

St Michael's Church of England Aided Primary School

Back Lane, Aldbourne, Wiltshire SN8 2BP

Inspection dates 6–7 July 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

- Pupils make rapid and sustained progress throughout their time at school because of the excellent teaching they receive.
- Leaders, including governors, have created a culture in which staff are committed fully to driving up standards and supporting the development of the 'whole child'. They do their utmost to ensure that every child achieves their potential.
- Provision and the quality of teaching in the early years are excellent. As a result, children achieve high standards and are prepared exceptionally well for the next stage of their education.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those who are disadvantaged, make very strong progress because of the excellent support they receive.
- The school provides a rich, broad diet of experiences both within and outside the curriculum. This enables pupils to develop the skills and knowledge that will help them move confidently into each new phase of their education.
- Teachers know their pupils extremely well and plan expertly to meet their different needs.
- Pupils love learning because teachers are very effective at making learning fun. This encourages pupils to be curious and to value education.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They are highly supportive of each other, and respectfully courteous to staff and visitors.
- The most able pupils make excellent progress and achieve high standards of attainment because they are challenged to do so.
- The high-quality work which the school undertakes with a local group of partner schools is having a very positive impact upon the development of teachers' practice.
- Parents, staff and pupils are overwhelmingly positive about the school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of assessment further by ensuring that teachers' accurate assessment and development of writing enables pupils' written work to flourish and develop to an exceptional standard.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- As a result of the headteacher's highly effective leadership, all staff are united in the uncompromising belief that all pupils deserve the best school experience. They share the headteacher's conviction that all pupils, regardless of ability or background, should be pushed to achieve their full potential.
- Senior leaders model the excellence they want to see in all staff. They have the highest expectations of themselves and achieve their ambitions through determination, hard work and a refusal to 'rest on their laurels.' Leaders are never satisfied with their achievements and all staff are inspired to feel the same way.
- Leadership is very strong at all levels in the school. This is because the headteacher has encouraged other leaders to take full responsibility for their work. At the same time, they know and respect the importance of accountability. The headteacher provides leaders and other staff with the confidence to take risks and try out new ideas. As a result, aspects of the school's work have improved rapidly.
- Staff are fiercely proud of the school. They demonstrate an unwavering loyalty because they believe passionately in the headteacher's vision that pupils should be at the heart of everything the school does. Consequently, not only do staff enable pupils to achieve high academic standards, but they also support them to enjoy a rich and vibrant wider school experience.
- The expert leadership of teaching has ensured that it is of very high quality, and consistently so, across the school. This is because staff are encouraged to research new ideas and reflect continually upon their practice, which is supplemented by a highly effective coaching programme. Furthermore, collaboration with practitioners from partner schools has also increased staff subject knowledge and sharpened their skills considerably.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve very well at the school. Their outcomes are high because leaders believe that it is fundamentally important that all pupils, especially those who are at risk of underachievement, are given every opportunity to succeed. Teachers, therefore, know their pupils very well and use their expertise to shape support that enables pupils to flourish. The additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is used very effectively.
- The most able pupils achieve very well as a result of the school's culture of high expectation and challenge. The excellent teaching secures highly positive attitudes to learning because the most able pupils relish the challenges they are presented with. In turn, they produce first-rate work.
- The curriculum is highly effective in deepening pupils' understanding in a broad range of subjects, unified by particular topics and themes. Conceptual understanding, reasoning and mastery of ideas underpin teachers' approach to the curriculum. Consequently, pupils are encouraged to explore and exercise curiosity. They are prompted to consider 'what if...?' In addition, experiences such as 'forest school' (hands-on learning activities in an outdoor environment) and other extra-curricular activities enhance pupils' skills and knowledge further.
- The sport premium is used by leaders to very good effect. The funding has been used to develop staff skills in their teaching of physical education (PE). It has also been used to encourage greater sports competition between schools and to increase pupils' participation in PE activities.
- Leaders and teachers benefit from very strong external support. Staff from the group of local partner schools meet regularly to share best practice, compare standards of pupils' work and share leadership expertise. The school improvement adviser understands the school well and is well placed to quality assure the work of the school. He also keeps leaders abreast of national policy and shares best practice with them. As such, the support he provides helps leaders and teachers to develop their work further.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is exceptionally well developed. In religious education and collective worship, pupils reflect upon important values, such as equality and forgiveness. They consider moral issues such as, 'How important is it to have family?' and 'How do we show we are sorry?' A group of Year 4 and 5 pupils who spoke to the lead inspector were able to talk in an informed and eloquent way about the European Union referendum. They shared their own opinions and were respectful of the views of others.
- Parents who responded to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and its leadership. In the words of one parent, 'I cannot thank the staff enough for giving my children the most wonderful start in life.' All staff who completed the staff survey also responded very positively.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The governing body is very clear about the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Governors work closely with senior leaders to devise highly focused plans that continue to move the school forward.

