

# St Michael's Church of England Primary School

88 Camden Street, London NW1 0JA

**Inspection dates** 6–7 December 2016

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

# Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Pupils, parents and staff agree that St Michael's is a happy and harmonious community where standards have improved strongly since the previous inspection.
- The recently appointed executive headteacher and the head of school have worked tirelessly and with great determination to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes.
- The quality of teaching is good. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to plan learning activities so that pupils achieve well.
- Pupils, including the most able pupils, make good progress from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics.
  Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities also make strong progress.
- Although improving, the teaching of phonics is not consistently strong. The proportion of pupils who reach the expected standards in the Year 1 phonics screening check is below average.
- Overall, the most able pupils are challenged in their learning, particularly in mathematics. However, too few of the most able pupils, particularly the most able disadvantaged pupils, achieve the greater depth standards in writing.

- Governors know the school well. They, like school leaders, are determined to raise standards even further so that all pupils achieve their best.
- Leaders have recently developed strong and robust systems to monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in English and mathematics. They have high expectations of all staff to deliver the very best learning opportunities for all pupils.
- However, leaders do not monitor other subjects across the curriculum with the same rigour to find out how well pupils achieve in all subjects.
- Children in the early years have good fun and make strong progress from the moment they start school. They play and explore together well and show high levels of confidence.
- Rightly, pupils are proud of their school. They speak happily about the improvements to the quality of teaching and the impact this has had on their learning.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a real strength of the school. Pupils' behaviour is good. They enjoy coming to school and are keen to talk about their learning at every opportunity.



# **Full report**

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

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
  - all teachers share the same high expectations of the most able pupils, especially the most able disadvantaged pupils, so that more pupils achieve the greater depth standards in their writing.
  - more pupils reach the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check.
- Further improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that leaders monitor pupils' outcomes in all subjects across the curriculum as rigorously as they do in English and mathematics.



# **Inspection judgements**

## **Effectiveness of leadership and management**

- The recently appointed executive headteacher and the head of school have a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and know what they need to do to secure further improvements. They have worked with determination and effort to improve standards across the school and have been successful in improving the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes.
- Senior leaders have established robust systems to monitor all aspects of the school's work, including teaching and learning in English and mathematics. They hold teachers to account for the progress pupils make and use an agreed set of 'school standards' to ensure that the quality of teaching is maintained or continues to improve further.
- The impact of senior leaders' actions can be seen in the improvements to teaching and learning throughout the school. Teachers work alongside leaders to look at what works well in their classrooms and what could be even better. Checks are made on the work in pupils' books, the progress pupils make from starting points and how they respond to tasks in lessons. Leaders provide teachers with good-quality feedback about how they can improve outcomes for the pupils in their classes.
- Although leaders make checks on pupils' learning in English and mathematics, they do not monitor pupils' outcomes in other curriculum subjects, such as science, history and geography in the same way, to find out what is working well and what could improve further. As a result, leaders have not identified where and how pupils could make even stronger progress across the wider curriculum.
- Leaders ensure that the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is used effectively. The executive headteacher has made changes this term to reflect the needs of current disadvantaged pupils and to act on the outcomes of an external review that was carried out last year. Additional teaching and support staff are well deployed to provide support to whole-class learning and additional interventions. This enables disadvantaged pupils to make good progress, particularly in reading and mathematics.
- In all year groups, pupils enjoy well-planned activities in a range of subjects. Leaders make sure that the curriculum is broad and balanced and that it matches the needs of the pupils well. Subjects are linked together into memorable topics. Pupils speak positively about the many exciting opportunities to learn in a fun way. For example, pupils delighted in the success of creating erupting volcanoes in science and were eager to talk about how they used syncopation to make music that is 'off the beat'.
- The curriculum is enriched by a range of clubs and activities that take place during and at the end of the school day. Pupils take part in sewing, art and craft, cookery and a range of sports activities. Teachers plan interesting trips so that pupils can learn beyond the classroom. For example, pupils spoke knowledgeably about how they searched for and classified minibeasts on a recent visit to Hampstead Heath.
- Leaders ensure that the additional sports funding is used to good effect. Sports coaches work at lunchtimes and during physical education lessons to enhance pupils' skills and raise the profile and importance of good health and exercise.
- The school's work to involve parents in the life of the school has been very successful. Parents are overwhelmingly pleased with the way in which the school has improved since the previous inspection and the opportunities they have had to be involved in



their children's learning. For example, parents join classes to work alongside their children and come to regular, well-attended coffee mornings, where they learn how to support their children at home.

