

St Michael's Church of England Primary School

Dalston, Carlisle, Cumbria CA5 7LN

Inspection dates

9–10 November 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders are not doing enough to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Some of leaders' plans for improvement lack clarity. This does not help them and governors enough to check the work of the school.
- The quality of teaching across the school varies and some pupils do not make the progress that they should. This is because staff do not always challenge pupils with enough skill to make sure that they learn in sufficient depth.
- Leaders do not review the progress of pupils, including different groups of pupils, in enough detail to have a precise understanding of the school's performance.
- Some pupils' behaviour in key stage 2 is poor. Leaders' analysis of patterns of behaviour is patchy. Some parents, pupils and staff are concerned about pupils' behaviour.
- Prior to the inspection, one governor's suitability to join the school governing body had not been checked. This is because leaders did not review school records carefully enough.
- The curriculum does not give pupils a well-informed understanding of the diversity of people, faiths and religions. Pupils' understanding of some British values is underdeveloped.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils in key stage 1 behave themselves and listen fully to staff.
- Attendance is good. Pupils are kept safe. They enjoy helping staff care for the school.
- Leaders and staff make sure that pupils' learning is celebrated positively in attractive displays in classrooms and corridors.
- Children in the early years are supported skilfully in their learning by staff. Children behave well, enjoy school and make important strides forward in their skills and abilities.
- In some classes lessons are successful and pupils learn well.
- Pupils' attainment in reading in key stage 2 is above average.
- Disadvantaged pupils' achievement is good during their time at the school.
- Some leaders have an accurate view of what the school is doing well and where it needs to improve. They understand the challenges they need to overcome in order for the school to once again provide a good quality of education.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality and impact of leadership and management by:
 - keeping a much closer check on the quality of teaching and pupils' learning across the school
 - sharpening analysis of how well different groups of pupils are achieving and behaving
 - giving staff better support and training to make sure that teaching challenges pupils enough
 - sharpening leaders' plans to improve the school to show precisely how success will be assured
 - strengthening arrangements to make sure that adults linked to the school always have their suitability to work with pupils checked
 - making sure that the school's website is fully up to date with the required information.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning and its impact on pupils' achievement by:
 - making sure that activities in lessons throughout the school are consistently well matched to pupils' needs and abilities
 - giving pupils enough opportunities to deepen their thinking in different subjects and extend their skills and knowledge.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - making sure that all pupils' behaviour in key stage 2 is good and that staff skilfully support pupils when they need extra help in managing their own behaviour
 - broadening pupils' understanding of the modern world
 - teaching pupils to understand the local and national implications of British values of democracy and individual liberty.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Most staff responding to the Ofsted survey say that they enjoy working at the school, their well-being is considered by leaders and they are proud to work at St Michael's. However, the quality of education at the school has slipped since the previous inspection and some staff highlight the decline.
- Some of leaders' plans for improving the school are too imprecise to help them and governors to be confident that actions are having the desired impact. In contrast, some subject-specific plans are clear and measurable.
- The quality of teaching is inconsistent and the headteacher has an imprecise understanding of this issue. For that reason, the pace of change is slow. Leaders are beginning to improve staff's work by providing some opportunities for training and links with other local schools.
- When the headteacher took up post in 2014, he quickly established that the assessment of pupils in the school was unreliable. He succeeded in raising the quality of assessment of pupils' achievement. Information about the attainment of pupils is now accurate. Nevertheless, leaders' own reviews of the progress made by pupils over time, across classes and subjects, are patchy and unconvincing. This means that leaders do not always have a precise understanding of how well pupils are learning.
- Leaders have established a clear set of school values which pupils learn across subjects. For example, they learn to respect that other people may have different views to themselves. Pupils know much about moral issues. Even so, their understanding of different faiths and beliefs is limited and sometimes confused. They told inspectors they want to understand more about these matters.
- There is a clear, new system for managing pupils' behaviour. Pupils told inspectors that they understand the consequences of misbehaviour. They say that staff are consistent in their response to issues. The headteacher keeps careful records of any behavioural problems that arise. However, he does not always review information in enough detail to spot and respond quickly to commonly arising problems. Leaders are not doing enough to make sure that all key stage 2 pupils behave themselves.
- Leaders make sure that pupils learn how democracy works in electing their peers for membership of the school council. Even so, pupils cannot explain examples of democracy at local and national levels, nor do they understand what the British value of individual liberty means.
- Leaders have given much priority to the redevelopment of the school curriculum in recent years. In some examples, pupils' learning is now much more interesting and linked with their work across subjects. A specific coordinator has dedicated time to check on how well the curriculum works. However, planned subjects give too little focus to teaching pupils about the diversity of people. For example, pupils understand little about the contributions made by people from ethnic minorities and people who have disabilities to the modern world.
- The funding for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is

