

St Michael's Church of England Primary School

Penberthy Road, Helston, Cornwall TR13 8AR

Inspection dates

8–9 November 2016

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected as an academy

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have not addressed deficiencies in teaching, learning and assessment quickly enough to ensure that they are consistently good across the school.
- Newly established middle leader roles are not yet having a discernible impact on school improvement.
- Information from the school's new system for monitoring pupils' progress is not yet readily available to support leaders and teachers in raising achievement.
- Teachers' implementation of the school's policy for providing feedback to pupils to ensure that they know how to improve their work varies considerably across the school.
- Teaching is not consistently tailored closely enough to the needs of the pupils. As a result, it lacks challenge so pupils lose interest, including the most able.
- Pupils' progress, especially in writing and mathematics, varies and is not consistently good in all parts of the school.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has established a caring community ethos that is strongly supported by staff and appreciated by parents.
- Provision in the early years is good and enables children to experience a stimulating range of learning activities and make good progress.
- Pupils behave well and share supportive relationships with each other.
- All staff work diligently to keep pupils safe. As a result, pupils say that they feel safe and valued at school and their parents agree.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Establish consistently good teaching, learning and assessment and secure pupils' good and better progress through key stages 1 and 2 by ensuring that teachers:
 - stimulate pupils' interest in learning and set high expectations of what they should achieve
 - follow the school's agreed marking policy and make sure that pupils know what to do next to improve their work
 - check how well pupils are learning and adapt activities so that all pupils, including the most able, are challenged and enabled to make accelerated progress from their different starting points.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that senior leaders:
 - enable newly established middle leaders to contribute fully to school improvement and ensure that they are rigorously held to account for bringing swift improvement in their areas of responsibility
 - implement fully the new arrangements for recording assessments of pupils' developing skills so that leaders and teachers can quickly identify and intervene if their progress slows or is not improving quickly enough.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The school has been through a period of significant uncertainty and change since it first became an academy in December 2013. This has impeded leaders' efforts to sustain consistently good teaching and learning.
- Since the school formally joined the multi-academy trust, it has received clear guidance which has helped to focus leaders' attention on school improvement. However, some changes put in place by senior school leaders have not had time to make a positive impact on the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes.
- The middle leadership roles of phase leaders are also in the early stages of development and have not yet had the time to impact positively on the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes. However, phase leaders are receiving appropriate support from senior leaders in the school and multi-academy trust to help them adapt to their new responsibilities.
- With guidance from multi-academy leaders, the school is introducing a new system for recording and checking pupils' progress, but this too is at an early stage of development. It is not yet enabling leaders and teachers to take the swift action needed to accelerate pupils' progress when it shows signs of slowing.
- Senior school leaders and multi-academy leaders check the quality of teaching and set teachers clear targets for improvement. Multi-academy leaders are helping school leaders to identify and tackle areas in need of improvement more effectively than in the past. For example, steps taken to encourage pupils' 'self-learning' skills and to stimulate pupils' interest are raising the quality of teaching and learning in some classes.
- The headteacher has been successful in raising pupils' attendance. Improvements are also evident in the use of additional funding to quicken the progress of disadvantaged pupils and in improved teaching of phonics, demonstrating the school's capacity to improve.
- The staff develop good links with parents. The parents who responded to the Parent View questionnaire expressed support and appreciation for the work of the school and would recommend the school to other parents. Parents who spoke with an inspector also expressed similar satisfaction with the school. They were particularly pleased by the way that staff communicate with parents supportively and keep pupils safe.
- Leaders and other staff work well together to sustain a caring community atmosphere across the school. Staff work diligently to promote equality of opportunity and to prevent discrimination. They include all pupils equally in school events and, for example, provide good additional support for those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. It covers the required range of subjects and provides activities, which pupils say they enjoy. However, these are not taught with equal effectiveness in all classes and this means that at times pupils' understanding is not deepened well enough.

