

# St Michael's Church of England Primary School

Maple Road, Pelsall, Walsall WS3 4JJ

**Inspection dates** 4–5 May 2016

**Overall effectiveness** **Outstanding**

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school

- The headteacher, supported by a team of dedicated, capable and experienced leaders, has pursued excellence in every aspect of the school's provision. This has resulted in important improvements to the quality of pupils' education since the previous inspection. Consequently, the overall effectiveness of the school is outstanding. Pupils thrive in their academic and personal achievements.
- Pupils' outcomes are outstanding. By the time pupils leave the school at the end of key stage 2, they achieve standards that are well above the national average. This is because they make substantial progress across the school.
- Leaders, teachers and adults work relentlessly to improve the learning and progress of every pupil.
- Pupils read exceptionally well. Effective teaching of phonics ensures that pupils quickly develop their skills in reading and writing and continue to develop them as they move through the school.
- Teaching is outstanding. Teachers inspire pupils to produce work of the highest standards. Highly effective assessment practices ensure that pupils make substantial progress in their knowledge, skills and understanding throughout the school.
- An outstanding curriculum, underpinned by the school's powerful ethos, promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well. Pupils enjoy a wealth of stimulating learning opportunities, including playing musical instruments and participation in choral and drama performances, which contribute strongly to their personal development.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. Pupils demonstrate extremely positive attitudes to learning in class and conduct themselves in an exemplary manner around the school. They communicate eloquently what they need to do to improve their learning and are highly motivated to do this.
- Children in the early years make outstanding progress. Effective leadership and a stimulating curriculum ensures that a much higher than average proportion of pupils reach age-related expectations by the end of Reception.
- Governors know the school well and are very effective in the way that they support and challenge the school to improve further.
- Parents have very positive views about their children's progress and welfare at the school.

## Full report

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

- Further close the gaps in the achievement between girls and boys in writing by continuing to build on existing strategies to accelerate the progress of boys, and ensuring that pupils are progressed on to more difficult tasks when ready.
- Ensure that the impact of all initiatives is rigorously monitored and evaluated.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- Under the strong and determined leadership of the headteacher, the school has continued to move from strength to strength. The school's motto, 'working together for success' reflects the harmonious and cohesive school community in which teachers and pupils aspire to be the best they can be. As a result, pupils and children achieve outcomes that are well above the national average in both the main school and early years and develop into successful young citizens who are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Leaders have an accurate understanding of what the school does well and what needs to be done to improve the school further. Leaders plan effectively to continuously improve the school. Variability in the quality of teaching, identified at the time of the previous inspection, has been significantly reduced and teaching across the whole school improved, so that pupils make consistently strong progress in all year groups. Relative historic weaknesses in the early years have been robustly tackled, and, as a consequence, the outcomes of children leaving Reception have risen significantly. This demonstrates leaders' excellent capacity to improve.
- A well-established and experienced team of senior leaders support the headteacher very effectively. They ensure that high expectations of teaching and of pupils' learning are promoted in all classrooms. Rigorous systems of assessment underpin the curriculum and teaching, and make sure that pupils make outstanding progress across their time in the school. Staff are unanimous that the school is led well.
- The quality of teaching is checked carefully by leaders at all levels. Well-considered whole-staff training, the sharing of good practice and support networks across teachers are resulting in continuous improvements to the quality of teaching. Targets to manage the performance of staff are set precisely and linked to school improvement priorities to ensure that all staff contribute to, and are accountable for, helping the school to improve further. For example, this academic year, many teachers are focusing on reducing the gaps between girls and boys in their writing. These systems make sure that all staff are fully committed to ensuring pupils achieve high standards and that staff develop their teaching and leadership skills further.
- Leaders of subjects play a prominent role in delivering improvements. They have a forensic and incisive knowledge of their areas and implement robust plans to drive further improvements. Outstanding provision for pupils with special educational needs and disability ensures that these pupils benefit from well-coordinated additional support. High-quality provision offered by well-trained teachers and skilled teaching assistants in the classroom enables the needs of these pupils to be met so they achieve well.
- Additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils is used very effectively. An extensive range of strategies are applied to remove any barriers to learning and ensure that pupils achieve well. These include extra tuition, pastoral support to build pupils' self-esteem, confidence and social and emotional skills, support for families, and access to books, resources and educational visits. Leaders evaluate how the pupil premium is used thoroughly to make sure that it has its intended impact. As a consequence, disadvantaged pupils attend well and their progress and attainment is improving in all year groups.
- The primary sports funding helps to provide pupils across the school with access to a broad range of sporting opportunities both through their sports lessons, which are delivered by specialist sports coaches, and through a popular programme of after-school activities. This work makes an important contribution to pupils' physical development, engagement and enjoyment of sport, fitness skills and leadership abilities.
- The curriculum is outstanding. Well-founded approaches to the delivery of English and mathematics by specialist teachers and smaller than average class sizes ensure that pupils make excellent progress in their acquisition of basic skills. Broad and balanced coverage of foundation subjects enables pupils to develop a secure understanding of a vibrant range of topics and provides important opportunities for pupils to rehearse their reading, writing and mathematical skills in different, exciting contexts.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is outstanding and permeates all aspects of the school's work. Assemblies, the religious education curriculum, links with the church, topic work and pupils' engagement with charitable and community events promote pupils' spiritual and moral understanding highly effectively. The British values of tolerance and respect are an integral part of the school's Christian ethos and these values are further promoted through 'diversity weeks'. A successful 'school council' develops pupils' engagement with democratic processes and enables them to contribute their ideas to improve the school. Excellent access to musical tuition, high levels of involvement with the school's musical and dramatic performances and links with arts organisations help to foster pupils'

