics were below those expected for their age. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher level or greater depth was below other schools nationally in all subjects.
- Improvements in the teaching of mathematics are leading to pupils having a better understanding of the relationship between numbers, and most pupils are secure when completing calculations using familiar methods. However, many pupils struggle when they have to apply their knowledge of number in different contexts.
- Disadvantaged pupils are not doing well enough in reading and mathematics. Funding to support these pupils is used for generic activities, rather than targeting gaps in pupils' knowledge, skill or understanding, and this is impeding their progress in these subjects.
- The performance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities mirrors that of other pupils across the school. Pockets of more rapid progress are evident due to effective support and guidance but this is not widespread or consistent. Consequently, not enough pupils are making good progress from their different starting points.
- The design and implementation of the curriculum is not resulting in pupils achieving good outcomes in a range of subjects. For example, weaknesses in teaching in history and geography are leading to pupils struggling to improve their knowledge and understanding in these subjects. When carrying out historical enquiries, pupils do not have a secure knowledge of the reliability of different historical sources and lack some basic geographical knowledge such as the names of continents and oceans.

School details

Unique reference number	138843
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10025104

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Junior
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	293
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	William Capon
Headteacher	Matthew Vella
Telephone number	01935 423863
Website	www.stmichaelsacademy.co.uk
Email address	sch.434@educ.somerset.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	4–5 June 2013

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information on its website.
- The school does not comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish about: the school's most recent results including progress measures and scaled scores; how the school will identify barriers to learning for disadvantaged pupils; how the impact of the pupil premium expenditure will be measured and reviewed; details of how the PE and sports premium will affect pupils' PE and sport participation and attainment and how improvements will be sustained; the publication of an accessibility plan as required as part of the Equality Act 2010.
- St Michael's is an average-sized junior school. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. An above-average proportion speak English as an additional language;

the largest minority ethnic group represented is from Poland. A higher proportion of pupils than is typically found arrive or leave school other than at the normal times.

- The proportion of pupils who receive the pupil premium funding is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils who receive support for special educational needs is well above average.
- A breakfast club is available to all pupils. It is managed by the governing body and formed part of the inspection.
- The current headteacher and deputy headteacher took up their posts in March 2017. Subject leaders for English and mathematics have been in post from June 2017. Year group leaders and the special educational needs coordinator started in their roles in September 2017. Over 60% of teaching staff are new to the school within the last year.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed lessons, looked at pupils' books in all classes and looked at evidence of pupils' past work. School leaders joined inspectors for these activities.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, subject leaders, year group leaders and four governors. Inspectors met with four groups of pupils to discuss their work and learning, 48 in total, as well as talking to a number of pupils during lessons.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation including evidence of leaders' evaluations of the school's effectiveness, information on pupils' attainment and progress, the school's plans for improvement and records relating to safeguarding arrangements.
- Inspectors spoke with several parents who were bringing their children to school; their views were considered along with 12 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.

Inspection team

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Wendy Hanrahan	Ofsted Inspector
Peta Dyke	Ofsted Inspector
Robert Lane	Ofsted Inspector

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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