

# St Michael's Church of England Primary School, Sandhurst

Lower Church Road, Sandhurst, Berkshire GU47 8HN

## Inspection dates

8 to 9 May 2019

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Leaders have taken effective action to ensure that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is typically good and improving rapidly. Staff appreciate the effective professional development that they receive.
- Leaders and governors have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. Together with a highly dedicated staff team, they are committed to improving the school further.
- Leaders and governors have responded well to a recent decline in standards. With effective support from the local authority, leaders have ensured that pupils receive a good quality of education.
- Middle leaders are knowledgeable about their subjects. They are having a positive impact on improving teaching and pupils' outcomes.
- Pupils behave well and take great pride in their work. They enjoy their learning and are excited about the wide range of activities on offer.
- Safeguarding is effective. Pupils are looked after well. Leaders know and understand the risks facing their pupils. However, some safeguarding records are not well organised.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils enjoy an exciting curriculum. Pupils have a breadth of knowledge on a wide range of topics. However, opportunities to improve specific skills, in subjects other than English or mathematics, are still developing.
- Current pupils are typically making good progress in English and mathematics, especially in upper key stage 2. Attainment in English and mathematics is high. However, strategies to strengthen pupils' progress further in writing and mathematics are not yet fully embedded across the school.
- Parents are pleased with the positive start their children make to school in the early years. Children are challenged well in their early reading, writing and mathematics skills and, consequently, make good progress. However, the outside area is underdeveloped, and this hinders the progress children can make in other areas of the curriculum, particularly for the most able children.
- The leadership of provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is not strong. As a result, pupils with SEND make variable progress in the school.

## Full report

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

- Enhance the effectiveness of leadership and governance by improving:
  - the organisation of safeguarding records
  - the leadership of provision for pupils with SEND so that they are correctly identified and helped to make good progress.
- Strengthen the quality of teaching and learning further so that pupils make strong progress across the curriculum by:
  - sharing best practice to ensure that recent developments to improve the progress pupils make in writing and mathematics are fully embedded across the school
  - increasing the level of challenge in the early years curriculum, particularly in the outside area, for the most able children
  - building pupils' skills systematically across the wider curriculum.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have created a school with a tangible community feel. Parents are positive about the school, with one parent writing, 'St Michael's is a lovely family-feel school with a great team of truly inspirational teachers.'
- Leaders ensure that staff receive high-quality training so that they can continually improve their practice. As a result, teaching has been strengthened, and this is having a positive impact on the progress pupils make.
- Leaders have high expectations of their staff but are also considerate of teachers' workload. Staff morale is high. All staff who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire strongly agreed that they are proud to work at the school.
- Leaders have been successful in halting a decline in standards in the school. They know the school's strengths and weaknesses well. Leaders and governors have made good use of the targeted and appropriate support and challenge provided by the local authority. School improvement planning is sharp and precise, and is focused clearly on pupils' outcomes. Leaders ensure that teachers are held to account to improve the progress pupils are making.
- Leaders have successfully improved attainment and progress in mathematics. They are very knowledgeable about the subject and are making changes that are having a clear impact on pupils' outcomes. Nevertheless, leaders know that they need to continue to ensure that their changes are used consistently across the school.
- Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is broad, balanced and well planned. The curriculum makes sure that pupils enjoy and learn from a wide range of experiences, including going on many trips to enrich their learning. Visitors to the school also contribute to the knowledge and understanding that pupils acquire at St Michael's. For example, every child in the school has recently taken part in first-aid training. Music has a high priority in the school, for example every pupil in Year 4 learns to play a musical instrument.
- Pupils are incredibly proud of the cross-curricular projects they complete, which are creative, exciting and well presented. However, leaders are rightly developing the curriculum further. They are aware that in some curriculum areas, tasks are heavily centred on writing skills. Consequently, the progress pupils make in developing and applying subject-specific skills, such as in history and geography, is variable.
- Leaders ensure that the additional government funding for primary physical education (PE) is used extremely effectively. Leaders strategically plan how the additional funding will have the greatest impact for whole-school initiatives, staff development and support for individual pupils. Pupils participate in a wide range of sports from rugby, swimming and dance, to curling and boccia (a ball-game played by users of wheelchairs).
- Leaders also create aspirational opportunities for pupils. For example, the whole school visited the Olympic Park to swim in the pool and meet the diving champion Tom Daley.
- Leaders ensure that pupils who are falling behind in their learning receive prompt and