- There is a strong sense of 'togetherness' at St Michael's. Parents and pupils told inspectors that one of the best things about their school is the way in which all members of the community, from both the Christian faith and others, come together to learn. The school prepares pupils very well for life in modern Britain because the school's values are fully embedded in all aspects of the school, and pupils develop a strong understanding of democracy, tolerance and respect. As one pupil said, 'We are all a big community and we are all connected.'
- Pupils have a very effective understanding of equalities and what it means to be different. They know that discrimination is not tolerated at this school. Leaders promote equality successfully. For example, pupils know why homophobic bullying is wrong. A group of pupils explained that the school's values 'encourage us to be ourselves and not to judge others'.

#### Governance of the school

- Governors know the school well and have worked effectively with school leaders to improve standards since the previous inspection. After the previous headteacher retired, governors made the decision not to appoint a substantive headteacher, but to appoint an experienced executive headteacher to lead the school and work in partnership with three other schools. Governors ensured that this transition was managed smoothly and that the pace of improvement was not interrupted.
- Governors fulfil their statutory duties. They hold leaders to account by asking effective questions in governing body meetings about pupils' progress and attainment. They challenge leaders to tell them about how well additional funding is used and about the impact it is having on pupils' outcomes.
- Governors visit the school regularly. Their visits are now more organised and focused on pupils' outcomes and the effectiveness of leadership. Since September, seven visits have been made by governors to meet with leaders, to observe learning in classrooms and to make checks on how the school improvement plan is being carried out.
- Governors are aware of how well pupils are doing in school and set challenging targets for pupils' achievement. They know that the leadership of subjects other than English and mathematics now needs to be monitored more astutely so that pupils' outcomes in these subjects can improve even further.

# **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a strong culture of keeping pupils safe in the school. Staff receive training that helps them to be vigilant and keep pupils safe from harm. Those responsible for leading safeguarding in the school ensure that staff keep up to date with the latest guidance and legislation from the government, including the 'Prevent' duty to protect pupils from the risks of extremist views.
- Leaders work closely with other professionals to ensure that vulnerable pupils and their families are well supported. Leaders know what to do if they have concerns about a pupil's welfare and follow up any concerns rigorously.
- Teachers and leaders ensure that pupils are aware of how to keep themselves safe. For example, through assemblies and personal, social, health and economics education



- lessons, pupils are taught about the possible dangers they may encounter online, or from other people outside of school.
- Displays of information around the school, and safeguarding information for visitors, are reminders to all adults about what they should do if they have concerns about a pupil's well-being. Parents say that their children feel safe at school.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