appreciation and deep engagement with the arts.

- The promotion of equality of opportunity is also an important part of the school's values. Pupils are taught about the importance of caring for and helping others. This is reflected in their considerate behaviour in the classroom and during breaktime and lunchtime. Leaders and all staff are fully committed to ensuring the highest standards of achievement for all pupils, regardless of background, and work actively to remove any barriers pupils may have to learning.
- The local authority has provided light-touch support for the school, but has maintained a clear and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They recognise the considerable improvements and high standards that leaders have successfully brought about. In addition, the outstanding leadership skills of the headteacher are further evident in the range of support she offers to other schools.
- Parents value the work of leaders and teachers and hold the quality of education that the school provides in high regard. They say that the school is 'fantastic' and describe how their children are happy and make excellent progress. Parents say that the school communicates well with them and engages them through parental workshops. They find staff at the school friendly and approachable and say that the school responds to any concerns raised. Parents also value the extensive range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities afforded to their children. One parent described the school as 'a lovely, welcoming school that helps my child to do well'.
- On occasion, leaders do not evaluate the impact of their work precisely enough. Nevertheless, there is clear evidence that the initiatives they have adopted have made a positive impact.
- **The governance of the school**
  - Governance is outstanding. The governing body has been restructured to enable governors to perform their duties with even greater rigour. Governors regularly audit their skills to make sure that they have the necessary skills set to perform fulfil their roles and responsibilities well. Consequently, they undertake their duties with great efficiency and effectiveness.
  - Regular, detailed reporting from the headteacher, scrutiny of published performance information and links with different areas of the school enable governors to develop a clear understanding of how well the school is performing in relation to other schools nationally. As a result, governors have a thorough awareness of the strengths of the school and any areas for further development. They check carefully that leaders are bringing about improvements.
  - Governors are assiduous in ensuring that school's resources are used efficiently to support initiatives that are improving outcomes for pupils.
  - Governors fulfil their statutory duties effectively and have a clear overview of such issues as the management of staff performance and safeguarding.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have successfully promoted a culture in which the safety and welfare of pupils is afforded the highest priority. A detailed and robust policy, coupled with a range of appropriate training, ensures that staff are alert and vigilant to the signs that pupils may be at risk, including the dangers of extremism. Staff have a clear understanding of procedures and know what to do to make sure that pupils are kept safe from harm. Effective work with the local authority and families ensures that the welfare of pupils is secured. Leaders ensure that pupils have numerous opportunities to be taught how to keep safe.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding**

