

St Michael's CofE (VC) First School

Weavers Lane, Off Lichfield Road, Stone, Staffordshire ST15 8QB

Inspection dates

7–8 November 2017

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	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Senior leaders and governors are highly ambitious for the pupils in their care. They are determined to provide a great education for all pupils in a supportive environment. They are well supported by a group of hard-working teachers and support staff.
- In a short time, senior leaders in the school have made significant improvements to the way that pupils are looked after and taught.
- Pupils make good progress during their time at school. They get off to a good start in the Nursery and Reception classes. At the end of key stage 1, pupils do well in the national assessments. At key stage 2, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education and leave school as curious and confident learners.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are supported well and make good progress. Pupils who receive support from the pupil premium also do well.
- Pupils' behaviour is very good in lessons. Around the school it is exemplary. Pupils are kind and considerate. Their attitudes to each other reflect the emphasis placed on trust, respect and thankfulness, which permeate the daily life of the school.
- The school has a positive and inclusive ethos. Relationships between pupils and adults in the school are very positive.
- Attendance and punctuality are good.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are generally good. Pupils enjoy their lessons. However, pupils do not have enough opportunities to write at length or to edit their own work. In some mathematics lessons, pupils do not do enough problem-solving.
- Subject and phase leaders are enthusiastic and effective. Many of them are new in post. In a few instances, it is unclear who is responsible for checking that agreed policies are implemented fully in all classrooms.
- The curriculum at key stages 1 and 2 gives the pupils a good grounding in English and mathematics. There are ample opportunities to study the other subjects of the national curriculum. The formal curriculum is complemented by fun-filled theme days.
- The school places emphasis on communicating well with parents and staff. Most parents and staff are very supportive of the school although not all have welcomed the recent changes.
- Governance is good. The governing body discharges its responsibilities well.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching further across the school by:
 - providing greater opportunity for pupils to write at length in different subjects
 - ensuring that pupils have more time to edit and improve their written work
 - giving pupils more problems to solve in mathematics.
- Make sure that all agreed approaches to teaching are implemented fully.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Senior leaders and governors have set out ambitious expectations for pupils in the school. Their vision of an excellent education in a caring environment is understood and shared by staff and parents.
- Senior leaders have improved the quality of education provided by the school since the last inspection. They have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and areas needing further improvement, and have identified clearly the next steps needed to make the school even better.
- The headteacher joined the school after a period of recent staffing instability. Since her appointment, she has made significant improvements to the school. Safeguarding procedures and training have been revised. The curriculum has been reinvigorated. Considerable staffing changes have occurred and a new programme of training for teachers and support staff has been introduced. The physical environment of the school has been enhanced. These changes have taken place over a very short period of time. In most instances, staff and parents have welcomed them enthusiastically.
- The early years curriculum has been revised. It provides a good balance of activities and prepares pupils well for Year 1. At key stage 1, pupils follow a broad programme, with suitable emphasis on literacy and numeracy. At key stage 2, pupils continue to follow the national curriculum, including French and music, and pupils have the opportunity to learn how to play a string instrument. The more formal curriculum is complemented by popular and fun-filled theme days, such as the recent 'Circus' and 'Meerkat' days.
- The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good. Pupils learn about themselves and the diverse world they live in. The school encourages them to develop an understanding of British and Christian values and this prepares them well for later life.
- A large number of staff were appointed or have taken on new responsibilities only very recently. These new leaders, as well as other subject and phase leaders, are enthusiastic and effective. Many have introduced significant changes to school, which have led to better outcomes for pupils. For example, a new approach to providing support to pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is ensuring that support is better targeted. Not all policies agreed by the school, such as those for editing written work and for teaching problem-solving skills, are implemented consistently in all classrooms.
- Training for teachers and support staff is good. Induction for new staff, including those who are new to teaching, is thorough. Nearly all of the staff speak positively about the school.
- The school places strong emphasis on communicating well with parents and staff. Most parents and staff are very supportive of the recent improvements made to the school but a few have expressed concern about the changes made.
- Senior leaders have improved the physical surroundings of the school. A new entrance area has made arriving at the school more welcoming and secure. Inside the school, a programme of tidying and refurbishment has led to brighter, more attractive

classrooms, which now provide a stimulating and pleasant learning environment. Teachers have worked hard to create lively and interesting classrooms, which are well organised and feature attractive and inspiring displays. A few of the corridors in the school, however, are less welcoming.

