

St Michael's Church of England Primary School, Steventon

The Causeway, Steventon, Abingdon, Oxfordshire OX13 6SQ

Inspection dates

11–12 June 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The new headteacher and leadership team have been successful in improving the school. They have used advice and support wisely to help them to sequence initiatives well. As a result, teaching is good and outcomes for pupils are improving rapidly.
- Assessment systems have been revised and reviewed. Information about pupils' learning is regularly checked to ensure that it is accurate and useful.
- The carefully chosen values that underpin the school's work are well known by everyone. They have provided firm foundations on which leaders are cementing shared expectations of conduct and attitudes.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of what these values mean in their daily lives, and most are successful in using them to guide their choices.
- Governance is effective. Governors have successfully ensured that they have the skills and information they need to hold leaders effectively to account.
- Current pupils are making good progress from their starting points, including disadvantaged pupils. Nevertheless, not enough pupils are reaching the higher standards in writing.
- Leaders have shown that they have the capacity to further improve the quality of teaching. While teaching is mostly good, occasionally it is not matched closely enough to pupils' needs or abilities.
- The curriculum is broad, rich and interesting for pupils. Pupils benefit from a varied and interesting daily diet of teaching and learning. However, the curriculum does not provide enough opportunity for pupils, particularly the most able, to extend and apply their writing skills.
- Children get off to a strong start in the early years. Current children are making good progress to be well prepared for Year 1.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in writing for the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to develop their writing across the wider curriculum.
- Further improve teaching by:
 - using ongoing assessments of what pupils can do to plan learning that is consistently well matched to their needs and abilities
 - ensuring that teachers systematically identify and respond to pupils' misconceptions and provide them with stretch and challenge.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher, other leaders and governors are passionate about the basis for the school's thoughtfully chosen values of courage, respect and perseverance. They are determined that teaching and reinforcement of these values, and what they mean, are of central importance throughout the school. This ambition motivates and supports leaders as they drive the school forward. They have the highest aspirations for all and strive tirelessly to improve pupils' outcomes.
- Since the arrival of the headteacher after the last inspection, many systems and policies have been streamlined and revised. Leaders have ensured that assessment information is accurate. It is well used by leaders, who check carefully and regularly that pupils are making increasingly good progress and attaining well.
- The newly formed leadership team has successfully raised the quality of teaching. Leaders work closely with colleagues to offer help and guidance. Additional training and support from the local authority has been well chosen to further strengthen this. Teaching across the school is now mostly good, although a few inconsistencies remain.
- Leaders are realistic and accurate in their own evaluations of the school's effectiveness. There is a clear focus on securing further improvement, demonstrated by the well-chosen projects that are at various stages of implementation. Planning for these developments is detailed and clear.
- The leadership of provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is effective. The special educational needs coordinator ensures that pupils' needs are identified early. She maintains close relationships with a range of outside agencies to obtain relevant expert advice. Through staff training and improved teaching, she has ensured that pupils' needs are increasingly well understood and met.
- Leaders' work in developing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is strong. Pupils are respectful and tolerant. They demonstrate a keenness to be supportive and kind to each other. The firm emphasis leaders place on promoting the school's values, alongside opportunities to learn about different cultures and religions, ensures that pupils develop a strong moral compass and broad positive attitudes.
- The sport premium has been used in part to provide staff training in physical education (PE). This has allowed pupils access to a wider range of provision and, more sustainably, has enabled class teachers to develop their own teaching skills and expertise. Leaders have evaluated the positive difference that this has made to pupils' experiences, participation and progress.
- The pupil premium strategy is effective. Leaders' knowledge of individual pupils is strong. This knowledge is then used effectively to devise individualised support to meet the specific needs of the small number of disadvantaged pupils. Leaders have high aspirations for disadvantaged pupils. They know that currently not enough are attaining at the higher standards, particularly in writing.
- The curriculum is varied and interesting for pupils. They enjoy a suitably broad range of learning which sparks their interest and develops their skills. High-quality artwork

abounds throughout the corridors. Pupils' singing in assembly is skilled and melodic. They participate enthusiastically in exciting scientific experiments and design projects. However, the curriculum is not consistently well used to extend pupils' writing skills.