used appropriately and helps most pupils to progress well.

- Leaders use the pupil premium funding carefully. This is helping disadvantaged pupils to learn successfully. Equally, the physical education and sport funding is spent thoughtfully, for example to give pupils extra help with their spatial awareness.
- The deputy headteacher (who is to be the acting headteacher from January 2018) knows what good teaching and learning look like. She and the middle leaders have a realistic and accurate view of the school. They recognise the issues that have held the school back from being successful. They know what actions they need to take to drive improvement forward. They are determined to work together and with the governing body and local authority to lift the quality of education in the school.

Governance of the school

- Governors have an adequate understanding of the school.
- In the past, governors have been prevented from gaining a clear view of pupils' achievement. They have been unable to draw accurate conclusions from nationally published information about pupils' progress because teachers' assessments were unreliable.
- Governors have sought to understand the impact of the school's work by asking the headteacher about individual pupils' learning. However, they do not always test out what they are told about teaching, learning and pupils' progress. This has led them to have an overly generous view of the school.
- Some governors visit the school but leaders would welcome more opportunities to share and debate their work with the governing body.
- Arrangements to keep an eye on issues, such as finance and site safety, are appropriate.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All work to care for and protect pupils at the school is based on frequent communication between staff, parents and pupils. Staff access relevant training in safeguarding and participate in regular updates about national child protection issues. They understand what might suggest that a pupil is at risk. They know how to refer any concerns about pupils or adults. Leaders make sure that all relevant information about pupils is recorded fully and securely. Relevant information is passed to other agencies and schools as needed. The curriculum gives pupils helpful opportunities to learn about safety.
- At the time of the inspection, the headteacher had not made sure that one school governor had undergone the required checks to work with children and pupils. This is a breach of statutory requirements. However, it does not indicate wider issues because of the many other arrangements in place to protect pupils. The request for a check has now been submitted to the relevant organisation. Leaders recognise they need to make sure that the school's records of checks on adults to work with pupils are improved.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is too variable. Teaching is not improving quickly enough to make sure that all pupils learn as successfully as they should in different classes and subjects. This leads to pupils' progress being patchy across the school.
- Some pupils are given work that they already know how to complete. Some pupils find their own conversations much more interesting than the undemanding colouring-in, copying or cutting-out activities they are given. On occasion, pupils in key stage 2 cannot learn well because the behaviour of other pupils is poor. Some pupils are required to queue too much for the attention of the teacher before they can continue working.
- Staff and leaders are starting to make good links to other schools and the local authority to check the reliability of pupils' assessments. Staff and leaders can now increasingly rely on what national information tells them about pupils' attainment in Year 2 and Year 6. Even so, arrangements for staff to regularly review their assessments of pupils in all subjects and classes is at an early stage of development.
- Sometimes teaching assistants are used well to support different groups of pupils. This means that teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants is strong and makes a positive difference to the success of activities. At other times, support is not deployed to best effect and pupils do not learn deeply enough as a result.
- Teaching for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is mostly well planned and considered. Pupils are supported helpfully and they participate fully in activities. However, there are some examples when this skilled practice does not happen. Weak consideration of pupils' individual needs means that for some, activities are adapted poorly to their abilities.
- Where pupils' learning is most successful, staff give careful attention to the needs of different groups of pupils, for example the lower-ability pupils being given just the right amount of help by staff to edit and improve a text. Equally, the most able pupils develop much confidence and depth in their learning when staff give them enough challenge in some subjects and classes.
- Planned learning, such as in history and literacy, sometimes fires pupils' enthusiasm, for example where pupils have learned about the First World War. However, some work on the same topic, for example in art, is low-level and contributes little to developing pupils' skills and understanding.
- The teaching of reading is improving across the school. This is because of extensive attention by staff and leaders to improving their skills by completing staff training.
- Homework is set regularly and in line with school policy. Parents are very supportive and make sure that pupils complete given work. Some pupils say that their homework is too easy.
- Staff and leaders make sure that classrooms are attractive places to study and learn. Displays on the classroom walls, as well as in corridors, support pupils' studies and positively celebrate good examples of their work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Some pupils who responded to the Ofsted survey say that they do not feel safe all of the time. However, pupils with whom inspectors spoke said that they know how to report any concerns to adults. They feel that staff listen to them and take their views seriously.
- Some pupils only feel happy at school some of the time.
- Pupils develop a clear understanding of how to eat healthily and live active lives. They know how to keep themselves safe at home and school. They have an adequate knowledge of how to stay safe when using the internet.
- Pupils who met inspectors were polite and self-confident. They know how to work independently or in a team. They enjoy the different opportunities to help their school, for example by joining the school council or helping to manage the school 'tuck shop'.
- Pupils are aware that bullying happens in the school. They say that staff act promptly and successfully whenever issues are brought to their attention.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- The standard of pupils' behaviour in the school varies widely. In key stage 1, behaviour is good, even when teaching is uninspiring. In key stage 2, pupils who need extra help managing their own feelings and behaviour are not supported skilfully by staff.
- Variation in the quality of teaching makes issues worse. Some pupils' behaviour is poor. This has a negative impact on the learning, behaviour and well-being of other pupils. Some staff, parents and pupils are concerned about pupils' behaviour.
- Attendance is good. Levels of persistent absence are low. Parents support the school's emphasis on good attendance and punctuality.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils start at St Michael's with skills and abilities typical for their age. However, not enough pupils fulfil their potential. Variability in the quality of teaching between classes and subjects means that there is inconsistency in pupils' learning. Some current pupils are not making the progress they should. In key stage 2, some pupils' poor behaviour also holds back their progress and that of other pupils.
- Teachers do not always provide activities that help pupils to progress well. For example, in one lesson observed, undemanding mathematics work set for the middle-ability pupils led to a slowing of learning. In contrast, the most able pupils in the same class learned at greater depth through appropriately challenging work.
- Most, but not all, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress in their