- Governors bring their expertise and experience to bear on the work of the school very productively. This is because the board understands the strategic nature of its role. Individual governors serve on sub-committees and link with the school in ways that capitalise on their skills and experience.
- Governors take their roles very seriously. They act with purpose, dedication and commitment in the best interest of the pupils.
- Governance provides the right balance of support and challenge to senior leaders. Governors use available information, such as published achievement data, to ask the right questions about what senior leaders are doing to tackle underperformance. Equally, governors are very loyal and want to ensure that the headteacher is supported in all her efforts to make the school experience the best it can be for every pupil.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Records to ensure that all staff and volunteers are suitable to work with pupils are complete, comprehensive and up to date. The school site is safe and secure. All staff have received appropriate child protection training alongside 'Prevent' training – the government's anti-radicalisation duty. Senior staff and governors who appoint new staff have also received safer recruitment training. Comprehensive risk assessments are in place for activities taking place on and off the school site. Leaders work effectively with the local authority and other agencies to ensure that pupils are safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge. They interest pupils in their learning through highly effective questioning. They enable pupils to ponder, to weigh up alternatives and to think about issues in depth. Pupils have confidence, in class discussions, to join the debate. Teachers help them to become intrigued about the subject they are studying and to be drawn further into their learning.
- Teachers' planning and resourcing of lessons is of the highest quality. Activities are planned to suit the needs of all pupils in the class. This means that pupils are challenged and stimulated regardless of their ability or background. As one pupil commented to the lead inspector, 'We learn loads and learn it in a fun way.' Consequently, pupils make rapid progress.
- Pupils love their learning. They work with real enthusiasm because they enjoy the tasks that they are set and feel a great sense of accomplishment at the progress they make. They relish the challenge, enjoy the 'cut and thrust' of whole-class discussion and enjoy highly positive and productive relationships with their teachers and teaching assistants.
- Teaching assistants are highly skilled. They have a powerful impact upon the learning and progress made by the pupils they assist. They share the same excellent questioning skills and confidence as teachers, which helps pupils to make very rapid progress.
- Pupils reflect frequently upon teachers' feedback on the quality of their work in all of their subjects and in all year groups. This self-reflection is exemplary. Pupils can explain why they have applied particular methods or approached tasks in a certain way. They explain their reasoning and evaluate the effectiveness of their approach. As a result, the dialogue between teacher and pupil enables pupils to make very strong progress.
- Classrooms and other learning environments are inspiring and invigorating. This is because they are awash with pupils' high-quality work and carefully designed displays that act as a further learning resource. These fresh, vibrant environments celebrate the joy of learning and encourage pupils to have the highest aspirations.
- Very high quality homework is set frequently and supports the progress that pupils make, especially in mathematics and English. It reinforces prior learning very effectively because it is stimulating and well-tailored to pupils' needs. Parents who responded to Parent View all felt that homework supported their child's learning very well.
- Teachers are highly effective at developing pupils' technical writing skills. Consequently, they craft carefully-constructed pieces of writing for different purposes and audiences. Pupils communicate very expressively because they are able to manipulate language to very good effect.
- In nearly all subjects, teachers are using a new system of assessment effectively to establish what pupils can and cannot do. This, in turn, is enabling staff to support the deepening of pupils' learning. In writing, however, teachers have been overcautious in their assessments and have not fully recognised the strengths of pupils' writing. This limits their capacity to stretch pupils to the full and to ensure that writing talent flourishes.