well-thought-out support to enable them to catch up. However, the leadership of provision for pupils with SEND lacks clarity. Leaders do not have a strategic overview of pupils' needs. Staff training in aspects of SEND is not well planned. Leaders' knowledge of the SEND code of practice is limited, especially in their understanding of identification of pupils with SEND. As a result, pupils with SEND are not always correctly identified and do not always make good progress.

## **Governance of the school**

- Governors have become more confident and able to ask challenging questions of leaders. Consequently, governors are now holding leaders to account well, especially for outcomes and the use of funding for the very few disadvantaged pupils in the school. As a result, pupils are now making stronger progress.
- With support from a national leader of governance, governors have been proactive in reviewing their effectiveness. They are currently looking at how a change in the governance size and structure could improve their focus further.
- Changes to how meetings are organised have resulted in all governors becoming more knowledgeable about their role in identifying the strengths and improvement areas of the school.
- Governors are ambitious for the future of the school and the pupils in it. They are deeply committed to pupils becoming well-rounded individuals who can make a difference to their local community and the world beyond St Michael's.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a strong sense of care and love at St Michael's. Relationships across the school are extremely positive. Pupils feel safe and know that staff will listen to them if they have any concerns. The headteacher goes out of her way to support her pupils and families in any way she can. Any necessary actions to keep pupils safe are taken without delay. Leaders understand the risks in the local area and, as a result, staff are vigilant.
- Training of staff and volunteers is up-to-date and regular. Pre-employment checks are fully in place. Leaders use staff meeting time well to update staff on different types of risk facing children in our society today. Consequently, staff understand their responsibilities well for keeping pupils safe.
- Although pupils are safe and feel safe in school, leaders' understanding of the most recent safeguarding changes to the statutory guidance, 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' September 2018, is not thorough. For example, risk assessments for volunteers are not fully in place. Some record-keeping is not well organised. Leaders began to review their record-keeping procedures during the inspection, so they could demonstrate the effectiveness of their work to keep pupils safe.

**Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Good**

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. Current pupils learn well across a wide range of subjects, including in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Strong relationships contribute to staff understanding pupils very well. This means that teachers can plan lessons that they know will inspire and excite their pupils. Pupils told inspectors that they have 'lots of fun' in lessons. Pupils are 'very happy' at St Michael's, which contributes to their willingness to take risks and embrace challenge.
- Teachers have high expectations of their pupils. For example, inspectors found skilful specialist teaching during a Year 4 clarinet lesson. Despite having had only five clarinet lessons so far, pupils were able to recognise and read notation, and use rhythm well to play in time. For example, pupils' rendition of 'Pease Pudding' was very tuneful.
- The teaching of mathematics is good. Consequently, most pupils are making good progress in mathematics. As a result of effective teaching, pupils are able to apply what they have learned to reasoning and problem-solving tasks. For example, in a Year 2 mathematics lesson, pupils were making their own decisions about how to collate and display data. Leaders are keen to share the best practice in the school to ensure that the teaching strategies they have introduced to improve progress further are fully embedded.
- Reading is taught effectively. Teachers ensure that pupils think deeply about why authors choose specific vocabulary. Teaching ensures that pupils' comprehension skills are developed well so that they can infer and understand subtle differences in the meanings of words. As a result, pupils read confidently and fluently, with strong understanding.
- Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve in writing, including in the basic skills of grammar, punctuation and spelling. Writing skills are taught systematically, and teachers give pupils many opportunities to practise and refine these skills. Teachers use assessment effectively to share with pupils how best to improve their work. As a result, the majority of pupils write well. Leaders are aware, however, that some recently introduced teaching strategies are not completely established. Handwriting is of a high standard across the school.
- Teachers carefully plan lessons in the wider curriculum that build on pupils' knowledge progressively. At the end of each topic, pupils have the opportunity to present their learning, showcasing their new knowledge. For example, pupils proudly shared with inspectors their projects about environmental issues. Work is presented to a high standard. Pupils take great care over their work because their teachers expect this of them. However, leaders know that teaching does not yet always focus enough on the progression of subject-specific skills.
- Sometimes teaching for pupils with SEND is not well planned, and this is hindering their progress. Their learning activities do not always match their needs and, from time to time, the design of a task does not help them learn. Leaders know that provision for pupils with SEND needs more thought at a strategic level, including thorough training for staff.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Leaders ensure that equality is promoted well through assemblies and in the curriculum. For example, an inspector observed an assembly celebrating the achievement of St Julian, the first women to write a book. Pupils were confidently contributing their ideas about how they, too, could inspire others.
- Staff promote healthy lifestyles and physical fitness extremely well. St Michael's was the winner of the 'Berkshire get active award' this year, recognising leaders' commitment to ensuring that pupils regularly engage in a wide range of sporting opportunities.
- Pupils told inspectors that there is no bullying in the school. Records confirm that incidents of bullying are extremely rare.
- The majority of parents are extremely happy with the care their children receive at the school. As one parent wrote, 'We have been so happy with the school and how it strives to nurture the children and make them become well-rounded people.'
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe online because of the well-planned curriculum. They could clearly tell inspectors what they would do if they received a message that made them feel uncomfortable. Leaders ensure that parents are also kept informed about developments to online safety, through useful workshops and visiting experts.
- Pupil's spiritual, moral and social development is promoted well. Earlier this academic year, the whole school visited Brookwood Cemetery to pay their respects to those who gave their lives in the First World War. Pupils reflected on this huge sacrifice, while considering how they too could play their part for future generations. Nevertheless, pupil's cultural understanding is less well established.
- Pupils have a keen understanding of how they can help others. For example, pupils love taking on the role of 'buddy' to the youngest children in the school. They do this with a sense of purpose, and are determined to be good role models.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Behaviour in classrooms and around the school, including in the playground, is respectful. Pupils are friendly and encouraging to each other. They show consistently positive attitudes to learning. Pupils take great pride in producing work to the best of their abilities.
- Pupils work hard in their lessons, seeking to improve their work wherever possible. They told inspectors how much they 'enjoy a challenge'.
- The school has recently introduced a new behaviour system. Pupils explained to inspectors how this worked, showing their secure understanding of any consequences that would be applied if they made a wrong choice. They were anxious to explain that 'getting to red' was extremely rare because the behaviour of pupils in the school was 'very good'. Pupils appreciate that they are given chances to improve their behaviour

before a consequence is applied.

- Leaders' analysis of behaviour incidents is not yet fully established. As a result, leaders are unsure of the impact the new behaviour initiatives have had on improving behaviour over time.
- Pupils' attendance is similar to the national average for primary schools.

### Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Current pupils' attainment is high in key stage 2, especially in English and mathematics.
- In 2018, there was a sharp increase in the proportion of pupils reaching age-related expectations in the mathematics assessment at the end of key stage 2. In key stage 1, in 2018, attainment was in line with the national averages in reading and mathematics, and above average in writing.
- Pupils typically make good progress across the school because of improvements in the quality of teaching. In some classes, pupils, including the most able, make excellent progress in mathematics, while their progress in other classes is steadier.
- Leaders have halted a decline in writing standards in key stage 2. Current pupils, in both key stages, are typically making good progress in writing from their starting points. Pupils write well, with a sense of pride and attention to detail in their work. However, progress in writing in some classes is not so strong as in others.
- The very few disadvantaged pupils in the school make good progress in a wide range of subjects. However, the progress of pupils with SEND is variable.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about reading, keenly explaining to inspectors about their favourite authors. They read with fluency and enjoyment. Younger pupils apply their phonic skills well to support them in reading unknown words. Over time, a very large majority of the pupils have reached the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check.
- Pupils build their knowledge well in a wide variety of subjects. Outcomes in art are especially high. Displays around the school show that pupils produce work of a high standard in many different art media. Nevertheless, leaders are aware that the curriculum needs further refinement to enable pupils to make stronger progress in developing their subject-specific skills, such as in history and geography.