learning. Pupils make important steps forward in their skills and abilities because of good support from teachers and teaching assistants. However, some pupils do not progress well because staff plan insufficiently for their individual needs.

- Past weaknesses in staff's assessment of children in the early years and pupils in key stage 1 and key stage 2 mean that much nationally published information about pupils' outcomes is unreliable. It is not possible to rely on any published measures of pupils' progress. However, published information about pupils' attainment in the school in 2016 and 2017 is considered accurate by the school and the local authority.
- Where published information is reliable, this shows a variable picture of how well pupils are doing at the school. For example, in 2016, Year 6 pupils' attainment of at least the expected standard in mathematics was above average but dropped to average in 2017. Pupils' attainment in writing in Year 6 was below average in 2016 and has improved to average in 2017. Pupils' attainment of at least the expected standard in reading in Year 6 is much more positive, being above the national average in 2016 and 2017.
- In key stage 1, pupils' attainment in reading, mathematics and science was above the national average in 2016. This dropped to below average in 2017 because of the specific needs of the cohort of pupils. Pupils' attainment in writing is below average in 2016 and 2017.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the national assessment of their phonics skills in Year 1 improved to be in line with the national average in 2017. This is because of the increased focus of staff and leaders on the teaching of letter sounds in the early years and Year 1. Given pupils' starting points, staff and leaders know that pupils should achieve even more.
- In some classes, pupils are now making better progress because the quality of teaching and assessment are improving. For example, pupils in Year 4 and Year 5 now benefit from many more meaningful opportunities to write to support their learning of geography and history.
- Careful expenditure of the pupil premium means that the small number of disadvantaged pupils achieve well during their time at the school. Staff are aware of pupils' individual needs and provide helpful extra support where needed.
- Pupils leave the school adequately prepared for continuing their learning at secondary school. They are becoming self-confident and enthusiastic about their education.