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 confident, self-assured learners. This is because every pupil is known as an individual and given whatever support is required to enable them to thrive at school. Pupils enjoy very strong, caring relationships with staff. As a result, pupils feel that it is safe to assert themselves, voice their opinions and express their individuality.
- Pupils report that they feel safe in school and receive very strong support from staff. One pupil who spoke to the lead inspector said, 'Teachers know what to do if you're in trouble; they help you straight away.' Another pupil commented, 'Teachers are there for you.'
- The school is highly inclusive. All pupils, regardless of background, are supported to achieve their best. Pupils who have complex needs are particularly well looked after. These pupils are embraced by their peers who understand and accept their differences.
- School leaders are committed absolutely to providing pupils with an education that supports all aspects of their development. As well as recognising the need for high academic standards, leaders also prioritise the mental and emotional health of pupils. The 'forest school' programme provides pupils with valuable opportunities to develop resilience, teamwork skills and self-sufficiency. As a result, pupils are very positive about their experience of school.
- Pupils are helped by the school to stay in the best physical health. Additional funding for sport has opened up more chances to join in and play different sports. The school's house system has also supported this competitive drive within the school. Moreover, leaders report that the initiative that has had the most impact on pupils' physical health is the daily one-mile run. This is undertaken by all key stage 2 pupils and teachers. Such has been the success of the daily run in improving mood and attitudes to learning that leaders plan to extend this initiative to the younger year groups.
- There is very little bullying in the school. Records indicate that when it does occur, it is dealt with swiftly and efficiently. This is also supported by the pupils who spoke to the lead inspector. The vast majority of parents who responded to Parent View agreed that bullying was dealt with effectively.
- Pupils have a good awareness of how to stay safe online. This is because internet safety is discussed with them in class and through assemblies. External speakers deliver workshops to pupils and parents to raise awareness of the issues at stake and help pupils to make sensible decisions.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- The pupils at this school are open, friendly and extremely polite. Pupils treat each other with kindness and show respect to adults and visitors. For example, when a group of Year 4 and 5 pupils had finished speaking to the lead inspector, they all thanked him for listening to their views.
- Attendance is well above average for all groups of pupils. In the case of a very small number of pupils who are absent persistently, leaders are able to account for the absences and are doing all they can to improve the attendance of these pupils.
- Pupils behave exceptionally well around the school site and as they move between lessons. During breaktimes, they play games with a team spirit and welcome anyone who wishes to join in. Pupils arrive well equipped and promptly to lessons. They enter assembly in a quiet and orderly way, and follow instructions to the letter. Correspondingly, inspectors did not witness any disruption to learning. This is supported by the school's behaviour records, which show that such incidents are rare.

Outcomes for pupils are outstanding

- Since the previous inspection, outcomes have improved in all key stages and pupils now make outstanding progress in English, mathematics and a wide range of other subjects. The work in pupils' books shows that they make rapid progress over time because they are challenged to think deeply and reflect meaningfully on how their work might be improved.
- By the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment is high. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standards in English and mathematics is well above the national average. These high standards are mirrored in key stage 1 where achievement is also well above the national average.

- In the Year 1 phonics test, pupils achieve highly and have done so consistently over time. At the end of Reception, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development in 2015 was much higher than the national average.
- Disadvantaged pupils make progress in all their subjects that is in line with, or better than, progress made by other pupils in the school and nationally. This is also the case for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Progress is particularly substantial because expectations of pupils' achievement are high and because the support they receive is tailored so well to their needs.
- The most able pupils thrive on the excellent teaching they receive. Interesting activities and thought-provoking questioning arouse pupils' intellectual curiosity and their hunger to learn more.
- Pupils read widely, confidently and with good levels of comprehension. Pupils across the school enjoy reading for fun, and this is as true of boys as it is girls. Pupils are encouraged to be ambitious readers. For example, certain pupils in Year 2 choose to read challenging texts such as 'Alice in wonderland' by Lewis Carroll. They read with expression and fluency, and show a high level of understanding of an ambitious text. Less-able readers are adept at using their phonics skills well to work out unfamiliar words.
- Cursive handwriting is developed very effectively from the early years onwards. Pupils write with increasingly accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation through key stages 1 and 2. Leaders' insistence on cursive script has also improved the legibility and presentation of pupils' work. It has raised pupils' expectations of their own work so that they are extremely proud of the work they produce.
- Teachers have not always recognised and rewarded the best writing fully, due to cautiously modest assessment of some pupils' work. This presents a slight risk that exceptional talent in writing may not be nurtured and developed to the full.
- Children are exceptionally well prepared for the beginning of their time in key stage 1 when they leave the early years. They achieve highly in all their areas of development so that they have the confidence and skills to 'hit the ground running' in key stage 1.
- By the time pupils leave the school in Year 6, they are ready to move on and keen to start at secondary school. This is because they are very well prepared to take on new, exciting challenges. They have the spirit and fortitude to adapt quickly to unfamiliar situations, and take their learning to the next stage.