- The curriculum is enriched by a wide range of clubs and extra-curricular activities, which boost pupils' confidence and personal development and extend their learning.
- The school promotes the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. Pupils learn well about a range of faiths, cultures and beliefs. When questioned, pupils demonstrate a good understanding of values such as respect and tolerance and an awareness of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. They make reference to displays in the school and show a good understanding of British values and a readiness for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders make sure that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported, for example through additional language therapy. Staff provide particularly sensitive and beneficial support to pupils who have complex needs such as physical disabilities.
- Leaders, including governors, ensure that additional funding is used effectively to support the learning of disadvantaged pupils. For example, pupils, including some of the most able disadvantaged pupils, advance their computing skills well during the before-school 'early birds' club.
- Additional funding to support the needs of pupils from service families is used well. For example, service pupils experience a boost to their social and emotional well-being during the after-school 'HMS Heroes' club.
- Leaders make good use of the primary sport premium funding to extend the skills of pupils. Leaders also use these funds effectively to increase pupils' participation in a wide range of sports and competitions, which promotes pupils' enjoyment and physical well-being. For example, funds are used effectively to provide stimulating triathlon, 'blind football' and 'wake and shake' events.

Governance of the school

- The governing body provides effective support and challenge to senior leaders.
- The governors' difficult decision to change the status of the school and join with the multi-academy trust earlier this year represents a key strategic commitment to improving the school.
- The governing body, with effective support from leaders and board members of the multi-academy trust, has widened its expertise and established more robust systems for monitoring the work of the school. These are beginning to have a positive impact.
- Governors and directors of the multi-academy trust now have a clearer picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are holding school leaders to account for the actions they are taking to improve provision and pupils' outcomes, including making sure that the additional funding is now being well spent.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The headteacher and governors, with good guidance from academy leaders, have ensured that all relevant safeguarding policies and procedures are kept up to date. These are known and implemented effectively by staff in accordance with statutory requirements to keep pupils and all those who work in the school safe. For example,

senior leaders ensure that staff receive regular training and are vigilant in supporting pupils considered vulnerable and protecting them from abuse. Staff work well with external agencies and parents and do not hesitate in making referrals as necessary to keep pupils safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment, although improving, is not consistently good. At times, teaching is not matched closely enough to pupils' needs and abilities, which slows their progress.
- Pupils' learning is less effective at times in Years 1 to 4. This is because, in some classes, teaching does not encourage consistently high expectations in the work set for the pupils. Consequently, pupils are not able to extend their skills and deepen their knowledge and understanding.
- On occasion, tasks and topics do not stimulate pupils' interests sufficiently. When this happens, pupils' engagement in learning, their response in class and the quality of the work in books are restricted. For example, pupils' learning in Years 1 and 2 is slowed at times when those who lose interest in learning distract others.
- Teaching does not ensure that pupils are sufficiently clear about what their next steps in learning should be. For example, work in pupils' books is not always marked in accordance with the school's policy and this can leave pupils uncertain as to what to do to improve.
- Although improving as a result of staff changes and training, teaching and learning of literacy and mathematics still fluctuate in quality. The development of pupils' handwriting, spelling and punctuation skills is stronger in some classes than others. Similarly pupils' basic numeracy skills and their ability to reason at a deeper level to solve mathematical problems are not developed well enough in some classes.
- The teaching of reading is generally effective. As a result, pupils are now making better progress. Recent changes in Years 1 and 2 to the way pupils are taught phonics at levels which match their ability are strengthening their understanding. In turn, this is improving pupils' ability to decode new words and to read more confidently and expressively.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work well together, for example in the way they encourage and value pupils' responses to questions to aid their learning. The staff develop very helpful and caring relationships with all the pupils.
- Staff supporting disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities encourage resilience in learning as well as skills. This was seen, for example, in Year 2 where pupils were helped to understand and use a computer program to develop their ability to recognise words and improve writing.
- Where pupils' learning is more successful, it is because pupils are presented with tasks and challenges that are closely related to their different abilities and starting points. For example, pupils in Year 5, especially the most able, were enthused in a mathematics lesson by the challenge of designing their own complex problems; as a result, the pupils advanced their understanding of inverse calculations.

- Learning is also more consistently effective where pupils receive clear guidance about their work. When questioned, pupils in Year 6 agreed that, 'The teacher shows us what to improve and this helps us to learn better.'

