

# St Michael's Catholic Academy

Beamish Road, Stockton on Tees, Billingham TS23 3DX

## Inspection dates

7–8 June 2017

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The principal provides strong leadership. His high aspirations ensure that pupils achieve increasingly well from their starting points.
- All leaders share the principal's high expectations. Staff work hard for the benefit of all pupils, and are proud members of the school.
- Governors know the school well. They are ambitious for improvement and provide good levels of support and challenge.
- The school receives high-quality advice from the chief executive officer, specialist consultants, practitioners and schools within Carmel Education Trust.
- Pupils are exceptionally well looked after in the school, and benefit spiritually, morally, socially and culturally from a wide array of educational and recreational experiences.
- Pupils attend regularly and behave well. They show positive attitudes to their learning, and are eager to achieve.
- Pupils say they feel safe at all times and that there is little bullying. Inspectors agree. Safeguarding arrangements are highly effective.
- Teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection and is consistently good. The most effective teaching helps pupils to learn and make rapid progress. This is particularly the case in subjects across key stage 3.
- In the past, many pupils have not made sufficient progress by the end of Year 11, especially in mathematics. Consistently good teaching is changing this picture, and ensuring that attainment is rising.
- Nonetheless, insufficient challenge and low expectations in the past mean that outcomes are not yet high enough for some pupils by the time they leave the school.
- This is the case for a minority of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, and from high-prior-attainment starting points. It is also true for a minority of pupils in mathematics.
- Parents are extremely positive about the school. They say how strong communication is between the school and families. They appreciate the way school staff take on board their views, and involve them in the life of the school.
- The curriculum is well planned to meet pupils' needs. Pupils take advantage of a broad range of subjects, and comprehensive careers information, that equip them well for the next stage in their lives.
- The school's cohesive programme of personal, social and health education, and strong Christian ethos, underpin pupils' excellent understanding of the importance of British values.

## Full report

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

- Accelerate the progress of pupils in mathematics, especially at key stage 4, by:
  - developing pupils' problem-solving skills
  - encouraging pupils to think more for themselves about finding answers and solutions to mathematical problems.
- Raise key stage 4 outcomes, by:
  - improving the progress of disadvantaged pupils in key stage 4 classes through fully extending the successful teaching and learning strategies already used in Years 7 to 9
  - providing more challenging work, more often, to better meet the needs of pupils with high-prior-attainment starting points.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Determined leadership from the principal has led to strong gains across the school. All areas for improvement emerging from the last inspection have been rigorously addressed. As a result, teaching is now consistently good and current pupils' outcomes are rising rapidly.
- Staff morale is high. The principal has developed a culture of high expectations, alongside a school climate that values all adults equally. Staff indicate a high sense of pride in their work in the school.
- Parents and pupils say how much the school has changed for the better in recent times. The responses from parents to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, are unequivocally supportive of the school's work. A very high proportion indicate that they would recommend the school. Pupils are similarly enthusiastic about the positive changes in teaching and learning over time. As one pupil expressed: 'When I first arrived, it was like there were potholes everywhere. They're all filled in now.'
- Leadership at all levels is strong. Senior leaders know the school well. The new leadership team, under the skilful direction of the principal, has established a strong culture of accountability and exudes constantly high expectations of all staff.
- Systems for managing the performance of staff are well organised. These systems ensure that all teachers are held to account for developing the quality of their teaching, and for making sure that the pupils they teach make good progress.
- Leaders make regular and accurate checks on the quality of teaching. Additional support is given to those teachers who do not meet leaders' expectations. Staff at the school, including those newly qualified, appreciate the high-quality advice and support they receive for their professional development. School leaders are quick to take advantage of the considerable expertise within the Carmel Education Trust, the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle, national examination boards, and the local authority.
- Leaders at all levels show a sense of urgency in improving aspects of the school's work that still require improvement. They have put in place arrangements to enhance teaching and learning in mathematics. They are persevering in key stage 4 with the successful work that has helped to diminish significantly the differences in learning and progress between disadvantaged pupils and their peers, in Years 7 to 9.
- Middle leaders are increasingly confident in helping to move the school forward. The systematic checks they make on pupils' progress and the quality of teaching in their teams bring about, for the most part, the necessary and rapid improvements.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Pupils access a good range of courses, academic and vocational, to meet their needs and aspirations. In addition, pupils benefit from an impressive array of extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities in sports, music, performing arts and various pastimes that enable them to develop their skills, talents and interests. A very small number of pupils are provided with bespoke, off-site provision that meets their individual needs.

