

Inspection of St Michael's Church of England High School

St Michael's Road, Crosby L23 7UL

Inspection dates:

8 and 9 November 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, including students in the sixth form, value and enjoy the friendly and welcoming feel of their school. Most pupils are open-minded and they welcome those who are different from them. Pupils and students are pleased with the extracurricular clubs and enjoy the range of activities on offer. This includes the school choir, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and many sports clubs.

Pupils and students benefit from trusting relationships with staff. Pupils are respectful towards each other. Behaviour in many lessons is calm. Pupils are confident that leaders and staff will listen to their concerns. Any incidents of bullying are rare, and they are dealt with well by staff.

Leaders have high expectations for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). In key stages 3 and 4, pupils learn a suitably broad range of subjects. In some areas of the curriculum, pupils learn very well. However, in some subjects, leaders have not supported teachers sufficiently well to design and deliver learning. This means that, in these subjects, pupils do not learn some of the important knowledge that they need in order to be successful.

The sixth form is a harmonious community where students support and care for one another. In the sixth form, students participate enthusiastically because highly skilled staff deliver well-designed curriculums effectively. Teachers in the sixth form help students to know and remember more over time. Almost all students successfully secure their places on university courses or apprenticeships.

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

Leaders have high aspirations for all pupils, including those with SEND. They want pupils to leave as successful, confident and resilient individuals. To this end, leaders ensure that pupils' needs are clearly identified, and that strategies to support pupils with SEND are shared with staff. Staff make appropriate adjustments, so that pupils with SEND can access the same learning as others. That said, weaknesses in how the curriculum is designed and delivered in some subjects in key stages 3 and 4 hinder this group of pupils in their learning.

In key stages 3 and 4, leaders in some subjects have designed curriculums that support pupils to develop a secure body of knowledge. For example, in mathematics, leaders have planned a curriculum that builds well on what pupils know already. Staff ensure that pupils have appropriate time to practise and apply new knowledge. However, these strengths are not consistent across subjects. This is because, in some subjects, leaders have not made clear enough to teachers the most important content that should be taught or the appropriate order in which to teach this content. Added to this, some subject leaders do not ensure that staff select the most appropriate teaching approaches to support pupils to learn content well. As a result, pupils do not develop a secure understanding of what they are

learning, and they forget some of the key information that they need in order to be successful.

The sixth form is different. Leaders have ensured that curriculums in the sixth form are designed well. Leaders make it clear to teachers what students should be learning and when curriculum content should be delivered. Teachers use their expertise to adapt how they deliver curriculums to meet the needs of all students, including students with SEND. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and they revisit prior learning. This supports students to build their knowledge from a secure base. Sixth-form students study in calm and focused classrooms. They value learning and they talked positively about how well they are supported by teachers.

For the most part, both in the sixth form and in key stage 4, teachers use leaders' assessment systems well to give pupils and students a clear sense of their strengths and those areas that they need to work on. However, in key stage 3, teachers are less clear about how to use leaders' systems to check on what pupils know, understand and can do.

There are clear processes in place to support those pupils who find reading tricky, particularly for those pupils in the earlier stages of learning to read. For example, staff use phonics programmes appropriately to teach pupils to decode words. These pupils quickly gain the skills they need to be fluent readers. That said, leaders have not ensured that approaches to supporting pupils with reading are understood and used consistently well by staff. As a result, some pupils get better support with their reading than others.

Leaders have not done enough to ensure that some pupils attend school as regularly as they should. Some pupils miss out on too much important learning. Leaders have recently introduced specific actions to improve attendance. However, it is too early to see the impact of this work.

Leaders have designed a well-ordered and age-appropriate curriculum to support pupils' personal development. This includes those pupils who attend the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND. Lessons, assemblies and external visitors help pupils to understand the wider world. Pupils learn about different cultures and religions. They also learn about important issues such as consent and healthy relationships.

The careers curriculum is thoughtfully designed. Pupils and students receive appropriate advice and guidance about their next steps. Pupils in Year 10 have the opportunity to complete work experience so they can further develop their understanding of the world of work. However, leaders have not provided sufficient opportunities for pupils to learn about technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Teachers value the training they receive and say that leaders are considerate of their workload and well-being.

Governors understand their specific roles and how these fit into the trust's governance structure. The trust has acted swiftly to provide additional support during difficult leadership challenges in the previous academic year.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders are knowledgeable about safeguarding. They have ensured that all staff have received appropriate training and fully understand their responsibilities regarding safeguarding.