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- All pupils across the range of backgrounds and needs work and play well together. They respect adults, respond well to all the staff and value their support and guidance. Pupils are happy and enjoy coming to school. They undertake a variety of responsibilities diligently. Older pupils in both key stages showed a clear awareness of the needs of younger pupils and supported them at breaktimes.
- The pupils say that they feel safe and appreciate the care taken by staff to keep them safe. When questioned, pupils show that they know how to stay safe. For example, they talk knowledgeably about the school's regular fire drills and how staff warn them about keeping safe near roads and when using fireworks. The responses to questionnaires from pupils, staff and parents also support this view.
- Pupils enjoy each other's company and respect each other's opinions. Pupils enrich each other's learning well by sharing ideas, especially when stimulated by interesting topics and challenged to give of their best. At times, in some classes, a minority of pupils need specific reminders to concentrate fully on their work.
- Pupils have a good understanding about how to stay safe and how to help each other to stay safe. They talk knowledgeably about how to use computers safely. They understand that bullying can take several forms; pupils know, for example, that verbal, racial and physical abuse is unacceptable.
- When questioned, pupils say that inappropriate behaviour does happen from time to time, but that there is very little bullying. Pupils confidently assert that if bullying does occur then the headteacher deals with it very swiftly and fairly. The school's records and parents' comments fully support the pupils' views.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well in class and when moving about the school.
- The pupils are particularly respectful during assemblies and demonstrate a good understanding of British values such as tolerance.
- One pupil represented the opinions of others when saying, 'We love school and have lots of friends.' This is also evident in the way that pupils from different backgrounds, including those from service families, mix happily as equally valued members of the school community.
- Pupils understand the school rules and are respectful and polite to staff and visitors to the school. When questioned, pupils said that sometimes if the work they are given is not as challenging as it could be, then a few pupils start to chatter and this interrupts their learning.

- The headteacher rigorously checks pupils' attendance and works well with parents and external agencies to reduce persistent absence.
- A variety of incentives, rewards and additional provision, for example the 'early birds' before-school club, have helped to improve the attendance of some disadvantaged pupils. Overall attendance has been improved and now matches the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- The rate of pupils' progress varies too much between classes. For example, it is consistently good in the early years, and in Years 5 and 6 where pupils typically progress well from their starting points. However, pupils' progress fluctuates between classes across Years 1 to 4. This means that some pupils do well but others make slower progress that constrains their achievement, as shown by the school's data and the work in pupils' books.
- Pupils' attainment is broadly in line with the national average by the end of Year 6. Some of the most able pupils do not reach the higher standards in writing and mathematics of which they are capable by the time they leave the school.
- Most children start school with skills that are broadly typical for their age. They make good progress so that by the time they leave the early years, an above-average proportion of children attain a good level of development.
- Pupils' progress has slowed in Years 1 through to Year 4 in recent years. Although showing some improvement, especially this term, in phonics and reading, standards in writing and mathematics are still no better than average by the end of Year 2. Positive changes in teachers' assessment and the planning of pupils' learning in Years 3 and 4 are bringing improvement this term. However, the pupils' basic literacy and numeracy skills are still not developed well enough in some of these classes.
- Pupils make better progress through Years 5 and 6 in response to more consistently good teaching. Observations of pupils' responses in these classes and a scrutiny of pupils' work in writing and mathematics revealed improvements, for example, in their reasoning skills. In writing, pupils chose words effectively to describe their feelings; and in mathematics they increasingly challenged themselves by setting their own problems.
- Current pupils are now making quicker progress across the school in reading. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 heard to read by an inspector showed confidence in sounding out letters correctly and tackling new words. Pupils used punctuation appropriately to check for sense and meaning, but some were less skilled in reading with fluency and expression. Pupils in Years 3 and 6 said that they read regularly at home and school.
- Over time, results in the national phonics screening checks in Years 1 and 2 have remained close to, but below, the national average. So far this term, strengthened teaching of phonics is raising children's and pupils' understanding of the sounds that letters make and improving their reading skills.
- Pupils make consistently good progress when they are interested and engaged, as shown by their work in science, when using computers and participating in sports.
- Pupils from service families are fully integrated in all aspects of school life. Staff are

diligent in supporting their emotional needs at times of family stress. As with their peers, the progress they make varies across the classes.

- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have their learning needs checked frequently. This enables staff to adjust the additional assistance they provide so that pupils make good progress in relation to their starting points.
- Disadvantaged pupils benefit from extra adult support and a range of additional activities, which meet their personal and academic needs effectively. For example, extra opportunities to learn by using computers before school are supporting the development of their basic literacy and numeracy skills. Increasingly, these pupils are growing in confidence and beginning to make faster progress than other pupils nationally.

