

St Michael's Catholic Primary Academy and Nursery

Telford Gardens, Merry Hill, Wolverhampton, WV3 7LE

Inspection dates 19–20 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy
	This inspection:	Good 2
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Early years provision	Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The principal is ambitious in her vision for the academy's future. She has taken a resolute and determined approach to the leadership of the academy. Other senior leaders, governors and the Board of Directors offer good support. As a result, the academy is improving.
- Pupils' achievement throughout the academy is good and improving. By the time pupils leave Year 6, they achieve standards that are above average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The quality of teaching is good overall, with some that is outstanding. Lessons are typically interesting and generally challenge pupils of all abilities.
- Positive working relationships exist between adults and pupils, based on a culture of mutual respect.
- Children in the early years receive a good start to their education because exciting activities stimulate their interest in learning.
- Pupils' behaviour, in and out of lessons, is impeccable. Pupils work hard and are keen to do their best. They display a zest for learning.
- Pupils feel safe in the academy because adults provide high quality guidance and support.
- A strong curriculum supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development as well as providing memorable experiences in art and physical education.
- Governors and the Board of Directors are very knowledgeable and have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. They work closely with academy leaders to make a strong contribution to whole-academy improvement.
- Attendance has risen to above average. Pupils are punctual as they enjoy coming to the academy.
- Parents are positive about the academy's work. They are invited into the academy regularly and value the opportunities to be involved in their children's education.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In some lessons teachers' questioning does not challenge pupils to think deeply enough about their work, particularly the most able.
- In Key Stage 1 pupils do not have enough opportunities to improve their writing skills.
- Pupils are not given enough guidance when responding to teachers' comments about their work.
- Pupils are not given enough opportunity to use and apply their mathematical skills to real-life problem solving situations.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed one act of collective worship, play and lunchtime behaviour, and visited 12 lessons or parts of lessons, four of which were observed jointly with the headteacher. In addition, an inspector listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors held meetings and discussions with the acting principal, senior and middle leaders, teachers, support staff, pupils and members of the governing body and Board of Directors. An inspector also met with the academy's improvement partner.
- A wide range of documentation was scrutinised which included the academy improvement plans, the academy's self evaluation summary, work in pupils' books, checks on pupils' achievement, minutes from meetings, safeguarding information and documents relating to the setting of targets for teachers.
- Inspectors took into account informal discussions with parents and the views of the 53 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. Questionnaire responses from 16 members of staff were analysed. Inspectors talked to parents as they arrived at school with their children.

Inspection team

David Edwards, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Deborah Jenkins

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The academy is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- St Michael's Catholic Primary School converted to become an academy on 1 September 2013 and is a member of the Bishop Cleary Catholic Multi Academy Company. When its predecessor school, of the same name, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be satisfactory.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. A very small minority of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is below the national average. This additional funding is for pupils who are eligible for free school meals or those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below the national average.
- Early years provision consists of a part-time Nursery class and a full-time Reception class.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum standards set for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.
- In autumn 2014, several new teachers joined the academy including an early years teacher.
- The principal of the academy, who was previously the deputy principal, was appointed as acting principal in January 2015. At the same time two acting vice principals were appointed to the senior leadership team.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the overall quality of teaching to outstanding, so that pupils make excellent progress, by ensuring that teachers consistently set work that is sufficiently demanding for all groups of pupils, including the most able.
- Raise pupils' achievement further in English and mathematics by:
 - giving pupils more opportunity to use and apply their mathematical skills to real-life problem solving situations
 - ensuring pupils have sufficient opportunities to respond effectively to the comments teachers make about their work
 - creating opportunities for pupils to improve their writing in Key Stage 1 by undertaking more extended writing activities.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The new acting principal has an ambitious vision and has set a clear direction for the academy. Her approach to leadership is resolute and determined. With the good support of governors, she has appointed and empowered a new senior leadership team. The new team, in turn, is having a positive impact, for instance on the compilation and use of assessment information, on the leadership of the early years and on provision to support all pupils according to their particular needs and circumstances.
- The acting principal is in the process of establishing an effective team of middle leaders, including the subject leaders for English and special educational needs. The team is making good contributions to the academy's leadership.
- The acting principal provides strong leadership of teaching. She and her senior leaders have undertaken a programme of observations, with feedback and advice given to teachers about improvement. The programme has improved the quality of teaching so that it is now consistently good. The programme of teaching support has led to the successful integration of new staff members and is contributing to better progress by pupils. Academy leaders have resolutely supported the drive for improved teaching. However, this has not currently led to outstanding achievement by all pupils.
- There is clear staff support for the direction being taken. Without exception, all those members of staff who completed a questionnaire agreed that they are proud of the academy and know what they are trying to achieve as an academy.
- The range of subjects and activities provided is good. The academy gives high priority to developing pupils' knowledge and skills in reading, writing and mathematics. To teach the wider curriculum, leaders draw imaginatively on commercially available units of work. There is a considerable emphasis on environmental awareness, for example 'Welly Wednesdays' and 'Forest Fridays' in Nursery and Reception. Leaders also support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through promoting personal values. For example, singing, dance and other musical activities, events such as 'arts weeks' and 'multicultural days' make a strong contribution to pupils' cultural development. Elections to the academy council foster appreciation of democratic values. The academy also celebrates the ethnic and religious diversity of modern Britain, promoting tolerance and respect.
- The academy makes good use of its primary sport funding. For example, the funding has allowed for the employment of specialist coaches to teach aspects of physical education. Additional clubs in multiskills, netball and football have extended the range of after-hours provision. There are many opportunities for pupils to engage in competitive sport and the academy is justifiably proud of its record of sporting achievement.
- The academy spends the additional government funding for disadvantaged pupils in a large variety of ways. Leaders recognise the need to close further any gaps in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and their peers, and are currently using the funding principally to provide additional teaching assistants to support pupils identified as in danger of underachieving.
- The academy has established effective partnerships with parents. For instance, the termly parental consultation events for each class bring parents into the academy and newsletters let them know what their children will be learning. In addition, the parent information sessions, for example on the teaching of mathematics, have been well received.
- The improved rates of progress by all pupil groups reflect the success of the academy in promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination.
- Senior leaders have made effective arrangements which fully meet all safeguarding and child protection requirements.