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and understanding of life in modern Britain are exceptionally well promoted through the study of religious education, personal, social and health education, and the assembly programme. Pupils value the range of educational visits and experiences designed to promote their cultural development. These opportunities and experiences promote a deep understanding among pupils of the importance of tackling discrimination and showing tolerance, as well as adhering to rules, while encouraging freedom of speech.
- Arrangements to check the impact of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils, as well as those who enter the school with below-average attainment, are rigorous. Consequently, leaders and governors are clear about which funded actions are making a real difference, and whether overall gains are sufficient. Year 7 pupils have particularly benefited from additional support to improve their literacy and numeracy skills, because of well-targeted 'catch-up' funding.
- The support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is of a high quality. The impact of this support is checked systematically by the trust and school leaders to ensure that individual pupils make good progress and that targeted funding is used to good effect.
- Leaders' strong focus on the care and support of all pupils makes a highly positive contribution to the overall Christian values and general climate of the school. Adults and pupils interact harmoniously at all times. Visitors are openly welcomed and warmly received.
- Careers guidance is very effective for pupils, especially in key stage 4. Pupils spoke positively about the support received during their options process. A range of visitors from universities, local training establishments and companies regularly promote opportunities available for pupils when they leave the school. As a result, all Year 11 pupils continue into education, training and/or employment.

### **Governance of the school**

- Governors and trust members are ambitious for pupils and families in the local community. They show a good understanding of the strengths of the school and key priorities for continued improvement.
- The school's governors have worked successfully with the principal to tackle weaknesses in leadership and teaching, since the last inspection, and to establish a culture of high expectations.
- Governors thoroughly understand the link between performance and pay progression. They have supported the principal in having difficult conversations, and in taking assertive action in cases where performance has been poor.
- Governors have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and the progress of different groups of pupils, including those eligible for pupil premium funding. They are well informed and confident in asking questions of key leaders.
- Governors place a high priority on keeping pupils safe, and ensure that staff training is up to date and relevant.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are highly effective.
- Staff training is constantly updated, including the 'Prevent' duty training.
- Leaders follow rigorously the school's safeguarding procedures, and liaise closely with the relevant external organisations, including the local safeguarding children board.
- Senior leaders and governors regularly undertake audits for safeguarding to ensure that the school's practice is of a high quality.
- Leaders ensure a safe environment for pupils through regular risk assessments. The school site is secure and staff are vigilant in keeping pupils safe.
- The school's links with individual families, where pupils live in particularly vulnerable circumstances, are of a high order. Staff are extremely dedicated to minimise the degree of risk associated with these situations. They make themselves readily available throughout the school day, and beyond, to ensure that all pupils and families receive the support required.
- Staff have a thorough understanding of the implications of the latest version of 'Keeping children safe in education'. They use the advice and information to guide constantly their work.

### Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Teaching has improved since the last inspection so that it is now consistently good or better. This means that the vast majority of pupils are currently learning well and are making good progress.
- Pupils' learning and progress are particularly good in key stage 3, and outcomes are rising strongly in many subjects in Year 10. This is because teachers show an increasingly good understanding of pupils' different needs and learning styles, and plan effectively to ensure that learning is meaningful and thought-provoking. Skilful questioning and judicious feedback, on the part of teachers and teaching assistants, encourage pupils to persevere with their work, especially when it becomes hard. More and more pupils show a readiness to find out things out for themselves, reach their own conclusions, and demonstrate resilience in the face of challenges.
- Teaching in English, religious education, humanities, technology and creative and performing arts subjects is strong. Resources and activities are well chosen to promote high levels of interest from pupils. Time is used effectively, in these subjects, for pupils to work independently, grow in self-confidence, and develop understanding for themselves. Teaching in science is sometimes inconsistent in promoting well key scientific skills of hypothesis, interpretation, justification and evaluation.
- Teaching in mathematics is effective in developing pupils' basic calculation skills, and knowledge of fundamental mathematical concepts. It is not yet consistently effective in providing enough opportunities for pupils to apply the key mathematical skills they have gained to investigate and solve problems. As a consequence, pupils spend a lot of time competently completing similar calculations. However, a minority do not develop a depth of mathematical understanding, of which they are capable, through work that

encourages them to analyse, reflect and discover solutions for themselves.

- Staff in all subjects are keen to share the effective practice in the school, and to visit other schools within Carmel Education Trust, the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle, and beyond, to learn from colleagues with specialist expertise. This is resulting in a palpable sense of enthusiasm and excitement for teaching and learning across all years. Pupils told inspectors of the clear improvements in lessons since the last inspection. One pupil said 'There's something to look forward to every day. More often than not, you've got to think for yourself. That's why you come to school.'
- Good relationships exist between adults and pupils. This fosters a positive learning climate where low-level disruption is rare. In all subjects there is a growing focus on developing and reinforcing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Teachers increasingly check and correct pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar, and provide opportunities for pupils to practise key mathematical skills. Many teachers encourage pupils to read aloud, check their understanding, and help them to pronounce correctly specialist words and terminology. As a consequence, most pupils are confident and fluent readers.
- Homework promotes good opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their skills in reading, writing and mathematics, as well as undertaking activities and tasks which deepen subject-specific competencies and understanding.
- Teaching assistants provide pupils with effective support, especially those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This heightens their learning from their different starting points. The teaching of this group of pupils, in general, is strong across the school.
- On occasions, some teaching does not stretch the most able pupils as well as it might. This is because some teachers do not check carefully enough how effectively all pupils are progressing in lessons. As a result, some teachers do not adjust the activities early enough to sustain levels of challenge, and deepen pupils' thinking.
- Overall, teaching is good in key stage 4. However, in a small proportion of classes a minority of pupils, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, have not fully developed the skills and understanding required to produce detailed work of a high quality. A minority are not yet sufficiently confident, or enthused, to persist with their learning and grapple with difficult concepts. Historically, teaching has not been consistently strong enough to meet these pupils' needs. The current good teaching is helping to address effectively a legacy of poor skills' development and learning aptitudes on the part of a minority of pupils. However, this is not always reflected by pupils' outcomes, as outcomes are not as high as they should be by the time they leave Year 11.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Lessons and the wide array of educational visits and experiences promote stimulating and thought-provoking experiences that intrigue pupils about the world around them.

As a result, pupils develop an excellent appreciation of the beliefs and viewpoints of people from different backgrounds, faiths and cultures, as an essential part of their preparation for life in modern Britain.