- The high expectations set by the executive headteacher and head of school pervade every classroom and every corridor. Displays around the building are used very effectively to convey these heightened expectations. Classrooms are now purposeful places to learn and pupils are keen to share the improvements with visitors.
- Leaders have improved the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that it is now good. Teachers know their pupils well and use clear systems set out by leaders to plan, teach and assess effectively. Learning now builds on what pupils already know and can do. As one pupil told inspectors, 'We don't repeat learning now.'
- Pupils are keen to learn. They respond positively to questions and challenges they are offered and follow teachers' instructions well. The quality of feedback has improved since the previous inspection. In line with the school's policy, teachers provide 'fix-its' and pupils respond each day. Feedback is consistently effective across classes and subjects and the work in pupils' books demonstrates how it improves and extends learning. Teachers and teaching assistants provide pupils with advice in lessons to help pupils improve. For example, to help pupils understand a misconception, one teaching assistant skilfully used a 'you teach me' strategy, where the pupils had to re-teach her what they had learned.
- Where teaching is at its best, pupils make strong and sometimes rapid gains in their learning. For example, in a Year 6 lesson, pupils worked with high levels of concentration as they grappled with the task of finding common multiples. Pupils thrive in an environment which is all about learning, where the questioning is well matched to pupils' responses in the lesson and where the teacher's subject knowledge is strong.
- Leaders have worked with great effort since September to improve the quality and breadth of learning resources for pupils, including a wide range of reading books, to raise standards in reading. Pupils are now excited about reading. They choose from a variety of high-quality and age-appropriate texts and are eager to read at home. Pupils read widely and the strong systems in place to improve their comprehension skills are beginning to have a positive impact, especially at key stage 2.
- Mathematics is taught well across the school. Teachers, with the support of the mathematics leader, are improving their teaching strategies. Pupils' attainment is good and the work in pupils' books shows that pupils achieve well and make good progress. Pupils use tools and resources alongside pictures, to help them solve mathematical problems. This approach is being used well and, together with a well-planned curriculum, is resulting in more pupils attaining the higher standards for their age in mathematics. Pupils are routinely challenged and are keen to 'up level' their work.
- Leaders have helped teachers to develop the teaching of writing so that pupils make better progress. The majority of pupils write well and use grammar, punctuation and spelling in their work that is appropriate for their age and stage of development. Work in pupils' books shows that pupils are developing their writing skills well. However, not



all teachers share the same high expectations of what pupils can achieve in writing. There is more to do to enable pupils, particularly the most able disadvantaged pupils, to reach the greater depth standards in their writing.

- Pupils have regular opportunities to write in subjects other than English. In religious education, for example, pupils write about the meaning of the different Christmas symbols, such as angels. Some pupils are given additional challenges, such as researching the importance of symbols in other faiths. In science, for instance, pupils write at length about their chosen amphibian, using punctuation and grammar accurately.
- At the previous inspection, the quality of pupils' work was not consistently good enough. This has improved a great deal. Handwriting is taught effectively. Pupils' books are well presented in all year groups and subjects. Pupils make use of the helpful examples on display which demonstrate what the best handwriting and presentation should look like, including in mathematics books.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive good-quality teaching and support. The special educational needs coordinator, together with a team of skilled teaching assistants, helps pupils to achieve their personal targets by working closely with individuals and groups in the classroom. For example, in a Year 1 English lesson the special educational needs coordinator supported pupils to read and understand new words using a range of skilful strategies, including gestures and signing.
- Teachers use homework effectively to consolidate and support the learning that takes place in the classroom. Pupils respond enthusiastically to the varied activities and say that homework makes a difference. For example, older pupils like taking high-quality texts home to read in readiness for the comprehension questions that they will answer in school the following morning.
- A strength of teaching is the way in which teachers reflect on their practice and meet regularly with teachers from the partner schools. Teachers now work together to plan activities that meet the needs of pupils. This has been particularly effective for new teachers or those who needed more support to improve. As a result, teachers are becoming more adept at adjusting their teaching to meet the needs of pupils during and between lessons.
- Pupils know and use their targets well and understand how these help them to improve. As one pupil said, 'Now we know where we are with our learning.' Another added, 'I look back and can see that my fluency has improved in reading.'
- The teaching of phonics, particularly in the early years and Year 1, is not consistently strong. Sometimes, strategies used to teach phonics are not fully effective at helping pupils to make good progress. Consequently, the proportion of pupils who meet the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check is below average.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

## Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils said that bullying is extremely rare. All pupils spoken to during the inspection were confident that they can speak to any member of school staff if they are worried



- or upset about something. Parents praised the school's work to promote their children's personal development. They have confidence in school leaders and said that any incidents are dealt with promptly.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. They understand the possible dangers they may face when using the internet or social media. Displays around the school emphasise the importance of personal safety and pupils' understanding of health, safety and well-being. Staff are vigilant when pupils are playing outside and ensure that they are appropriately supervised. Pupils say that the school is a safe place to be.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They are keen to talk about their learning and are welcoming and friendly to visitors. Pupils know that all adults are there to look after them. Pupils value the many new ideas that leaders have introduced to make them feel valued. For example, pupils enjoy wearing their own clothes on their birthday because they feel special and other pupils wish them well.
- Pupil voice is strong. Opportunities for pupils to talk and debate are plentiful. For example, pupils enjoy posting their ideas to the 'talk topics' that are displayed in the corridor, knowing that their ideas will be shared in assembly and with others. As one pupil told the inspectors, 'We get to speak because there is democracy here and nobody is there to judge you.'
- Pupils develop a good understanding of equalities. They know that discrimination is wrong. They are keen to learn about their friends' faiths and backgrounds. Work in religious education books and around the school shows that there are many opportunities for pupils to learn about the world around them.

#### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and when they move around the school building. All staff communicate the same high expectations of pupils' behaviour and, as a result, the school is a calm, orderly and purposeful place to learn.
- Pupils get on well. They show respect and courtesy for each other and the adults in their school. They enjoy the many opportunities to work in small groups and develop good speaking and listening skills. Even the youngest children in the Reception Year readily share their toys, take turns and look after their friends.
- Attendance has improved over the last three years. Pupils spoke extremely positively about how new leaders have increased the drive for even better attendance since the start of this year. Parents agreed. As one parent said, 'My child now pulls me to school each morning!' The head of school, supported by the inclusion team, has worked exceptionally hard to help improve the attendance of the small number of pupils who are absent too often. This term has been a great success, with persistent absence figures improving rapidly to be broadly in line with national average.
- Parents and pupils agreed that behaviour in the school is good. Effective initiatives are in place to support pupils who find playtimes more difficult, such as indoor activities and small-group spaces where adults skilfully support pupils' developing social skills.
- Very occasionally, pupils lose concentration in lessons when the activities that the teacher has planned are not fully effective at meeting pupils' needs.



# **Outcomes for pupils**

- In all year groups, pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Since the previous inspection, the quality of teaching and learning has improved to enable pupils to make better progress from their starting points.
- Disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities also achieve well. Work in books and the school's assessment information show that for some pupils, their progress has been rapid, particularly this term.
- Throughout the school, the challenge for the most able pupils has improved. Inspectors saw teachers and teaching assistants providing good-quality feedback to pupils in English and mathematics sessions which challenged pupils to think hard. Work in pupils' books shows that the most able pupils make strong progress from their starting points, particularly in mathematics.
- Inspection evidence confirms that most children start the school in the Reception class with skills, knowledge and understanding that is lower or much lower than would be expected for children of their age, particularly in reading, writing and numbers. Good-quality teaching and high levels of care, guidance and support enable children to make strong progress. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of Reception Year has improved over the last few years and is now in line with the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has increased year on year. However, the improvement has not been strong enough to bring the proportion of pupils who achieved this standard in 2015 and 2016 up to the national average.
- In 2016, attainment at the end of key stage 1 was above the national average in mathematics. The majority of pupils attained above the national average in reading, although the number of pupils achieving the greater depth standards, particularly in writing, was below the national average.
- The Year 6 pupils who took the key stage 2 tests in 2016 made good progress in mathematics to attain scores that were above the national average. The number of pupils attaining the higher score in mathematics was in line with the national average. Mathematics was an area for improvement identified at the previous inspection and these results show the impact of the strategies to improve the subject throughout key stage 2.
- In 2016, Year 6 pupils' progress in reading was broadly in line with the national average. Disadvantaged pupils did particularly well, as did those pupils who began at lower starting points. Pupils' attainment in reading was above the national average.
- Attainment and progress at the end of Year 6 was less strong in writing. Too few pupils were assessed to be writing at greater depth. Inspection evidence for current pupils supports this picture. Pupils, particularly the most able and most able disadvantaged pupils, do not write at greater depth and although some teachers know how to improve standards in writing for these pupils, not all share the same very high expectations of what these pupils can achieve.