Early years provision

Good

- Early years provision is a strength of the school. Teaching, learning and assessment are consistently effective and enable children to sustain good progress in all areas of learning.
- Children enter the Reception classes with skills and development that, over time, are mostly typical for their age.
- Strong leadership of the early years provision ensures that staff make very effective use of frequent assessments of children's starting points and progress to provide stimulating and relevant experiences that build well on their previous learning.
- Teachers and teaching assistants carefully record their observations of the children's learning. They take note of the quality of the children's responses and adapt learning activities successfully to provide effective challenge and sustain good progress. Teachers ensure that children across the range of abilities, including the most able and disadvantaged children, are motivated and learn well. For example, children joined in enthusiastically when reciting favourite nursery rhymes such as 'Jack and Jill'. Staff are equally skilled in providing activities that target boys' and girls' learning needs effectively.
- As a result, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development across the areas of learning continues to be above average. This shows that children are well prepared for the next stage of their learning in Year 1.
- All staff work closely and effectively to keep children safe and ensure that all welfare requirements are fully met. As a result, children feel safe, behave well and relate warmly and respectfully to adults and other children.
- Staff also work very supportively and communicate well with parents. Staff provide good guidance for parents on how to continue children's learning at home. For example, parents respond well by recording learning activities completed at home in the children's 'learning journals', alongside those undertaken at school.
- The positive relationships between home and school and between staff and children greatly help to boost their confident engagement and enjoyment in learning. For example, during the inspection children were seen joyfully making their own 'beanstalk' as part of their topic about giants and attempting 'magic writing' to record their ideas.

- Children in both Reception classes learn well across a balanced range of indoor and outdoor experiences that promote good progress across all the areas of learning. For example, children develop their early writing and numeracy skills to equally good effect both in classrooms and outdoors.
- Children develop an interest and joy in reading at an early age. They were observed learning the sounds that letters make, reading with adults and talking enthusiastically about their favourite story book characters. Children demonstrated a clear understanding of the way words and pictures in stories are sequenced to show meaning.
- Children across the range of abilities, including the most able and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, have their needs met effectively.
- School leaders have improved provision this year to make sure that disadvantaged children are enabled to progress and achieve as well as their classmates.
- Leaders have also identified the need to further stimulate boys' engagement in learning and, for example, have plans to provide more practical learning opportunities outdoors.

School details

Unique reference number	140027
Local authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	10019934

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	404
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Canon David Miller
Headteacher	Shaun Perfect
Telephone number	01326 572386
Website	www.st-michaels.cornwall.sch.uk
Email address	head@st-michaels.cornwall.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- This school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The very large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is slightly below average.
- The school is close to the Culdrose Royal Naval Air Station and a large number of children from service families attend the school.

- Children experience early years provision in two Reception classes. The other pupils across the school are also taught in single year-group classes.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- A privately run pre-school operates on the school's site but, as it is not managed by the school's governing body, it is not included in this inspection.
- St Michael's Church of England Primary School converted to become an academy school on 1 December 2013 as the founder member of the newly formed Pilgrim's Way Church of England Academy Trust.
- When its predecessor school, St Michael's Church of England Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be good overall.
- The academy changed status as the Pilgrim's Way Church of England Academy Trust joined five other primary schools and became a member of The Saints Way Church of England Multi-Academy Trust, sponsored by the Diocese of Truro, on 1 May 2016.
- Governance is undertaken by members of a local governing body and representatives of the multi-academy trust.
- The headteacher is supported by an executive principal who oversees the school's work along with the other schools in the trust.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 30 lessons and saw the work of 15 teachers.
- The inspectors were accompanied by the headteacher and the deputy headteacher during some of these visits to lessons.
- A wide range of documents were scrutinised, including records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance, safeguarding procedures and the school's self-evaluation.
- The inspectors examined the school's systems for checking progress and records of checks on the quality of teaching.
- The inspectors talked to individual pupils and representative groups of pupils about the school and their work. They listened to individual pupils read and attended two assemblies. The inspectors also looked at samples of pupils' work across a range of subjects and classes.
- The lead inspector held meetings with members of the governing body and senior leaders of the multi-academy trust. Members of the inspection team also held meetings with a senior leader of the academy and with school staff, mainly senior and middle leaders.
- The views expressed in the 48 online responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire and in nine staff questionnaires and 23 pupil questionnaires were also considered. In addition, the inspectors also gathered the views of several parents during informal meetings at the school.
- The inspectors evaluated the school's use of the primary physical education and sport funding and the pupil premium.

Inspection team

Alexander Baxter, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Bradley Murray	Ofsted Inspector
Justine Hocking	Ofsted Inspector

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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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