- Pupils have a profound understanding of the concepts of freedom and democracy, and of Britain's parliamentary system. They are proud of their school responsibilities as student leaders, as well as of the help and support they provide for other pupils in the Good Shepherd and Emmaus centres.
- The school has a harmonious atmosphere. Pupils mix happily with each other and enjoy each other's company. They are exceptionally well-mannered and welcoming to visitors. They move from lesson to lesson in a calm and orderly fashion, always arriving on time and well-equipped.
- Pupils feel very safe in the school and exceptionally well cared for. They have total confidence in staff to help them with any problems that may arise.
- Pupils are confident in their understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They are very clear about the importance of keeping safe online and the precautions to take when using social media and a mobile phone.
- Pupils understand about different types of bullying, know that bullying is something that is repeated regularly, and show a genuine keenness to prevent it from happening in, and beyond, the school. Pupils say that when rare incidents of bullying occur, they are dealt with quickly and successfully by staff.
- The school chaplain, staff in the Emmaus and Good Shepherd centres, intervention tutors, and pastoral learning managers provide consistently high-quality support for pupils who experience social, emotional and mental health problems, or who have particular concerns. Pupils are full of praise for the school's online 'tootoot' system. This enables all pupils to use online technology to share personal difficulties, and receive bespoke support, in a highly confidential manner, at any time of the day or night.
- The school's personal, social and health programme, including regular visitors from the church and local community services, provides pupils with excellent information about how to lead a healthy lifestyle, and the importance of forging positive and supportive relationships.
- Pupils benefit from very effective careers information, advice and guidance. They feel well supported during the options process, and there is an extensive range of well-planned opportunities for pupils to learn about careers and life beyond the school.
- The school's work with vulnerable pupils, including its use of alternative provision, has significantly reduced the number of pupils at risk of not being in education, training or employment. Pupils who attend alternative provision are well supported to make good progress on the courses they are studying. Leaders are vigilant in monitoring pupils' attendance and behaviour when they attend alternative provision.
- The school site is exceptionally well kept. It is secure and very well supervised. Pupils respect the learning environment, which is clean and inviting, and free from graffiti and litter.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The vast majority of pupils behave well in lessons. They are smart in their uniforms and show respect for adults and each other. Pupils know about the systems in place to challenge any less than good behaviour in class, and to encourage good attitudes and learning. These allow teachers to deal with any interruptions to learning swiftly and effectively.
- The school is calm and orderly. Pupils conduct themselves sensibly between lessons and at social times. There is a high presence of staff on duty, so on the rare occasions when behaviour is not so good, it is dealt with swiftly and successfully.
- Pupils' attendance has risen since the last inspection, and is at the national average. The effectiveness of the school's systems to help pupils enjoy school and to want to attend well is demonstrated by the reducing numbers of pupils who have longer-term absences. This is particularly the case for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

### Outcomes for pupils

### Requires improvement

- The vast majority of current pupils make good progress, particularly across key stage 3. Progress is also accelerating in Years 10 and 11, and attainment rapidly rising. This is due to improvements in teaching since the last inspection, resulting in daily learning that is consistently effective, for the most part.
- However, a legacy of underachievement by a minority of key stage 4 pupils still prevails. This is the result of historic teaching that did not fully develop pupils' key subject skills and basic competencies, and successfully promote a thirst for learning. Outcomes by the end of Year 11 are, therefore, not yet consistently good, especially in mathematics.
- In 2016, overall Year 11 outcomes were additionally depressed by the poor achievement of a large cohort of pupils educated off-site. This cohort represented one tenth of the entire year group. The poor outcomes of this cohort had a particularly negative impact on the overall attainment and progress of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, and on those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Leaders have recognised these shortfalls, and put in place successful strategies to make sure that outcomes improve. For example, all but a very small minority of pupils are now educated on-site. Rigorous arrangements check weekly the attendance, behaviour and progress of the very few pupils attending off-site provision. Inspection evidence shows that these pupils are making good progress.
- Visits to lessons, sampling of pupils' work and other inspection evidence confirm that pupils in the school are now making good progress. This is particularly the case in English, humanities subjects (including religious education), design and technology, and creative and performing arts subjects (including physical education). Progress in vocational subjects is also strong.
- The school's own assessment information shows rapidly improving progress for different groups of pupils from their starting points. This information is frequently

checked for accuracy by 'expert' practitioners within the Carmel Education Trust. In addition, Year 11 information has been subjected to rigorous moderation by staff with experience of marking for national examination boards. Inspection evidence also shows that the school's 2016 projections of Year 11 pupils' outcomes were close to final results in many cases.