Governance of the school

- Governance is effective. Through a process of recruitment and training, governors have ensured that they have the right skills to be effective partners with leaders in securing continued improvement. Governors demonstrate a high degree of commitment to the school. They gather a wide range of information to ensure that they are well placed to understand the school's strengths and development needs.
- Governors are understandably proud of the improvements since the previous inspection and aspects of increased provision, such as the addition of the nursery. Nevertheless, they remain ambitious for the future. The governing body has a realistic and accurate view of the school's overall effectiveness. For instance, they recognise that, despite improvement, not enough pupils currently reach the higher standards in writing.
- Governors take a systematic approach to fulfilling their statutory duties. They provide effective oversight of safeguarding arrangements. They know that the additional money the school receives for sports and for the pupil premium has a positive impact on improving outcomes for pupils. This close scrutiny ensures that they fulfil appropriately their financial obligations.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have created a strong safeguarding culture that permeates throughout the school. Well-trained staff work closely together to keep pupils safe. Regular safeguarding updates keep this important work at the forefront of everyone's minds. When recruiting new staff, all appropriate background checks are made. This information is logged accurately on the school's single central record. The school's safeguarding practices meet statutory government guidelines.
- Staff and leaders know confidently the action to take in response to any concerns. The school works effectively with child protection officers from the local authority. If this external service is not good enough, leaders will demand better care and support for children. Leaders always act in the very best interests of children at risk, and challenge others to do the same.
- Pupils learn well how to keep themselves safe, including online. Most parents and staff who responded to the Ofsted surveys or spoke to inspectors were confident that pupils were safe at school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is typically good throughout the school. Current pupils learn well across a range of subjects, including reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching is underpinned by secure subject knowledge, particularly in mathematics and English. As a result, pupils can recall and explain their learning, demonstrating a secure understanding of a variety of concepts.
- Pupils are clear about what they are learning and how to improve their work. Adults support them well in doing this so that pupils make good progress from their starting points.
- Mathematics teaching is typified by logical sequences of work to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding systematically over time. Pupils use equipment well to help demonstrate their secure understanding of the concepts that underpin their thinking. Pupils have secure computational skills. For instance, in a session spotting patterns, pupils were adept at manipulating a range of calculations until they found the appropriate number sequences.
- Teaching about grammar is generally a positive feature of English teaching. Pupils are mostly successful in achieving these objectives in their work. This allows them to shape and adapt their writing with confidence and accuracy.
- The wider curriculum provides exciting opportunities for pupils to learn in a range of subjects. For instance, during the inspection pupils were immersed in designing and building wooden buggies. They were building electric circuits confidently and manipulating woodworking tools safely and with dexterity.
- Teachers make good use of skilled and knowledgeable teaching assistants to support learning throughout lessons. Adults' subject knowledge is strong. Teachers and teaching assistants facilitate discussions between pupils well.
- Teachers' expectations are mostly high. Overall, they cater well for the range of abilities in their classes. Teachers are gaining confidence in using the improved assessment processes to help to ensure that teaching is increasingly well matched to pupils' needs, although this is not fully embedded across the school.
- Careful provision for pupils with SEND focuses closely on pupils' specific areas of difficulty. Teachers are also sometimes successful in extending and challenging the most able pupils. However, there is scope for raising expectations of what the most able can achieve sooner in writing.
- Writing opportunities across the wider curriculum are not consistently well developed. Despite exciting learning experiences, pupils' work to record and develop the ideas and learning that comes from these is sometimes left unfinished.
- Adults are generally skilful in using a wide range of questions to support and enhance learning. However, on occasion their questions lack sufficient focus to probe pupils' understanding and to challenge them to think more deeply. When this is the case, teachers sometimes miss opportunities to adapt their teaching to address pupils' misconceptions.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are mostly polite, respectful and friendly to each other. They take pride in their school and embody its values. Pupils mix well during breaktimes, making these typically enjoyable experiences. Supervision is unobtrusive but vigilant, ensuring, for example, that the occasional playground slip is well supported by prompt first aid and a note to take home.
- Pupils work well together in lessons, supporting each other and sharing ideas confidently. They enjoy opportunities to be part of the wider school, for instance by operating the technical equipment during assembly.
- Vulnerable pupils receive additional care that supports their emotional well-being and boosts their confidence and self-esteem well. The headteacher is passionate in his aspiration for high-quality provision for pupils with social and emotional needs. Pupils appreciate that the school is a caring community. They believe that they are all valued equally within the school, irrespective of circumstance. They told inspectors that, 'At our school we care for each other and we look after each other.'
- Pupils state confidently that they feel safe at school. They receive a well-planned programme of additional personal development learning that, for example, deepens their understanding of bullying and how to keep safe.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Most pupils behave well throughout the day. In lessons, pupils usually work well together, demonstrating respect and positive relationships. They respond promptly to class teachers' instructions, reflecting the well-embedded rules and routines.
- Some pupils demonstrate excellent learning behaviours. However, a handful of pupils in some classes are not consistently able to sustain this high level of purposeful focus when activities are more open ended, or at transition points. When this is the case, adults support pupils well to skilfully draw them into learning or provide appropriate support.
- Most pupils and parents believe that the school makes sure its pupils are well behaved. Nonetheless, a small minority lack confidence in the school's success in managing pupils' conduct and behaviour. A few pupils report that lessons in some classes can be disrupted by silly behaviour, although this was not observed during the inspection. Leaders monitor behaviour closely. Their records demonstrate appropriate and swift responses to occasional incidents of poor behaviour.
- Pupils attend well. Leaders ensure that families know the importance of not missing too much school. In the very few cases where regular school attendance provides a challenge, leaders provide bespoke and wide-ranging support. As a result, persistent