- The quality of teaching is of a high standard across the school. Its impact on pupils' learning and progress over time is acutely evident in the quality of pupils' work in their books, the eloquence with which they talk about their learning, and their outcomes.
- Classrooms are stimulating, well-resourced environments in which to learn. Teachers use their strong subject knowledge and a wide range of carefully selected strategies and approaches to engage pupils in their learning. High-quality relationships between teachers and pupils, and a culture of cooperation, foster pupils' love of learning and thirst for knowledge. Pupils are enthused because they say that their teachers 'make learning fun'. As a result, pupils take responsibility for their learning and progress. In a Year 4 mathematics lesson for example, the teacher's inspirational use of song, peer discussion and visual aids, coupled with systematic checks of how well pupils were learning, made learning memorable for pupils and enabled them to rapidly acquire an understanding of how to plot coordinates.

- An important feature of teaching in the school is the way in which teachers use their knowledge of pupils and check thoroughly what pupils already know and can do. They use this information well to set work at precisely the right level of difficulty so that pupils learn well. In a key stage 2 writing lesson, the teacher had carefully assessed pupils' work and used this to set tasks that enabled pupils to work on the weaker areas of their imaginative writing. This enabled pupils to make excellent progress with this aspect of their writing.
- Teachers' spoken and written feedback is delivered in a timely manner to promote quick gains in pupils' learning. Teachers spot quickly when pupils make mistakes or have misunderstandings and reshape explanations to correct them, so that a rapid pace of learning is sustained. The written feedback teachers offer supports pupils in making continuous and sustained progress. This feedback, and the careful tracking of pupils' skills as they move through the curriculum, ensures that pupils know what they need to do to make further progress.
- The teaching of phonics is highly effective. As a result, pupils develop fluency in their reading and writing from an early age and continue to apply these strategies to secure their comprehension of increasingly challenging texts. Pupils enjoy reading and demonstrate a love of books.
- The teaching of mathematics has further improved in order to provide greater challenge for the most able pupils. Teachers focus well on securing pupils' conceptual understanding. Pupils are able to progress to more demanding tasks when they are ready, which fosters their problem-solving and reasoning skills. For example, in a Year 5 mathematics lesson, pupils relished the challenge of their investigations into perimeter. In a Year 2 lesson, lower-ability pupils approached problem-solving activities methodically and with great resilience, and their reasoning skills were stimulated well by effective questioning.
- Teaching assistants are highly skilled and make an important contribution to the quality of teaching. They work seamlessly with teachers to provide effective support to small groups, to ensure that pupils with additional needs make strong progress.
- Homework is set routinely and is closely linked to pupils' learning in class in order to further extend their knowledge, skills and understanding.
- All parents say that their children are taught well and are making strong progress.
- In the rare instance that teaching is not of the highest standard, a minority of pupils can sometimes spend too long consolidating their learning as opposed to progressing to more difficult work.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding**

### **Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils are highly motivated, self-assured in their learning and keen to achieve well. They articulate a keen awareness of their learning and take responsibility for their own learning in lessons. For example, pupils actively seek out more difficult work in lessons because they relish the challenge of learning.
- Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe and secure and value the support and help of their teachers, to whom they feel confident that they could report any concerns. They develop a strong understanding of how to keep safe from strangers, how to stay safe when using the internet, and how to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Pupils spoke with relish of how they had learned about road safety from workshops that took place during the inspection. The school was recently one of the first schools nationally to receive the 'Good Diabetes Care in School Award'.
- Pupils value and are fully involved in the wide range of opportunities offered to them by the school in music, the performing arts and sports that promote their cultural learning.
- The Christian ethos of the school underpins the curriculum and powerfully promotes the values of care for others and tolerance. The impact of this work is evident in the care and respect pupils show to others and their involvement in a wide range of charitable activities.
- Parents say that their children are well cared for, and that should they report any concerns, these are resolved swiftly and efficiently. The views of staff at the school confirm the high priority given to pupils' welfare and safety.
- The school's before- and after-school provision contributes well to the level of care afforded to pupils and offers pupils interesting and varied activities, and support for homework.