Leaders have clear systems and processes in place for recording concerns, and staff use these confidently. Leaders make appropriate and timely referrals to agencies so that pupils can get the help that they need.

Leaders make appropriate checks on all new members of staff before they join the school to ensure that they are suitable to work with pupils.

Pupils know where to seek support if they have a worry. They feel that staff are approachable and will listen and help. For example, pupils learn how to keep themselves safe through assemblies, lessons and visits from external visitors.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils do not attend school as often as they should. Therefore, these pupils miss out on accessing the curriculum, including some essential learning. This hinders their progress through subject curriculums. Leaders should ensure that recently implemented monitoring systems are used so that effective action can take place to improve pupils' attendance.
- Leaders have not ensured that approaches to supporting pupils with reading across the curriculum are understood and used consistently well by all staff. Consequently, some pupils get better support with their reading than others. Leaders should ensure that staff implement reading approaches more evenly so that pupils have the same experience and opportunity to develop their reading skills and learn well across the curriculum.
- Leaders have not ensured that assessment at key stage 3 is well organised and understood by staff. As a result, some staff are not clear about what pupils know, understand or can do. This prevents teachers from addressing some pupils' misconceptions quickly enough. Leaders should ensure that assessment is purposeful, linked to the knowledge taught and helpful to both teachers and pupils.
- Leaders have not ensured that the curriculum is consistently well implemented by teachers in some subjects. As a result, some teachers do not always present

information clearly enough or select the most appropriate methods and resources to ensure that all pupils are able to learn and remember the information that they need. This means that some pupils do not develop a deep understanding of the subjects they are learning. Leaders should ensure that staff are equipped and have the confidence to deliver curriculums consistently well.

- Leaders' curriculum thinking in some subjects is significantly less developed. This means that teachers are less clear about the knowledge that pupils should learn, hindering pupils in successfully building on their learning over time. Leaders should ensure that teachers are clear about the knowledge that pupils should learn and that content is ordered logically. This will help pupils to deepen their knowledge, remember more and develop their skills over time.
- Leaders have not ensured that pupils have sufficient opportunities to learn about the range of technical education qualifications and apprenticeships on offer. This means that some pupils are not fully informed about some of the choices available to them when they make decisions about their next steps. Leaders should ensure that pupils are informed well about the full range of apprenticeships and technical qualifications open to them.

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	141338
Local authority	Sefton
Inspection number	10242215
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter 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	701
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	94
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trustees	Maggie Swinson
Headteacher	John Morrin
Website	www.stmichaelshigh.com
Date of previous inspection	3 and 4 October 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school appointed a new headteacher in December 2021.
- Leaders use three alternative providers for a small number of pupils.
- The school has two specially resourced provisions for pupils with SEND. One of these caters for nine pupils with autism spectrum disorder and the second caters for 16 pupils with dyslexia.
- St Michael's Church of England High School is a Church of England school. The school's previous section 48 inspection took place in December 2015.
- The school is part of the Liverpool Diocesan Trust.
- The school does not meet the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information 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.

- This was the first routine inspection the school had 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 held meetings with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, the special educational needs coordinator, the chief executive officer of the trust, trustees and a representative of the local authority. Inspectors also held meetings with a representative of the diocese, members of the governing body, (including the chair), subject leaders and members of staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in mathematics, art and design, languages, history and English. For each subject, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke to teachers and pupils, and reviewed samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also visited a range of lessons in other subjects. In these lessons, they checked on pupils' work and spoke with pupils about their learning.
- Inspectors met with several groups of pupils. They talked about the quality of education in the school, as well as other aspects of school life. Inspectors also spoke to pupils informally around the school.
- Inspectors spoke to leaders responsible for pupils with SEND and literacy across the school. Inspectors visited lessons with a focus on pupils with SEND with leaders. Inspectors made visits to both of the specially resourced provisions.
- The lead inspector reviewed a range of documentation and policies, including leaders' improvement plans, the school's self-evaluation and the school's website.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors checked the single central record of leaders' recruitment checks on staff and spoke to leaders responsible for safeguarding.
- Inspectors visited form time, attended an assembly and held telephone conversations with those staff who work with the small number of pupils who attend alternative providers.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's survey for staff, and the responses by parents and carers on Ofsted Parent View. There were no responses to Ofsted's survey for pupils.

Inspection team

Dawn Platt, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Stephanie Gill	Ofsted Inspector
Alan Hammersley	Ofsted Inspector

Derek Yarwood

Ofsted Inspector

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