absence rates are low.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Leaders' successful actions have led to a significant rise in pupils' outcomes. Across the school, current pupils are making good progress from their starting points in a range of subjects, including reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils achieve well in phonics. From the Nursery upwards, children demonstrate a strong and growing ability to apply phonics knowledge to successfully sound out new words.
- Reading at the school is promoted positively. Pupils read regularly, make progress and enjoy books. Pupils read well and with enthusiasm. They have books that are well matched to their ability. Older pupils confidently read tricky books with sophisticated story lines, which they discuss with insight and understanding.
- Pupils develop well to be confident and competent mathematicians. They have secure numerical understanding which they can apply to help them to solve problems. Pupils can explain their mathematical reasoning, which is generally rooted in a confident understanding of numbers and concepts.
- Pupils' outcomes are positive across a range of subjects. Pupils enjoy the opportunities provided by the rich curriculum to develop a broad set of skills which prepare them well for the next stages of their education.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND make similarly strong progress as their peers, often from lower starting points. Some pupils make even better progress and begin to catch up with their peers. Leaders are tenacious in trying to achieve this success for all and in further raising aspiration so that, for instance, more disadvantaged pupils attain the highest standards, particularly in writing.
- Most pupils' writing across the school is good and improving. The technical aspects of their writing are mostly accurate. Pupils employ a wide range of punctuation and sentence structures in their writing. However, a few pupils are not yet achieving as well as they should for their age, and some most able pupils are not yet writing at the highest standards. Some of the most able pupils do not develop and sustain their ideas well enough in writing across the curriculum to be securely working at greater depth.

Early years provision

Good

- Since the previous inspection, early years provision has experienced considerable change and development. There is a new leader, new staff and a nursery has been added to provision.
- In 2018, leaders were disappointed with outcomes at the end of Reception Year when far fewer children attained a good level of development than national proportions. Since that time, provision has strengthened considerably so that current children are making good progress from their starting points and are well placed to move into Year

1 with all the skills they need for continued success.

- The early years leader provides strong leadership. Under her careful direction and training, staff make accurate assessments of children's abilities. Parents also contribute to these assessments regularly through their own observations at home. This comprehensive picture is used by staff to devise learning activities that develop children's individual skills well. As a result, children, including those who need to catch up from lower starting points, make strong progress.
- Imaginative and skilled teaching captures children's interests and enthusiasm. Well-judged teamwork between the teacher and teaching assistant helps provide effective support for children, including those with SEND. When appropriate, adults participate in play and deepen children's knowledge and understanding with effective questioning. At other times, they stand back appropriately to ensure that children learn independently. This careful balance nurtures successfully children's emerging skills and builds their confidence.
- The environment, indoors and out, is bright, attractive and well organised. Staff and leaders have included thoughtfully designed and clearly designated areas to promote the full range of children's learning and development.
- Children focus well on their learning and playing because activities are interesting and fun. This is most evident during focused work, and when children choose their own activity. For instance, during the inspection children were immersed in investigating paper aeroplanes, helping each other by suggesting ways to improve the design through varying the wing shape. Occasionally in Reception Year, some children lack focus during carpet time, but this inattention is generally short-lived and children are quickly refocused by staff or by a change in activity.

School details

Unique reference number	123160
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10088138

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	205
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Daniel Ashford
Headteacher	Paul Atkins
Telephone number	01235831298
Website	www.stmichaelssteventon.co.uk
Email address	headteacher.3241@st-michaels-pri.oxon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	21–22 March 2017

Information about this school

- St Michael’s Church of England Primary School is a smaller-than-average-sized primary school. Most pupils are of White British heritage. In 2017, the school expanded the early years foundation stage to include nursery provision.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has appointed a new headteacher and a new senior leadership team is in place.
- External reviews of governance and several other aspects of the school’s work have been commissioned. The local authority has provided an enhanced level of support for school leaders.
- The school has a smaller-than-average proportion of pupils who are supported by pupil premium funding.
- The school’s last statutory inspection of Anglican and Methodist schools (SIAMS) took

place in October 2015.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was the first re-inspection since the school was judged to require improvement in March 2017.
- The inspectors, accompanied by senior leaders, visited lessons across the school. Pupils' behaviour was observed around the school, including during assembly and breaktimes.
- The inspectors looked at pupils' work in lessons and checked a selection of pupils' books with subject leaders.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, governors and staff.
- The lead inspector met with the systems leader from the local authority. Telephone conversations were also held with representatives from the local authority and the diocese.
- An inspector met formally with a group of pupils and spoke informally to other pupils during lessons and around the school. A number of pupils read to an inspector.
- A wide range of documentation was considered, including: the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans; minutes of the governing body's meetings; reports from the local authority and external reviews; information on pupils' progress and attainment; and records of pupils' behaviour and attendance. The lead inspector scrutinised records related to safeguarding.
- The inspectors took account of parents' views through 88 responses to the Ofsted survey, Parent View, including 53 free-text comments, five emails received during the inspection and through informal discussions with parents. Inspectors also considered 25 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Deborah Gordon, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Kevin Parfoot

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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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