

St Michael's C of E Primary School

Front Street, Bishop Middleham, Ferryhill, County Durham DL17 9AL

Inspection dates

14–15 September 2017

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

- High-calibre, aspirational and driven leadership has improved the school. Senior leaders have successfully strengthened the quality of teaching and sustained outstanding outcomes for pupils by the time they leave the school.
- Outcomes in all phases of the school have improved since the last inspection. In recent years, pupils have made significantly more progress across key stage 2 than seen nationally in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Provisional assessments from 2017 show that standards are being sustained. By the end of Year 6, standards of attainment are well above those seen nationally, with half of pupils attaining the higher standard in both writing and mathematics.
- The quality of teaching is outstanding. The ambitious and capable teaching staff benefit considerably from a rich culture of continuing professional development.
- Teachers are adept at assessing pupils' level of understanding and skilfully adapt their lessons as they progress.
- Pupils are keen to come to school. Levels of attendance are well above the national average. Pupils participate in lessons eagerly and want to get involved. Occasionally, they do not take enough care with handwriting or present their work as well as they could.
- Behaviour is exemplary. Pupils sustain their concentration throughout lessons and show a real enjoyment in learning. Rewards are used skilfully to reinforce positive behaviours, which pupils readily uphold.
- The curriculum is wide-ranging and is well supplemented by trips out of school and visitors into school. A comprehensive review of the curriculum has ensured that teachers have a very secure understanding of national curriculum expectations.
- Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is strong. They benefit from rich and memorable experiences that develop their understanding of the world. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Safeguarding of pupils has a high priority and all members of staff are vigilant.
- The quality of the early years is outstanding. Children make excellent progress in developing reading, writing and number skills. The addition of the new Nursery which opened this term has further enhanced early years provision. Nevertheless, more could be done to foster a strong partnership with parents.
- The governors provide thoughtful strategic leadership. Their carefully considered decisions have moved the school forward since the last inspection.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that pupils maintain the highest standards in the quality of their handwriting and presentation across the whole curriculum.
- Do more to foster a strong partnership with parents and carers of children in the Nursery and Reception classes, so that children make the best possible progress from their point of entry to the school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The headteacher's sustained ambition and relentless effort to improve the school are achieving outstanding outcomes for pupils. Together with the very effective deputy headteacher, she has recruited and developed a team of highly committed teachers and teaching assistants. Her relentless focus on the professional development of staff has improved the quality of teaching and secured significantly better rates of progress and attainment than seen nationally. By the end of Year 6, pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Senior leaders make frequent checks on the quality of teaching and learning and provide teachers with precise feedback on how to refine their practice. They have successfully fostered a culture of continuing professional development. All members of staff aspire to improve, are hungry for feedback and value the guidance they receive.
- Leaders have adapted positively to changes in national education policy. They have, for example, developed their own model of assessment and reviewed the curriculum they provide. They use assessment information well to analyse the progress pupils make and to quality assure the performance of teachers.
- The senior team and the governors expect their ambitious teachers to make a significant contribution to the leadership of the school. As a result, subject coordinators provide regular training and guidance for their colleagues, which has improved the quality and consistency of teaching.
- All teachers have worked together to complete a thorough review of the curriculum and carefully mapped learning activities against the expectations of the national curriculum. Teachers therefore have a detailed understanding of progression in the national curriculum subjects and draw upon excellent subject knowledge in their planning. The core curriculum is particularly well planned and produces outstanding results. The wider curriculum topics take full advantage of the many out-of-school trips and specialist musicians, storytellers and artists who visit the school.
- The curriculum does much to foster pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school's work to recognise and support children's rights has been recognised through accreditation. Pupils in each class consider their rights and responsibilities each year and set them out in a class charter. The school's Christian dimension is very apparent in assemblies and displays. Many pupils take advantage of the wide range of lunchtime and after-school activities. This work makes a significant contribution to pupils' social and moral development. Many pupils hold leadership responsibilities as playground buddies, mediators or members of the sports crew. A wide range of carefully considered activities foster tolerant and responsible attitudes that prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders have used the pupil premium and the physical education and sport funding for primary schools thoughtfully. Additional support provided by teaching assistants is sharply focused on addressing gaps in knowledge and quickly helps pupils to catch up. The school has greatly increased participation in sport over recent years through strategies such as employing their own sports apprentice. There is an effective sports partnership that brings specialist coaches into school, and social times have many

organised sports activities, many of which are led and refereed by the pupils themselves. The school benefits from excellent sporting facilities.

