

Inspection of St Michael’s Church of England High School

St Michael’s Road, Crosby L23 7UL

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 June 2024

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education	Inadequate
Behaviour and attitudes	Requires improvement
Personal development	Requires improvement
Leadership and management	Inadequate
Sixth-form provision	Requires improvement
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The head of school is Claire McIntyre. This school is part of the Liverpool Diocesan Schools Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Laurie Kwissa, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Margaret Swinson. There is also an executive headteacher, Jane Galbraith, who is responsible for this school.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school wants the best for pupils and the students in the sixth form, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). However, it does not provide pupils with a standard of education that enables them to achieve well. Over time, pupils have experienced an ill-designed and poorly delivered curriculum. At the end of key stage 4, many pupils, particularly the most disadvantaged, leave school without attaining the qualifications that they need to be successful.

Some pupils are happy in school. These pupils feel well cared for due to the positive relationships that they develop with some staff. This is particularly the case in the sixth form, where staff get to know students well.

Recently, the school has reviewed its processes for managing unacceptable behaviour. Some staff and pupils said that behaviour is improving as a result. However, most pupils are frustrated by the inconsistent manner in which staff deal with incidents of poor behaviour. Some pupils do not have positive attitudes to learning. They disengage during lessons and do not behave as well as they should.

Some pupils spoke positively about the wider opportunities that the school provides. For instance, they enjoy participating in sports clubs and they are proud of their recent performance in a school production. Students in the sixth form benefit from the chance to work towards a leadership award, which includes organising fundraising events.

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

A prolonged period of turbulence in leadership and staffing is coming to an end. However, this has greatly hampered the school's efforts to improve the quality of education that it provides. The trust and the school have failed to adequately address most of the weaknesses that were identified during the previous inspection. Despite the trust's efforts to support the school, the actions that have been taken to tackle pupils' underachievement have not been effective. This is because there is a lack of sufficient leadership expertise. Recent work to strengthen leadership has led to a realistic understanding of the shortcomings at the school. However, the actions to bring about change are in their infancy.

The school is in the process of redesigning the curriculum across key stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form. In most subjects, this work is at a very early stage. Staff have only very recently identified the important information that pupils should learn. As a result, teachers do not have clarity about which information to emphasise during lessons. This means that pupils have a weak understanding of the subjects that they study.

Teachers are knowledgeable about their subjects. However, many lack the expertise that they need to deliver the curriculum effectively. This is because the school has not paid enough attention to staff training and development.

Many of the activities that teachers design do not enable pupils to learn the subject content of the curriculum. In addition, teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to remember their learning over time. The systems to check what pupils know and remember are in development. All too often, teachers are not aware of the gaps in pupils' learning. As a result, pupils, particularly those with SEND and those who are disadvantaged, do not gain a secure foundation on which to apply their later learning.

The shortcomings in the curriculum in key stage 3 mean that pupils are not well prepared for key stage 4. They start Year 10 with many deficits in their knowledge. They are on catch-up from the start. This is compounded further in this year group because teachers do not do enough to help pupils overcome gaps in their learning. This means that pupils cannot absorb or retain new subject content to build their knowledge over time. As a result, published data shows that, by the end of Year 11, pupils make poor progress and that their attainment is significantly below the national average.

Some of the weaknesses that pupils in Years 7 to 11 experience are less apparent in the sixth form. For example, the smaller class sizes make it easier for teachers to pinpoint where students need to revisit their previous learning. As a result, some students in the sixth form learn more successfully than those in key stages 3 and 4. Even so, similar weaknesses in the design of the curriculum mean that students in the sixth form are not prepared well enough for their future.

The school identifies those pupils who struggle with reading. Some pupils, including some in the specially resourced provisions for pupils with SEND (specially resourced provisions), receive suitable support to help them to overcome gaps in their reading knowledge. However, most pupils who find reading difficult do not receive the help that they need to read confidently and fluently. This makes it all the more difficult for them to learn.

The needs of pupils with SEND are identified accurately. Pupils in the specially resourced provisions benefit from support that is carefully tailored to their needs. However, across the rest of the school, pupils with SEND are not supported well. The weaknesses in the curriculum have a disproportionate effect on some pupils with SEND. In addition, the school does not check that the needs of these pupils are being met. This means that weaknesses in the provision for pupils with SEND are not identified or addressed.