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning in lessons are exemplary and make an important contribution to pupils' outstanding progress. Purposeful collaboration between pupils, reflecting their strong social skills, has a

powerful impact on their learning.

- In the playground and around the school, pupils conduct themselves in a calm, sensible and orderly manner. They enjoy breaktimes and lunchtimes and appreciate the time they have to play and socialise with their friends. Although they are supervised well by adults, pupils manage their own behaviour effectively. A warm, friendly and welcoming atmosphere permeates the school at all times.
- Pupils' pride in their school is reflected in the high standards with which they wear their uniform, the respect they show to the school buildings and resources and the excellent standards of presentation of their work.
- Very effective systems and procedures to manage pupils' behaviour are reflected in the absolute lack of pupils excluded from the school for the last five years.
- Rigorous approaches to following up absence have improved attendance for all groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and disability. As a result, attendance is above average and the proportion of pupils regularly absent from school is well below average.
- Bullying and name-calling are rare. Pupils told inspectors how they are taught to understand that this is wrong. Any incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively.
- The views of staff, parents and pupils confirm the very high standards of behaviour at the school.

## Outcomes for pupils

## are outstanding

- Pupils make substantial and sustained progress during their time in the school. Leaders' records demonstrate that pupils enter the Nursery with skills slightly below those expected for their age. From here, they progress to above-average standards at the end of key stage 1 and standards of attainment that are significantly above average across reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2. Highly effective teaching of phonics has led to sustained improvements in the proportion of pupils meeting the national standard by the end of Year 1, which is well above average. The very small number of pupils who do not attain the standard catch up quickly in Year 2.
- Published information shows that from their different starting points all Year 6 pupils made expected progress in reading and writing in 2015 and the proportions making better than expected progress were above the national averages. Inspectors' close scrutiny of the work in pupils' books, visits to lessons and the school's records of the attainment and progress of current pupils confirm the rapid progress pupils are making in response to high-quality teaching, learning and assessment across all subjects.
- In writing, pupils quickly develop their use of spelling, handwriting and grammar and can write very successfully across a range of forms. Pupils' progress in writing is supported by successful application of these skills in a wide range of contexts through their topic work. This demonstrates that the same rigour and high expectations are applied as those in English lessons.
- Although boys have attained below girls in writing in some year groups, leaders have ensured that effective action has been taken to promote boys' better engagement in lessons. Inspection evidence demonstrates that teaching is successfully closing the gaps between boys and girls. Nevertheless, this remains an area of sustained focus for the school.
- Reading is a key strength of the school. Pupils make exceptional progress in reading. An excellent start in phonics, coupled with a well-structured programme of reading, ensures that as they move through the school, pupils read fluently and expressively and continue to develop their skills quickly in all year groups.
- In mathematics, last academic year, although most pupils made good progress, a small number of pupils narrowly missed their targets. Leaders have successfully addressed this issue. Pupils quickly develop fluency in calculation, mastering mathematical skills, and apply their skills within challenging problem-solving contexts with great confidence. As a result, pupils are making outstanding progress.
- The achievement of disadvantaged pupils has shown some variability over time, due to the very small numbers in the school. Careful monitoring and allocation of additional funding is ensuring that well-matched provision is accelerating the progress of these pupils so that attainment is rising and gaps between these pupils and their classmates are narrowing.
- Very well-coordinated support for pupils with special educational needs and disability helps them to overcome any barriers that they have to learning. Teaching assistants work very effectively to support pupils in lessons because they have a good understanding of their needs. As a result, pupils with special educational needs and disability make strong progress and attain well.