- Special educational needs funding is also used very well. Leaders are quick to identify and develop detailed plans for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Tracking information confirms that these pupils sustain rapid progress as a result.

Governance of the school

- High-quality governance has been sustained since the school was last inspected. The governors' well-considered strategic decisions have strengthened the school's leadership capacity and improved the quality of provision overall. For example, their decision to become a school-centred initial teacher training hub has strengthened the focus on professional development.
- The governors have proactively sought to appoint ambitious teachers with the potential and appetite for senior leadership roles. Together with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, they have fostered this talent, extending leadership capacity more widely across the school.
- The governors have given careful consideration to extending early years provision with the opening of a new nursery. They have consulted widely and resourced the provision thoughtfully to ensure that it has the best possible start.
- Governors provide the senior leadership team with strong support. They continually ask probing questions in order to assure themselves that finances are used wisely. They monitor the progress pupils make in each class across subjects and across different groups rigorously.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have strong systems in place to check the suitability of all members of staff and other adults that come into the school. They ensure that all members of staff are well trained and understand the duty upon them to act if they have a concern about a child's safety. Although the volume of child protection referrals has been relatively low, the culture shared by members of staff is one of continuous vigilance. Leaders keep thorough records and work effectively with parents and external agencies to ensure that children are kept safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved since the school was last inspected. Teaching in all phases of the school now has a considerable influence on the pace and depth of learning and supports the rapid progress pupils make.
- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge. They use this to plan lessons that help pupils with different starting points to take the next step.
- Teachers across the school use a variety of approaches to continually check pupils'

grasp of new knowledge. For example, pupils use individual voting pads to quickly provide the teacher with data about their level of understanding. As a result, teachers know when to go deeper into concepts with the most able pupils and when other pupils need more time or help to secure new skills.

- Questioning is used skilfully to probe pupils' level of understanding and to identify any misconceptions. Teachers across the school, including those who are newly qualified, confidently adapt lessons as they progress in light of their ongoing checks.
- Skilled teaching assistants work in close partnerships with the class teacher. Their thoughtful interventions help pupils to keep focused on what matters. Senior leaders are adept at deploying teaching assistants where they are most needed in order to help pupils at important transition points. For example, leaders have deployed additional teaching assistants to work in the Year 1 and 2 class at the start of this term to help the younger pupils adapt to a more formal style of learning.
- All teachers hold high expectations for behaviour and conduct in class. They use rewards consistently to reinforce positive behaviours and attitudes.
- Since the previous inspection the teaching of mathematics has improved. Teachers focus on ensuring that pupils develop a deep sense of understanding and the ability to think flexibly. Pupils develop confidence in working through mathematical problems because they are taught how to approach them and are given regular practice. As a result, outcomes for pupils in mathematics have strengthened considerably.
- Reading and writing skills develop well because teaching ensures that pupils develop the skills to analyse text in detail using correct vocabulary. Scrutiny of the work in pupils' books shows that the quality of writing develops quickly across the year, as pupils employ increasingly mature conventions and draw upon rich vocabulary to give their work colour and personality. Most pupils take great care with their handwriting and presentation, although some are less careful when studying subjects beyond the core of English and mathematics.
- Phonics is taught particularly well in the early years and across key stage 1. Teachers are skilled at helping the youngest children grasp the link between sounds and letters.
- Pupils consistently demonstrate enjoyment in their learning and most are very keen to participate in lessons and to answer questions. Pupils respond to the feedback they receive and routinely edit and improve their work as it develops.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils at St Michael's feel safe and are well aware of potential risks to their personal safety. They know, for example, about the risks they might encounter when online and how to keep themselves safe. Members of the pupil parliament help teachers to plan an e-safety day each term and provide guidance and instruction to pupils on how to use popular websites safely.
- Leaders ensure that detailed risk assessments are completed for activities in and out of

school.