The school has designed a suitable programme to support pupils' personal development. However, this is not delivered consistently well in key stages 3 and 4. Pupils are better prepared for some aspects of life in modern Britain than others.

Since the last inspection, the school has strengthened its careers provision. Pupils receive useful information about the careers and further education opportunities that are available to them. Pupils in Year 10 and students in Year 12 spoke positively about their recent work experience.

Typically, the atmosphere around the school is calm and orderly. However, staff's expectations of pupils' behaviour are inconsistent. Some staff do not address pupils' misbehaviour. This sometimes leads to disruption in lessons and around the school. However, the school is now working with staff to ensure that the approach to managing behaviour is used consistently well.

The school has a strong focus on improving pupils' attendance. This work has begun to have some impact. The rates of attendance for some pupils are improving. Even so, many pupils, including some students in the sixth form, do not attend school as often as they should.

A small number of staff are unhappy about some of the actions that the trust has taken. This has further hindered the pace of change in the school. However, most staff are appreciative of the school's consideration for their workload. They want to help the school to move forwards.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's and trust's actions have not led to the much-needed change that is required to improve pupils' education. As a result, pupils leave Year 11 unprepared for the next steps in their education, employment or training. The trust must ensure that there is sufficient expertise in the school to identify and carry out the necessary actions to bring about swift improvement to the design and delivery of the curriculum in key stages 3 and 4.
- In some subjects, the school is still identifying the specific knowledge that it wants pupils, and students in the sixth form, to learn. As a result, teachers do not know which information to prioritise when designing lesson activities. This means that pupils' achievement in a range of subjects is weak. The school should ensure that it completes its design of subject curriculums and that it identifies the knowledge that pupils should gain and the order in which subject content should be taught.
- Across subjects, the curriculum is not delivered well. This means that pupils' knowledge does not build securely over time. The school should ensure that staff receive the training and guidance that they need to deliver the curriculum effectively.
- Pupils who find reading difficult do not receive the support that they need to make up for gaps in their reading knowledge. This hinders their learning across the curriculum. It prevents them from achieving well. The school should ensure that there is suitable and effective support to help pupils read with confidence, fluency and accuracy.

- The school does not check how well its provision to support pupils with SEND is working. This leads to pupils with SEND not receiving the support that they need to move through the curriculum. The school should ensure that it carefully evaluates the support that pupils with SEND receive so that weaknesses in this provision can be swiftly addressed.
- The provision to support pupils' personal development is variable. This means that some pupils are less aware than they should be of some of the important information that they need to be well equipped for their future lives. The school should ensure that the curriculum for pupils' personal, social, health and economic education is implemented consistently well.

Having considered the evidence, we strongly recommend that the school does not seek to appoint early career teachers.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	141338
Local authority	Sefton
Inspection number	10348311
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	678
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	59
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Margaret Swinson
CEO of the trust	Laurie Kwissa
Headteacher	Claire McIntyre (Head of School) Jane Galbraith (Executive Headteacher)
Website	www.stmichaelshigh.com
Date of previous inspection	22 November 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Liverpool Diocesan Schools Trust.
- The executive headteacher has been in post since the end of April 2024.
- The school operates two specially resourced provisions for children with SEND. One resourced provision provides for pupils with cognition and learning needs from Year 7 to Year 11. There are currently 17 pupils accessing this provision. The other resourced provision provides for pupils with autism from Year 7 to Year 11. There are currently 10 pupils accessing this provision. In both resourced provisions, all pupils have an education, health and care plan. All places are commissioned through the local authority.
- This Church of England School is in the Diocese of Liverpool. The school's last section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, was in December 2023.

The next section 48 inspection is due to take place between December 2026 and December 2028.

- The school uses seven registered and three unregistered alternative providers for a small number of pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the executive headteacher, the headteacher, other leaders and staff.
- An inspector spoke with representatives of the trust, including the chair of trustees and the CEO.
- An inspector met with representatives of the local governing body.
- An inspector spoke with representatives of the local authority and the diocese. An inspector also spoke with an external consultant who works with the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science, history, computing and business, and physical education. For each deep dive, they discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. An inspector also spoke with leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their experiences of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. They also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for pupils and for staff.

- The inspectors reviewed a wide range of evidence, including the school's self-evaluation documents and records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record, took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Sally Rix, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
David Woodhouse	Ofsted Inspector
Graeme Rudland	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Cocker	Ofsted Inspector
Charlotte Oles	His Majesty's Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024