- The academy's Board of Directors and governors have taken a close interest in its development and had a positive impact on its work. For instance, they have supported the drive for improved attendance so it is now above the national average. The Board of Directors is rightly confident in the capacity of the academy's leadership because of the senior team's robust and accurate view of the academy's effectiveness.
- The academy's improvement partner believes that the academy has improved since gaining academy status. She believes it is a good academy. She has supported the academy in implementing systems and practices which have led to rising standards.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors and the Board of Directors are very supportive of the academy. They have a very secure understanding of its particular context and analyse data to understand how well the academy is performing in comparison with other schools. They are also knowledgeable about the quality of teaching. They undertake the headteacher's annual appraisal very effectively and are well informed about the academy's arrangements to set targets for other staff. They are consulted about whether salary progression is merited and know that this judgement is closely linked to teachers' performance. The acting principal and governors have tackled any underperformance rigorously. Governors meet their statutory obligations. They also have the knowledge, skills and confidence to hold the academy to good account.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. The academy staff insist on the very highest standards of behaviour. All pupils know and understand these expectations well. Adults promote positive relationships which help pupils behave equally well in lessons and during social time.
- Pupils behave extremely well around the academy. They are polite towards adults, for example holding doors open for them. At lunchtimes in the hall where pupils eat their midday meal, the atmosphere is calm and orderly. Pupils themselves say that behaviour is good, a view endorsed by parents.
- Pupils show very positive attitudes to learning. They listen carefully to their teachers. Pupils are engaged by activities and concentrate well, which supports their learning in lessons. They cooperate well with partners to share ideas.
- School council members take their responsibilities seriously, such as fund raising and acting as a voice for their fellow pupils. These opportunities help prepare them for the next stage in their education.
- The academy's detailed record keeping shows that incidents of inappropriate behaviour are very rare and that it deals with any concerns swiftly. Teachers and teaching assistants share the same high expectations of pupils' behaviour.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- Leaders ensure that pupils feel safe in the academy and enjoy attending. Pupils' attendance is now above average and continues to improve as the school works well with parents to promote regular attendance. The academy has effective and robust procedures in place to deal with any absence.
- An older pupil told an inspector that bullying does not exist and said, 'Mrs. McHale has a zero tolerance policy to bullying'. Pupils are entirely confident that, should bullying occur, adults in the academy would respond quickly to any concerns. Pupils know about the different types of bullying, including physical, racial and cyber-bullying.
- Pupils have excellent opportunities to learn about keeping safe through lessons. They understand how to

keep safe on the internet, on the road and in the event of a fire. Pupils learn regularly about common dangers, particularly those related to safety on the academy premises.

- The academy gives high priority to pupils' safety. Staff have an excellent understanding of how to keep pupils safe; regular training ensures they are knowledgeable about the academy's safety policies and procedures.
- All parents who responded to the online questionnaire, 'Parent View', or those who spoke to inspectors stated that their children were safe in the academy.