Early years provision

is outstanding

- Excellent leadership of the early years ensures that children enjoy a superb start to their education. Leaders are steadfast in their attitude that children should be able to achieve their best.
- Children make very rapid progress in their learning across all areas of development, especially in their reading. This is because of the range of provision designed to meet their needs, the quality of teaching and adults' high expectations.
- The expertly organised provision ensures that all children encounter a range of different experiences that are designed successfully to fascinate and intrigue them. Activities allow children to use numbers, experiment with the properties of objects, and exercise their imaginations through painting and building. Staff make best use of learning environments, both inside and out, so that children can develop skills in different contexts.
- Children are encouraged at an early age to choose ambitious challenges for themselves. For example, a group of children wanted to take on the three-star challenge (the hardest of three levels of challenge) of making a potion for pirates using found objects and materials.
- Children demonstrate exceptional learning behaviours during play and more formal tasks – readily cooperating with, and showing respect towards each other. They work quietly when appropriate, share toys and resources, and value each other's work. Children actively want to participate in their learning and are excited at the prospect.
- Teachers, teaching assistants and other adults use the high-quality training they have received to provide outstanding support for children. To meet the wide range of needs in the early years, adults are carefully deployed, and activities carefully chosen, to get the best from all children.
- Teachers' assessment and monitoring of children's progress is a strength. Staff know children exceedingly well so that assessment is accurate. Cross-referencing standards of work with practitioners from other schools confirms that assessment is accurate. Careful and frequent monitoring of progress enables children to make very rapid gains in their learning.

- Safeguarding is effective. All staff have received appropriate training and conduct a daily risk assessment of the environment. Two staff trained in paediatric first aid are on hand should any issues arise. The early years site is secure.
- Parents are fully involved in the life of the school. The early years has an 'open door' policy, whereby parents are encouraged to visit and discuss their children's progress on a daily basis. Parents are encouraged to contribute to their child's assessment and to participate in their learning adventure. They do this through classroom visits, attending workshops and taking note of Wow! awards, which celebrate children's achievements.

School details

Unique reference number	126392
Local authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	10003925

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.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	183
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Simon Knighton
Headteacher	Mrs Judith Arkwright
Telephone number	01672 540434
Website	stmichaelsaldbourne.co.uk
Email address	head@stmichaelsaldbourne.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	22–23 March 2011

Information about this school

- St Michael’s Church of England Aided Primary School is a smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The headteacher has been in post for three years and has worked at the school for a number of years in other roles.
- The school receives external support from a school improvement adviser contracted to the local authority and a group of local partner schools known as GRAP (Great Bedwyn, Ramsbury, Aldbourne and Preshute).
- The majority of pupils are from a White British background.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding to support pupils who are eligible for free school meals and those who are in the care of the local authority) is below average.
- The proportion of girls in the school is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities requiring support is below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities who have a statement of special educational needs or education, health and care plan is well above average.
- The school meets the government’s current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils’ attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in lessons, with some observations being conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, middle leaders, teachers, teaching assistants, groups of pupils and representatives from the local governing body.
- The lead inspector spoke to the school's improvement partner by telephone.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, the school development plan and information on the progress of current pupils. Inspectors also scrutinised records relating to behaviour and attendance, the monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment, the work of the governing body and reports produced by the school improvement adviser.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work and observed their conduct at break and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors took account of 82 responses to the online survey Parent View, 17 responses to the staff questionnaire and 27 responses to the pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

Stephen Smith, lead inspector

Faye Bertham

Ken Bryan

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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