- The inspection team looked carefully at the school's assessment information showing the proportions of pupils currently on track to make secure progress for 2017 and beyond. These show that pupils are now making better progress than has been the case up to and including 2016. There is evidence that the quality of pupils' work matches the school's and trust's evaluations of their current progress.
- In the past, disadvantaged pupils have made less progress than their peers. Leaders are ensuring that the use of the pupil premium funding diminishes successfully this difference. The biggest impact to date is in Years 7 to 9, where outcomes of disadvantaged pupils are rapidly rising, largely as a result of regular attendance, increased levels of confidence, and heightened basic literacy and numeracy skills. Differences are diminishing in key stage 4, particularly in Year 10, but at a less notable rate. This is because of irregular attendance by a minority of disadvantaged pupils, despite the school's best efforts, and historical low levels of self-esteem, concentration and basic skills' development. As a consequence, by the end of Year 11 the differences in outcomes between disadvantaged pupils and their peers have not yet sufficiently diminished.
- In general, pupils make faster progress in English than in mathematics.
- In English, pupils develop competent skills to write at length, and in detail, for a range of different audiences and purposes, both formally and informally. They can analyse literary texts and evaluate the impact of a writer's language for themselves. Pupils are confident readers. They can articulate fluently their views, and confidently justify their opinions.
- In mathematics, pupils develop a good grounding in basic mathematical skills, and are competent in completing a range of calculations. They are less adept in applying mathematical skills and knowledge to investigate and solve problems. Pupils' analytical and reasoning skills, and abilities to consider different approaches to finding solutions for themselves, are not fully developed.
- The vast majority of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. Staff are well trained in assessing the needs of these pupils and in providing appropriate support.
- Historically, not all pupils from high-prior-attaining starting points make the progress of which they are capable, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Not enough attain the highest grades by the time they leave Year 11. Inspection information shows that levels of challenge for the most able, across all years, are improving, and that school leaders are projecting higher proportions of students, in most subjects, to be on track to attain top GCSE grades this summer. Nonetheless, the outcomes of a minority of pupils from high-prior-attainment starting points still require improvement.

## School details

Unique reference number	139656
Local authority	Stockton
Inspection number	10031994

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	857
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Mary Toth
Principal	Andrew Ramsey
Telephone number	01642 870003
Website	<a href="http://stmichaelsacademy.org.uk">stmichaelsacademy.org.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:enquiries@stmichaelsacademy.org.uk">enquiries@stmichaelsacademy.org.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	9–10 June 2015

## Information about this school

- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school is smaller than the averaged-sized secondary school.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. Smaller numbers of pupils have an education, health and care plan than seen nationally.

- The school is part of the Carmel Education Trust.
- The school uses largely three alternative providers for a very small number of Year 11 pupils, Aspire and Redhill (local authority provision) and The Skills Academy at Stockton Riverside College.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Since the previous inspection there have been significant changes in staffing, including new senior and middle leaders.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited a wide range of lessons across the school, looking extensively at pupils' work in all lessons. Visits to lessons were made with two senior leaders.
- Alongside senior leaders, inspectors reviewed pupil progress data and pupils' work in books, information about the performance of teachers, documents pertaining to safety and behaviour, and information pertaining to safeguarding.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils in lessons and at breaktimes and met with groups of pupils separately.
- Meetings were held with the principal, senior and middle leaders and governors. A discussion was also held with senior leaders from the Carmel Education Trust.
- Inspectors took account of the 56 replies from parents, and the 34 replies from staff to Ofsted's questionnaires. No pupils responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire. Inspectors also considered a variety of recent school surveys of the views of parents and pupils of the work of the school.

## Inspection team

Andy Swallow, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Christine Durand	Ofsted Inspector
Lee Elliot	Ofsted Inspector
Nick Horn	Ofsted Inspector

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