Early years provision

Good

- The early years leader has a good understanding of children's skills and abilities on entry to the Reception class. She gathers this information from good assessment, close links to pre-schools and lots of discussion with parents. She makes careful use of information in planning for children's learning.
- Given leaders' focus on making sure that children are ready for learning, staff place great emphasis on checking how children feel about themselves and their lives. Any child feeling sad or low is given extra help and support so they flourish in the Reception class.
- Teachers plan a curriculum that provides children with a wide range of valuable

learning opportunities both indoors and outdoors. For example, there are many opportunities to make models, count, read and write as well as to learn about different faiths and cultures. The learning environment is planned and developed well.

- The quality of teaching is good and improving. Just occasionally some activities are less engaging for children, for example the colouring-in of worksheets. By the time that children leave the class, they are ready for continuing their learning in Year 1.
- The staff team in the Reception class work very well together. They are confident, knowledgeable and thoughtful about their work. They have good access to training. They link closely with other schools to share and debate about children's learning in the early years. As a result, children's quality of education is improving well.
- Relationships between staff and children are good. Children behave sensibly. Staff offer skilful help to any individual child who is still learning to respect resources, themselves, or others.
- The early years leader has a clear understanding of safeguarding children.

School details

Unique reference number	112246
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10043207

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	218
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Stephen Withers
Headteacher	Mr Christopher Marsh
Telephone number	01228 711544
Website	www.st-michaels.cumbria.sch.uk
Email address	head@st-michaels.cumbria.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	25–26 June 2013

Information about this school

- St Michael's is an average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of children who have SEN and/or disabilities is average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged children eligible for support through the pupil premium funding is average.
- The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is below average.
- The headteacher is new to the school since the previous inspection and is leaving at the end of this term.
- The deputy headteacher is new to her role since the previous inspection. She has recently been appointed to the role of acting headteacher from January 2018.
- 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.

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about pupils' outcomes and equality objectives on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning throughout the school and outdoors. Inspectors conducted a series of joint observations with the headteacher and with the deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors checked pupils' work to see what learning and progress have been like this year. An inspector reviewed a sample of pupils' work in English, mathematics, history and geography with the deputy headteacher.
- An inspector heard some pupils from Year 2 and Year 4 read.
- Inspectors reviewed information about the progress pupils are making. Inspectors considered examples of information from leaders' checks on the quality of teaching and learning and reviews of how well the school is doing.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils in classes, around the school and outdoors. Inspectors reviewed 41 responses from pupils to an Ofsted questionnaire. Inspectors considered a summary of responses to a school pupil questionnaire from 2016.
- Inspectors spoke with a sample of 20 pupils chosen randomly from Year 2 to Year 6.
- Inspectors met with the school leaders for mathematics, English, the curriculum and the early years. Inspectors spoke with staff around the school and reviewed responses from 16 staff to an Ofsted questionnaire.
- Inspectors held a number of meetings with the headteacher and deputy headteacher to consider their reviews of the school and their plans for improvement.
- An inspector met with the deputy headteacher to review the school's work to support pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- The lead inspector spoke by telephone to the school's adviser from the local authority and met with a senior adviser.
- The lead inspector met with four governors, including the chair of the governing body, on the first day of the inspection. On the second day he met again with one governor.
- Inspectors spoke with some parents as they dropped their children off at school. Inspectors reviewed 64 responses and 63 free-text responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors reviewed two parents' comments sent via the school email system.
- Inspectors reviewed the checks made by the school on the suitability of staff to work with pupils.

Inspection team

Tim Vaughan, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Stephen Rigby

Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

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.

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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

© Crown copyright 2017