

Inspection of St Michael's C of E Primary School

Dalston, Carlisle, Cumbria CA5 7LN

Inspection dates: 25–26 February 2020

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

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 we spoke to told us that the school is like 'a big happy family'. Pupils feel safe and well cared for. They thrive in a nurturing environment. Pupils are kind to each other and respect people's differences. Older pupils recognise that behaviour is better than it used to be. Bullying is rare. Pupils say that if it does happen, they tell an adult and it stops. Most parents and guardians agreed with this.

Pupils enjoy their lessons. They learn well in reading, writing and mathematics because their learning builds on what they already know and can do. Teachers have high expectations of pupils in these subjects. However, pupils' learning in other subjects is not as well organised. In subjects like history, pupils do not always see the connection between one lesson and the next. Pupils have gaps in their knowledge because their learning is not well ordered.

Pupils have many opportunities to develop their interests and responsibilities in school. Older pupils help care for younger pupils on the playground. School councillors help the headteacher to make decisions about the school. Pupils access a wide range of after-school clubs. These are well attended by all pupils.

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

Leaders have transformed the curriculum for reading, writing and mathematics. They have invested heavily in professional development to improve these subjects. Curriculum plans set out what pupils will learn and in what order they will learn it. Leaders check on how pupils are progressing in these subjects. As a result, most pupils achieve the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2.

Leaders have developed detailed planning for science. This sets out the content and sequence of learning for most year groups. For example, pupils in Year 5 were learning how the Earth moves around the Sun. They could relate this to earlier learning in Year 3 about the Sun and shadows. However, not all teachers follow the sequence of lessons laid out in the science planning. As a result, some pupils do not develop the scientific knowledge they need as a foundation for future learning.

In other subjects, curriculum leaders are only starting to develop the expertise that they need to ensure that the curriculum is sufficiently ambitious. In subjects like history, computing and art planning is underdeveloped. This means that teachers have too little guidance to plan learning that is well ordered. As a result, pupils' learning does not systematically build on what they already know and can do. Leaders know that there is much to do to ensure that pupils learn the knowledge they should in subjects other than reading, writing and mathematics.

Leaders have introduced a new phonics programme. Staff are highly trained. A daily phonics lesson ensures that pupils learn and remember the sounds that letters make. Books are well matched to the sounds that pupils know. Pupils use their

phonic knowledge to sound out unfamiliar words. Staff provide effective support for pupils who fall behind. In 2019, the proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard in the phonics screening check was broadly in line with the national average.

Older pupils are avid readers. They develop their fluency and comprehension through reading carefully selected class novels. Parents and pupils share a love of reading at the monthly reading cafes.

Children settle quickly into the Reception class. Staff take every opportunity to develop children's language and mathematical skills. Staff use the outdoor environment to enrich learning. For example, children visited a local forest centre. They collected natural materials and made string maps to show the journey of a mouse. They shared these journeys using a range of geographical vocabulary.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive effective support to access the curriculum. This is usually provided in class, so that pupils do not miss out on learning in the wider curriculum. Pupils with SEND make steady progress through the targets on their plans.

Pupils know the importance of helping people who are less fortunate than themselves. One pupil has inspired the whole school to support a toilet twinning project. Pupils proudly display the community scrapbook which records fundraising events.

Governors know the school well. They share the same ambition as the headteacher to improve the curriculum. Governors undertake a wide range of training. This helps them to support and challenge the headteacher effectively.

Pupils, parents and staff recognise the positive changes that the headteacher is making. Teachers appreciate the opportunities that leaders provide to improve their learning. This includes the recent training on the role of the curriculum leader.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make the correct checks on adults who work and volunteer at the school. Staff are well trained to spot the signs that a pupil may be at risk. Staff regularly update their safeguarding training. As a result, staff are knowledgeable and vigilant. When necessary, they take the right action to follow up their concerns.

Pupils are taught to recognise risk. For example, during a fire drill, pupils remained calm. They followed carefully the instructions from adults. Pupils evacuated the building in a matter of minutes. Younger pupils learn about road safety. Older pupils learn how to ride their bike safely on the road.

What does the school need to do to improve?

- In the foundation subjects detailed curriculum planning is not available to teachers. This means that there is insufficient guidance for teachers to plan in these subjects. Teachers are not clear what is the most important knowledge to be learned and in what order it should be learned. As a result, new learning does not build on what pupils already know. Senior leaders should ensure that for every foundation subject there is a clear sequence of learning which shows how pupils will develop and build on their knowledge, so that pupils achieve well in these subjects.
- Foundation subject leaders do not yet have the knowledge and skills that they need to contribute to curriculum improvements. Recent training for subject leaders is clarifying the expectations of the role. As a result, curriculum leaders are in the early stages of influencing the quality of what is planned and implemented in their subjects. Senior leaders should ensure that foundation subject leaders have time and support to plan the curriculum and carry out the necessary checks on its implementation and impact.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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	112246
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10121976
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	216
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Kirstie Somerville and Rachel Hogarth
Headteacher	Julie Paisley
Website	www.st-michaels.cumbria.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	9–10 November 2017

Information about this school

- The current headteacher took up her appointment in May 2018.
- The current deputy headteacher took up her appointment in September 2018.
- The current joint chairs of the governing body were appointed in April 2019.
- This is a Church of England voluntary controlled school. It is part of the diocese of Carlisle. It was last inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 in December 2017.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- During the inspection we met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, curriculum leads and other members of staff including the school bursar.
- We spoke with a group of governors including the joint chairs of the governing body.
- We spoke with a representative of the local authority.

- We looked at a range of documentation relating to safeguarding including the single central record. We met with the headteacher who is responsible for safeguarding to discuss how the school keeps its pupils safe.
- We did deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, science and history. We visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and talked to them about their experiences of school.
- On the second day of the inspection we also looked at wider aspects of the curriculum, such as French, writing, art, religious education (RE) and computing.
- We spoke to members of the school council.
- We visited a local outdoor forest centre where Reception-age children were spending the day.
- We considered the views of 59 pupils who responded to the pupil survey.
- We spoke to several parents at the start of the school day. The views of 58 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View were considered.
- We observed pupils reading and spoke to many pupils about their reading.
- We considered the views of 24 members of staff who responded to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Garry White, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Julie Brookes

Ofsted Inspector

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