- The school provides a comprehensive programme to develop pupils' personal, social, health and economic awareness. The programme links to nationally led and local themes. There are well-planned opportunities for pupils to learn about faiths other than Christianity and to develop a broad understanding of different cultures. For example, last year pupils visited the Oriental Museum in Durham and developed a wide range of work based on their experience. The school employs a range of philosophical approaches to introduce pupils to questions of morality, which helps them to develop a clear sense of right and wrong.
- The school successfully fosters in pupils a commitment to hard work and to keep trying. As a result, pupils continually apply themselves and lessons are highly productive. Scrutiny of books shows pupils are committed to improving their work and readily go back to edit or make corrections.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils know how to moderate their behaviour and naturally abide by their class charter because they know it is the right thing to do. The school's records show that incidents of bullying or derogatory, racist or homophobic language are extremely rare.
- Pupils are polite and courteous towards one another and adults. They show care for and consideration of one another when socialising at playtime, in the dining hall and at breakfast club. They routinely hold doors open, and some pupils thank teachers at the end of lessons.
- Pupils take part confidently and enthusiastically in lessons, contributing answers to the teacher's questions and working with partners to develop their ideas. They revel in working together to solve problems. When they are unsure, they are confident to say why and ask for help from the teacher or teaching assistant. Their obvious enjoyment of learning makes a positive contribution to their strong progress.
- Levels of attendance have been consistently above the national average for primary schools. Very few pupils miss school regularly. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils is in line with that of other pupils nationally. The sustained high level of attendance reflects the shared confidence parents have in the quality of education the school provides. The provision of the breakfast club has also helped to improve the level of attendance.
- Pupils are keen to take leadership responsibilities, such as representing their class at the pupil parliament or acting as mediators who intervene to sort out differences when pupils fall out. Pupils also have a role to play when staff are recruited.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Outcomes have improved since the previous inspection because leaders have strengthened the quality of teaching and sustained a culture of high expectations.
- From their different starting points, pupils make substantial progress across the school and attain standards that are significantly above average by the time they leave Year

6. In 2016, for example, the proportion of pupils that attained the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6 was 33% above the national average. Provisional results for 2017 show that high levels of attainment have been sustained. As a result, pupils are very well prepared for secondary school.

- The teaching of early reading skills begins as soon as children enter the school and is particularly effective. In each of the last three years, all pupils have attained the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check. Pupils quickly develop their skills in reading because they are heard to read frequently and a love of reading is actively promoted.
- Over time, improvements in the quality of teaching have ensured that standards at the end of key stage 1 have improved steadily. Provisional end-of-year assessments for 2017 show a marked improvement on those of 2016, when standards were closer to the national average. Basic skills in English and mathematics are taught skilfully, and pupils are well supported by well-trained and experienced teaching assistants.
- Pupils continue to make sustained and rapid progress across key stage 2. In recent years, their progress in reading, writing and mathematics has consistently been significantly stronger than seen nationally. In 2016, for example, progress in writing and mathematics was in the top 6% of primary schools nationally. Provisional results for 2017 show a similarly strong picture, with half of the pupils in Year 6 attaining the higher level in writing and mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make equally strong progress. In recent years, disadvantaged pupils have made stronger progress and attained standards above those of other pupils nationally. Such positive outcomes reflect the highly effective use of the pupil premium. The most able pupils in the school are well supported and challenged. Almost all go on to attain the higher standard in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2.
- Pupils develop a sophisticated grasp of grammar, punctuation and spelling. Pupils use correct terminology when discussing pieces of writing and draw upon their knowledge and understanding to great effect when producing creative writing of their own. Almost all pupils attain the expected standard in the national curriculum grammar, punctuation and spelling test, with a high proportion excelling and reaching the higher standard.
- Pupils also make strong and sustained progress across the wider curriculum. Engaging topics integrate learning across different national curriculum subjects highly effectively. There is a broad programme of visits beyond school to supplement pupils' experiences and in-school events designed to capture pupils' interest. For example, during the inspection, pupils and members of staff came to school dressed as characters created by Roald Dahl and celebrated his books in their lessons.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- Leaders and governors have given considerable thought to the introduction of new Nursery provision. They opened a well-resourced, 22-place Nursery at the start of term with the aim of broadening and improving the quality of early years education. The Nursery classroom and outdoor space are well equipped with appropriate resources and furniture. Although this inspection took place very early in the term, it was clear