# **Early years provision**

- Children make strong progress from their starting points as a result of effective teaching, learning and assessment. Since the previous inspection, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of Reception has increased. It is now in line with the national average.
- Adults in the early years know the children very well. Daily team meetings enable all adults to share what they know about each of the children and plan for their next steps in learning.
- Children's behaviour in the early years is good. The children develop good levels of confidence, motivation and self-esteem that enable them to explore and engage happily in the learning environment. Adults are positive role models for children and set very clear expectations for how children should behave. Children are well prepared for the move to Year 1.
- Adults respond well to children's needs. They ensure that the learning environment is adapted to reflect children's current interests as well as the class topic. For example, children are currently learning about 'light' through activities that embrace all areas of learning.
- A strength of the early years provision is the quality of partnerships with parents. Staff and parents work closely together, particularly when children first start school, to enable good continuity in children's learning and development.
- Staff know how to provide an appropriate balance of adult-led activities and times when children can play, explore and lead their own learning. For example, during the inspection children enthusiastically searched for three-dimensional shapes that were hidden in the outdoor area. Adults interacted with children's learning in a timely way, asking good questions to find out children's understanding. Children described the features of cylinders, cuboids and prisms accurately, using the correct vocabulary.
- Children moved to different activities confidently. They enjoyed using the dough and readily took clipboards as they drew maps of the 'shape hunt'. Other children responded well to the challenge of creating towers with blocks and keenly counted the number of cubes needed to make a taller building. Children develop good levels of independence, for example as they put on their coats to go outside.
- The early years leader, together with the head of school, monitors the quality of provision carefully. They have a good understanding of the strengths of the early years and use good-quality plans to help it improve still further.
- Although the overall quality of teaching is good, it is not as effective in phonics. This is because teaching strategies are not used consistently and sometimes children are held back by activities that are not well planned to build on what they already know and can do.



### **School details**

Unique reference number 100044

Local authority Camden

Inspection number 10019646

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

Type of school Primary

School category Maintained

Age range of pupils 4 to 11

Gender of pupils Mixed

Number of pupils on the school roll 176

Appropriate authority The governing body

Chair Judy Powell

Headteacher Clare Dyson (Head of school)

Juliette Jackson (Executive headteacher)

Telephone number 020 7485 8965

Website www.stmichaels.camden.sch.uk/

Email address admin@stmichaels.camden.sch.uk

Date of previous inspection 5–6 November 2014

#### Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about the pupil premium strategy or special educational needs information report on its website.
- The current head of school and the executive headteacher took up their posts in September 2016, following the retirement of the previous headteacher. The executive headteacher is a national leader of education.
- The school is within a partnership of four schools, led by the executive headteacher. The other three schools are also primary schools in Camden: Our Lady's Catholic Primary School, St Eugene de Mazenod Catholic Primary School and St Mary's Church of England Primary School, Kilburn.
- St Michael's Church of England Primary School is an average-sized primary school.
- The early years provision consists of one Reception Year class. The nursery that was inspected at the time of the previous inspection is now part of the neighbouring school.



- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well above the national average.
- A much higher than average proportion of pupils is supported by the pupil premium funding. This is additional government funding provided for pupils who are eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.



# Information about this inspection

- Inspectors made visits to all classes to observe pupils' learning, some of which were undertaken jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors also made several shorter visits to lessons in all year groups.
- The lead inspector held meetings with the chair of governors and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors also held meetings with leaders and other staff.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils in lessons, in the playground and in a formal meeting to find out their views on the school. The inspectors also took into account the responses to the school's own pupil survey.
- Pupils accompanied an inspector on a tour of the school to talk about the curriculum, and the ways in which the school helps them to learn.
- An inspector listened to pupils read in Year 2 and Year 6 and talked to them about their books, their enjoyment of reading and how reading is taught at the school.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' books across all year groups and in a range of subjects. They also looked at work on display and on 'learning walls' in the classrooms.
- A wide range of the school's documentation was scrutinised by inspectors. They sampled governing body minutes, records relating to behaviour and attendance, information about safeguarding and child protection as well as the school's assessment information on pupils' attainment and progress.
- The views of 23 members of staff who completed the Ofsted survey were considered by inspectors.
- The inspection team considered the three responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. They also met with parents in the playground as they dropped their children at school, to find out their thoughts on how well the school meets their children's needs.

# **Inspection team**

Gary Rawlings, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Helen Morrison	Ofsted Inspector



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