- The most able pupils attain high standards. Consistent challenge ensures that a much higher than average proportion of pupils attain high levels by the time they leave the school.
- Teachers' rigorous checking of pupils' learning and progress during lessons enables effective support to be offered for any pupils who have not secured their skills, knowledge or understanding. When pupils are identified as not having made the progress expected of them, a 'fast response teacher' works with individuals to close the gaps in their learning. As a result, pupils catch up quickly and none are allowed to fall behind.
- Pupils make excellent progress in music and in sports as a result of specialist teaching.
- Pupils' high levels of achievement in English and mathematics, coupled with their successful development of learning skills, ensures that they are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of their education.

## Early years provision

## is outstanding

- Outstanding leadership of the early years, together with high-quality teaching and assessment, have ensured that children's outcomes have consistently improved. Children make outstanding progress during their time in the Nursery and in the Reception class.
- Children enter the Nursery with skills that are just below those expected for their age but achieve standards at the end of Reception that are well above the national average. This is because they make outstanding progress in all areas of learning. Consequently, children are very well prepared for Year 1.
- Leaders rigorously review the effectiveness of provision to identify any areas where further improvements can be made. For example, leaders have made adjustments to the organisation of the day to ensure that boys rapidly develop their skills in language and using numbers. Children develop their reading and writing skills highly effectively and are able to sustain their focus on activities extremely well. For example, one boy, who was deeply engaged in a writing task, commented to an inspector that 'I'm writing a book!'
- Children enjoy learning in very stimulating environment that encourages their love of learning through imaginative, creative play. As a result, children's behaviour is outstanding.
- Highly effective teaching encourages children's independence and confidence from the moment that they start Nursery. Activities undertaken in classrooms and outdoor learning areas are extremely well organised so that class teachers and teaching assistants have a powerful impact on learning. Adults model play and language with considerable skill and exciting activities, such as role play, support children's quick development of skills.
- Parents are fully involved in their children's 'learning journey' and contribute to the assessment of children's skills. Parents value the use of 'wow!' postcards that keep them informed of the progress their children have made.
- Leaders ensure that the safeguarding and welfare of pupils is afforded the highest priority.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	104227
<b>Local authority</b>	Walsall
<b>Inspection number</b>	10001009

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	367
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Local authority
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Megan Smylie
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Ros Hutchinson
<b>Telephone number</b>	01922 682 309
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.stmichaels-pelsall.co.uk">www.stmichaels-pelsall.co.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:enquiries@stmichaels-pelsall.co.uk">enquiries@stmichaels-pelsall.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	28–29 February 2012

## Information about this school

- St Michael’s Church of England Primary School is larger than the average primary school.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is lower than other schools nationally.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding is below the national average. This is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible to receive free school meals or children looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs is slightly below the national average.
- The school provides a breakfast and after-school club.
- The school offers 52 Nursery places that are part-time, but offers provision for parents and carers who want their children to stay for the whole day. Children in the Reception class attend full-time.
- Pupils in the main school are taught in ability groups in the morning for English and mathematics and study other subjects in the afternoon.
- In 2015 the school met the government’s floor standards, which set the minimum requirements for pupils’ attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.



## Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 12 lessons or part lessons, including examples of teaching in every year group. In addition, inspectors looked at pupils' books in a range of subjects and year groups to establish the progress and quality of their work over time.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders and governors. Inspectors also met with a representative from the local authority who works with the school.
- Inspectors spoke informally to a number of parents and carers at the start of each school day to gauge their views of the school. In addition, inspectors took account of 53 recent responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) and analysed 30 responses from the staff questionnaires.
- Inspectors talked with groups of pupils as well as individual pupils during their lessons and at playtimes to find out their views about the school.
- The inspection team heard pupils read and observed their behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- The inspection team looked at a wide range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, plans for improvement, external monitoring reports, records of checks made by leaders and information on pupils' progress and attainment, and records of the meetings of the governing body. They also scrutinised records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Chris Chapman, lead inspector

Peter Humphries

Janet Baker

Her Majesty's Inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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