that children were settling well and felt safe and secure because of the caring attitudes of the staff.

- Children's starting points on entry to the Reception class have varied from year to year. In recent years the majority of children have entered Reception with skills below those typical for their age. Prompt assessments ensure that the children who need additional support are quickly identified and specific learning is tailored to meet their needs. All children, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, make rapid progress as a result. Over recent years, outcomes at the end of the Reception Year have climbed above the national average.
- Early years funding for disadvantaged children has been used appropriately. As a result of regular assessment, teachers target additional support to meet identified needs.
- Teaching in the early years is outstanding. Teachers help children to learn through well-designed activities and adept questioning that encourages children to explore, experiment and find meaning. Adults operate as a highly effective team. They each know their role and responsibilities in ensuring that the objectives set out in planning are achieved. Teachers skilfully blend child-initiated learning with more specific teacher-led sessions that develop children's speech and language and the early steps into reading. Children respond very positively to their teacher's obvious enthusiasm and child-centred approach.
- Teachers and other adults make precise ongoing observations and record their findings across the day. These notes are added to each child's learning journal and used skilfully to shape the nature of learning activities. Teachers encourage parents to contribute their own observations of their children's development, although children's learning journals have little input from parents. Those parents who spoke to the inspector were full of praise for the care their children had received, and commented on the rapid progress they had made while in the Reception class.
- Leadership and management of the early years is outstanding. The early years leader shows vision and has clear plans in place for the expansion of early years provision. She has ensured that members of staff are well trained and understand their roles.

School details

Unique reference number	114258
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10032085

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	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	118
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Bowes
Headteacher	Lindsey Vollans
Telephone number	01740 651482
Website	http://www.stmichaelsprimary.durham.sch.uk/
Email address	bishopmiddleham@durhamlearning.net
Date of previous inspection	1–2 May 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The large majority of pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor targets, which are the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics at the end of key stage 2.

- The school runs a breakfast club and offers after-school provision.
- The school began offering Nursery provision for up to 22 children in September 2017. There are currently 14 children attending the Nursery.
- The school is a hub for school-centred initial teacher training. Both the headteacher and the deputy headteacher have part-time secondments and teach professional studies to trainees.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited lessons across all phases of the school, including the Nursery and Reception classes. Visits to lessons were undertaken jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. During observations, the inspector sampled pupils' books and talked to pupils to evaluate the quality of their current work. In addition, the inspector scrutinised in detail a sample of books containing work from a broad range of subjects. The inspector also listened to a number of pupils read.
- The inspector observed pupils at playtime and lunchtime and observed their movement and behaviour around the school.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, curriculum leaders, the early years leader and special educational needs coordinator, and a group of pupils. The inspector also met with a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body, and spoke to a representative of the local authority on the telephone.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, policies, assessment information and records of checks on the quality of teaching. The inspector looked at records of attendance, behaviour, minutes of governing body meetings and safeguarding information.
- The inspector took account of the 39 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and met with a group of parents. In addition, the inspector took account of the nine responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Chris Smith, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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