The quality of teaching is good

- Relationships between staff and pupils are warm and respectful. The pupils' exceptionally positive attitudes and outstanding behaviour enhance the academy's well-established climate for learning.
- The good quality of teaching, including the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics, has led to pupils' increasingly good progress since the academy opened.
- The academy's records and work in pupils' books show that the quality of teaching is consistently good and sometimes better. In typical lessons, teachers ask probing questions and have high expectations of all pupils. For example, in a Year 5 guided reading lesson, pupils were challenged to use their skills of inference and deduction, making reference to extracts from the text, to support their judgements about characters and events in the book they were reading.
- In a small number of lessons teachers did not ask sufficiently challenging questions which required pupils to think more deeply about their work, particularly when questioning the most-able pupils.
- Teachers plan exciting activities which motivate pupils to learn. They regularly check pupils' achievements to ensure that tasks match their needs well. Skilled and well-trained teaching assistants effectively support pupils' learning so that all pupils make equally good progress.
- The teaching of writing is good. A focus in the last year has led to improvements in the quality of pupils' writing. Teachers' marking and feedback provide good guidance on what pupils need to do to improve their work. The presentation of pupils' writing is strongest in Years 4 to 6. However, pupils are not given enough guidance to help them to respond effectively to comments that teachers make about their work. In Key Stage 1 evidence from pupils' work books show they do not have enough opportunities to hone their extended writing skills.
- Pupils enjoy reading and standards are high. Staff promote reading well across subjects and pupils have regular opportunities to read to adults in the academy. Pupils enjoy opportunities to read fiction and non-fiction books and learning about different authors. They are keen to use the academy's interactive reading program on their computers at home.
- Good progress in mathematics is evident from work in pupils' books. Well-used classroom displays promote mathematical vocabulary and support pupils' learning. Pupils have regular opportunities to develop their understanding using practical resources. Pupils' calculation skills are strong, but the academy acknowledges that they currently do not have enough opportunities to use and apply their mathematical skills to real-life problem solving situations.

The achievement of pupils is good

- The acting principal has set high expectations for pupils' achievement across the academy. This has had a positive impact which is reflected in pupils' improved rates of progress and higher overall attainment.
- Pupils' improving rates of progress, since the school became an academy, are the result of the concerted action by school leaders. As a result, pupils in all year groups are making good progress in reading, writing

and mathematics.

- Good progress has led to high standards of attainment. In 2014, pupils' attainment in national assessments at the end of Year 6 was above the national average in reading and mathematics, English, punctuation, spelling and grammar and writing. In reading, English, punctuation, spelling and grammar and mathematics over half of the pupils in the year group reached the higher level (Level 5). In mathematics, almost a quarter of the pupils attained the highest level (level 6).
- Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 2 in 2014 was above average in reading and mathematics and in line with national averages in writing. In particular, the proportions of pupils who reached the higher level (Level 3) were above average in reading and writing.
- The academy has successfully focused on improving pupils' knowledge and understanding of phonics (the links between letters and the sounds that they make). Results in the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2014 were above the national average. The successful teaching of phonics is having a positive impact on pupils' reading and writing skills.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. One reason is that skilled teaching assistants support these pupils well. This helps them to make the same good progress as their classmates.
- The most-able pupils achieve well overall and make particularly good progress when teachers set demanding work for them. Occasionally teachers do not ask demanding enough questions of the most able to challenge them to think more deeply, which slows their progress.
- In assessments at the end of Year 6 in 2014, disadvantaged pupils performed above their classmates in reading and mathematics and were about one and a half terms behind in writing.
- In 2014, disadvantaged pupils performed above other pupils nationally in mathematics and reading and did every bit as well as other pupils in the school. Nonetheless, in writing, they were about one and a half terms behind. Overall however, the academy makes effective use of additional funding to support these pupils. The achievement gaps with other pupils nationally and across the school are closing rapidly, and some are non-existent. Nonetheless, there is still more work to be done to narrow achievement gaps to the same extent in writing. The academy's evidence shows that disadvantaged pupils are making good progress overall.

The early years provision

is good

- When children first come to the academy, in the Nursery, their knowledge and skills are generally typical for their age. They make good progress in the Nursery, and develop a good foundation for learning, especially in their communication, language skills and in their personal skills.
- Children benefit from good teaching and make good progress. By the end of the Reception Year in 2014, a higher than average proportion of children reached the expected level of attainment in their communication skills and use of language, in their personal and physical development and in mathematics. This indicates good progress in all these areas of learning. Children are well prepared in these areas for entry to Year 1.
- The 'Welly Wednesday' activities in Nursery and 'Forest Friday' activities in Reception make a strong contribution to developing children's personal and social skills and their knowledge and understanding of the world.
- Adults work as a strong team and plan an imaginative range of activities based on children's interests and ideas. For example, children in the Nursery eagerly created a cafe in the role play area. They prepared imaginary meals for their customers and took money in payment.

- Phonics teaching helps children enjoy reading and contributes effectively to developing children's writing skills.
- Children's individual learning journeys (information from ongoing checks on their progress) contain a wide range of photographs and written comments from adults. Contributions from parents enhance their importance as a complete record of children's achievements. This ensures that parents are closely involved in their children's education.
- Children behave exceptionally well in the Nursery and Reception classes because adults place significant importance on children's social and moral development. Adults and children are respectful and courteous towards each other and create a safe and harmonious environment in which learning thrives. Staff promote safe practices well in all activities, including when children are using the outdoor equipment or when they attend educational visits.
- The leadership and management of the early years is good. The teaching team has established effective routines and good expectations, to which children respond well. However, on occasions, work set could better extend the most able. Adults do much to encourage children to become independent by doing things for themselves. Teachers are making good use of the outside area.
- Parents who spoke to inspectors agree that children get the best possible start to their education at St. Michael's.

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

Unique reference number	139892
Local authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	449934

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	238
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rosalie Watkins
Principal (acting)	Stacy McHale
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected as an academy
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