Governance of the school

- Governance of the school is strong.
- The governing body is well led. The chair of governors took up her post recently after being a governor at the school for a considerable number of years. She has steered the governing body, and the school, through a recent period of unsettled staffing. As a consequence, the school has not lost momentum and it has made rapid progress under the leadership of the new senior team.
- Governors are knowledgeable and possess a good blend of relevant skills and experience. They offer thoughtful support as well as challenge to the school leaders.
- The governing body holds senior leaders to account and discharges its statutory responsibilities, including safeguarding, well. It has ensured that additional funding, such as the pupil premium and sport premium, is used well.

Safeguarding

- The leadership of safeguarding is very good. It has ensured that arrangements for safeguarding are effective and that safeguarding is a priority for the school. Senior leaders and governors work effectively together to create a climate in which pupils are safe.
- Senior leaders reviewed the school's safeguarding procedures and arrangements, including site safety, as a priority after taking up post. This led to alterations to the start of the school day, revisions to arrangements for adults visiting the site, and enhancements to the security of the site.
- Pupils feel safe when they are in school. They know what to do if they feel upset or worried. They feel confident when talking to adults in the school. They believe that bullying occurs only very rarely and that instances are handled firmly and sensitively when they do occur.
- Regular lessons and thoughtful assemblies help pupils understand how to keep themselves safe. Teachers and the other staff in the school are very approachable. They know their pupils well and this helps keep those in their care safe.
- Regular training ensures that all adults in the school understand what to do if they have any concerns about a pupil's welfare. They know what to do in different circumstances and, if needed, whom they should turn to for further help.
- School leaders, and other staff, are vigilant in their approach to keeping pupils safe, including when keeping records and working with external agencies. Where needed, they follow up instances of concern until they are satisfied that there has been suitable resolution.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching is usually lively and engages pupils well. Pupils enjoy their lessons and this helps them make good progress. Teachers have high expectations of the pupils' work rate and manage behaviour well.
- Pupils settle to tasks quickly and concentrate well. They respond eagerly to questions and are keen to contribute their ideas.
- Relationships in classrooms are good. Pupils are responsive to the variety of tasks they are asked to do. In turn, teachers value their considerable effort in lessons.
- Teachers work together to plan lessons that build on what pupils already know and can do. Pupils are helped to identify what they need to learn in order to achieve the expected standards. Although written advice given by some teachers to pupils is rather general, pupils mostly understand what they need to do to improve their work. In guided reading sessions, pupils learn to read accurately and many respond insightfully to what they have read.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to write at length. Many of their pieces of writing are too short. The approach taken to 'scaffolding' writing, often using simple worksheets, can mean that pupils have limited means through which to develop extended writing. Pupils are not asked to edit or improve their own writing often enough as they move through the school. Although teachers correct the pupils' writing well, at different stages of its composition pupils do not do enough of this for themselves.
- In mathematics, teachers give the pupils plenty of opportunities to develop fluency in using number and mathematical reasoning. However, they do not always provide pupils with enough practice in problem-solving, which is an important part of the revised mathematics curriculum.
- Many pupils receive additional help from other adults inside and outside of lessons. In most instances, this helps the pupils make good progress and to catch up on any work that has been missed or misunderstood. In a very few instances, however, these interventions are ineffective, or disruptive, and pupils miss out on lessons done by other members of the class.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are taught well. The way they receive intervention and support has been revised. Although this has caused some concern among a few parents, these pupils are making good progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school is inclusive and considerate. It is a caring and positive community, in which all pupils are valued. Pupils' attitudes to each other routinely reflect the values of trust, respect and thankfulness, which permeate the daily life of the school.

