

Inspection of St Michael's CofE Primary School

Dalston, Carlisle, Cumbria CA5 7LN

Inspection dates: 2 and 3 July 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy, polite, caring and friendly. They greet staff and each other with a wave and a smile. Pupils appreciate the positive relationships that they have with staff. As soon as children join the school in the early years, they benefit from a high level of care. Children settle in quickly and make a positive start to their education.

Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), respond well to the high aspirations that the school has for their achievement and for their conduct. They achieve well. Pupils show positive behaviour during lessons and around school. They treat each other with kindness.

Pupils enjoy taking part in activities that develop their talents and interests, including choir and clubs in chess and sports. The school provides opportunities for pupils to take on leadership roles. For example, as 'book buddies', older pupils relish reading and talking about books with children in the early years.

Pupils benefit from many trips, such as to castles, cities and places with geographical features including rivers and wetlands. These visits help pupils to deepen their understanding of the wider world. Pupils also experience adventurous activities and residential stays. They become resilient, confident and independent young people.

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

Governors have worked successfully with the school to address the areas for improvement that were identified at the previous inspection. Pupils, parents and carers alike have welcomed these positive changes. Pupils now benefit from a high-quality education. The school has an accurate picture of its performance. Governors provide an appropriate level of support and challenge to the school. Together, they have established a school where everyone is valued.

The school has designed an ambitious curriculum. It has thought carefully about the important information that pupils should learn, from the beginning of the early years. Pupils' knowledge builds securely over time. They achieve well across a broad range of subjects. In the Reception Year, children learn all that they should to be well prepared for the demands of key stage 1.

Staff make regular checks on what pupils know and remember. This allows them to identify any gaps or misconceptions in learning that pupils develop. In the main, staff use this information to design activities that help most pupils to build their knowledge securely. However, at times, these activities do not address some pupils' misunderstandings. When this happens, these pupils do not develop sufficient depth of understanding in some subjects.

The school accurately identifies the additional needs of pupils with SEND. Staff support these pupils to learn alongside their peers. Pupils with SEND achieve well.

Reading has a high profile at this school. Staff have a comprehensive understanding of pupils' reading needs. They deliver the phonics programme expertly. Children begin to learn to read as soon as they start school in the Reception Year. Pupils who have gaps in their phonics knowledge receive the help that they need to catch up quickly. The books that pupils read contain the sounds that they already know. This helps pupils to become fluent readers. Children in the early years benefit from the meaningful conversations that they have with staff. They quickly become confident communicators.

The school's well-considered reading programme makes a valuable contribution to pupils' understanding of the world. For example, pupils learn about the importance of teamwork, how to care for animals and how to deal with bereavement.

Pupils attend school regularly. They are highly motivated in their learning. They work extremely well together during lessons. The school provides appropriate support for a small number of pupils who need help to successfully manage their own behaviour. From the beginning of the early years, children learn how to recognise their emotions and to talk about their feelings.

The school prioritises pupils' wider development. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They are encouraged to care for their environment, to raise money for different charities and to talk about important world events. Pupils know how to keep themselves physically and mentally healthy. They know the signs of a healthy relationship and how their body changes as they grow. Pupils enjoy learning about different faiths and cultures. They value the differences that exist between people. Pupils know how to be a respectable member of the community.

The school supports staff's well-being and workload well. For example, staff appreciate working as a team when designing the curriculum. They feel trusted to carry out their roles and are proud to contribute to the ongoing improvements at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- On occasions, staff are not quick enough to rectify the gaps and misconceptions in some pupils' knowledge. This means that these pupils move on to new learning before they are ready. The school should support staff in addressing gaps in pupils' learning, so that pupils successfully build the depth of knowledge that they should.

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	112246
Local authority	Cumberland
Inspection number	10294284
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	203
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chairs of governing body	Rachel Hogarth and Billy Mallinson
Headteacher	Lorna Smith
Website	www.st-michaels.cumbria.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	25 May 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This Church of England school is part of the Diocese of Carlisle. The last section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, took place in December 2017. The next section 48 inspection is due to take place by December 2025.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision for pupils.
- The school provides a breakfast and after-school club for pupils.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspections are a point-in-time inspection 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.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspectors held discussions

about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- The inspectors met with the headteacher and other school leaders.
- The lead inspector held meetings with members of the governing body, including the joint chairs of governors. He also spoke with representatives of the local authority and of the diocese.
- The inspectors met with leaders to discuss SEND, pupils' behaviour and attitudes and the provision for pupils' wider development.
- The lead inspector observed some pupils from the Reception Year and Years 1 and 2 read to a familiar adult.
- The inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. There were no responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and for pupils. The inspectors gathered the views of staff and pupils throughout the inspection.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record and took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils. They considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at social times.

Inspection team

Andy Cunningham, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Rachael Alarcon

Ofsted Inspector

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