- The school has a strong Christian ethos, which underpins regular acts of worship and celebration. Pupils are taught the importance of living a moral life and understand the difference between right and wrong.
- Pupils are helped to develop as young people through lessons, assemblies, class events, visits and trips, and opportunities to take on responsibility. Older pupils routinely help younger pupils, for example when playing in the playground or when organising events such as the sale of remembrance poppies.
- The attendance and punctuality of pupils are good. The attendance of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, and those who are supported by the pupil premium, has improved in the last two years. The school reminds parents regularly about the importance of punctuality and has introduced new measures for checking on it.
- The school prepares pupils well for the next stage in their education. Careful attention is given to supporting pupils as they move from the early years into key stage 1 and then into key stage 2. By the time they leave the school, Year 4 pupils are confident and curious learners. They are able to organise themselves and make good decisions about what they need to do to be successful learners.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave very well in lessons. They settle down quickly at the start of sessions and are usually very keen to learn. They respond swiftly to teachers' instructions and instances of poor behaviour are very rare.
- Some of the younger pupils can find it tricky to sit and listen for long periods on the floor during phonics sessions.
- Pupils' behaviour around the school is exemplary. Pupils are very polite and courteous to each other. They take turns when playing, assist each other on the playground, and wait sensibly when required in the dining hall.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils achieve well during their time at school. They get off to a good start in the Nursery class and make good progress in their learning. They are given challenging and interesting activities to do.
- Pupils do well in the phonics check at the end of Year 1. In 2016 and 2017, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in phonics increased and is now average. Pupils learn to read with fluency and are able to decode unfamiliar groups of letters and words.
- By the end of Year 2, pupils have achieved a suitable grounding in mathematics, reading and writing. Test results have improved in the last few years and the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standards in these subjects is broadly average. In 2017, the proportion of pupils exceeding the expected standards rose markedly to a figure higher than the national average.

- By the time they leave school at the end of Year 4, pupils have made good progress across the different subjects. Their writing, reading and mathematics are broadly at or above the standard expected for their age. They leave school well equipped for the next stage in their education.
- Pupils make good progress in the other subjects. Music is a particular strength of the school.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress. Their progress is monitored carefully and provision is adjusted to meet their needs. Pupils who receive support from the pupil premium also make good progress.

Early years provision

Good

- Children enjoy coming to the nursery. Routines are very well established and this helps all new children to settle quickly and well. Children are well supported by their key workers.
- Activities provided in the nursery are challenging and relevant to the children's ages. There are sufficient opportunities to learn using practical equipment, including by playing outdoors. Key workers assess children's learning journeys accurately. They use this to guide children to different activities. A few of the older children could benefit from doing even more challenging tasks.
- In Reception, the development of children's writing is good and their books show that they are working at or above the standard expected for their age. They are supported well in guided writing activities. The introduction of a new approach to teaching phonics has led to significant improvement in the proportion meeting the expected standard in the phonics check at the end of Year 1. Children learn to speak confidently to each other, and to others, including about how to keep themselves safe. In mathematics, the higher-attaining children could be asked to solve more problems. Children, including disadvantaged children, are well prepared for moving into Year 1. Teachers have a good understanding of what children know and how they might do even better. Assessment is accurate and used to plan the next learning activities.
- Behaviour in the early years is good. Children are very engaged in what they do except for a few children who occasionally find it hard to sit for extended periods during whole-class teaching. Relationships between adults and children are very friendly.
- Early years provision is very well led. The school has a clear sense of priorities for the early years. Links with parents and outdoor learning, for example, have increased recently. The transition of children from early years into key stage 1 is well thought out and organised. Early years staff work well with external agencies and with families to provide timely support for any children requiring extra help. Additional funding is used well.

School details

Unique reference number	124275
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10043154

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	273
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs J Doig
Headteacher	Mrs J Wass
Telephone number	01785 334 930
Website	www.stmichaelsstone.org.uk
Email address	office@st-michaels-stone.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	11–12 July 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- It is larger than the average-sized first school.
- Most pupils are White British. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium is below average.
- The school has an average proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. A lower-than-average proportion of pupils have an education, health and care plan.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited lessons across the school and observed pupils at work and at play. Inspectors also met with pupils, staff and governors, and a local authority representative, and spoke to a representative from another local school that pupils go on to attend. Inspectors scrutinised the work in pupils' books, published performance information, and a wide range of documents provided by the school. Inspectors took account of the results of the staff questionnaire. Inspectors spoke with different groups of parents, before and at the end of the school day, and took account of 107 responses to Parent View, the online questionnaire. Inspectors also took account of a small number of written submissions from parents.

Inspection team

Mike Cladingbowl, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
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Emma Titchener	Ofsted Inspector

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