### Early years provision

**Good**

- Children start school in the early years with skills and knowledge that are broadly typical for their age. The proportion of children attaining a good level of development has been higher than the national figures in recent years, showing that children make good progress.
- There was a slight dip in attainment in 2018. Leaders have responded swiftly by increasing the level of challenge in reading and mathematics, and, as a result, children are well prepared for Year 1. Current children, including those children with SEND, make good progress in the early years.

- Leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths in early years provision, as well as the areas that need further development. For example, the early years leader is increasing the opportunities for children to use technology in their learning and play.
- Relationships are strong. Children have many opportunities to learn how to care for and respect others. The class regularly visits a local care home, where children chat and listen to older members of the local community, showcasing their increasingly mature communication skills.
- Teaching successfully ensures that children have regular opportunities to understand the world beyond St Michael's, and, as a result, children have a strong understanding of diversity and equality. During the inspection, children were pretending to be knights writing to a dragon. There was no shadow of doubt that girls could be strong and brave knights.
- Teachers have high expectations of the children, and they challenge the most able pupils well in reading, writing and mathematics. They question and guide children well. Children enjoy writing because teachers ensure that the tasks are linked to children's interests. Children's writing shows a strong grasp of phonics and awareness of a sentence. However, in the outside area, children, particularly the most able, do not have enough opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills in a wide range of curriculum areas.
- Behaviour is excellent in the early years. Children concentrate on tasks well because they are interested in what they are doing. They demonstrate a secure sense of belonging and emotional well-being because adults encourage the children to be independent and to think for themselves. As a result, the children feel valued and secure.
- Parents have many opportunities to be involved in their children's learning. This includes regularly supporting the children on their 'walks in the woods', where children have the chance to learn about appropriate risks. Leaders have established effective transition arrangements before children start in the early years, such as visiting them in their pre-schools.
- Children are cared for well. Leaders have ensured that all welfare requirements are met, and that safeguarding procedures are effective.



## School details

Unique reference number	109973
Local authority	Bracknell Forest
Inspection number	10088064

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	193
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Louise Norman
Headteacher	Maire Bird
Telephone number	01252 873 360
Website	<a href="http://www.st-michaels-school.org">www.st-michaels-school.org</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:secretary@st-michaels-school.org">secretary@st-michaels-school.org</a>
Date of previous inspection	4 to 5 June 2015

## Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school, with one class in each year group. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- A new chair of governors took on the role in September 2018. The headteacher is retiring at the end of this academic year. A new headteacher has been appointed and will start in September 2019.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds is below the national average.
- An inspection of the school's distinctive Christian character was carried out under section 48 of the 2005 Education Act in September 2015.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils learning in every class. Most teaching was observed jointly with a senior or middle leader. Inspectors looked at pupils' work in books covering a range of subjects, abilities and year groups.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and the senior leadership team, the special educational needs coordinator and the intervention teacher, and leaders with responsibility for early years, computing, mathematics, English and PE. An inspector also met with a group of staff.
- The lead inspector met with four governors, including the chair of the governing body. She also met with representatives from the local authority and the diocese. An inspector met with the national leader of governance, who is currently supporting the school.
- Inspectors met with a group of pupils and considered their views of the school. Inspectors also spoke informally with pupils during lessons, and during lunchtimes and breaktimes. They also considered 163 responses to Ofsted's pupils' questionnaire. An inspector also heard pupils read.
- Inspectors considered the 85 responses from parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and scrutinised 38 free-text responses. They spoke informally with parents at the start of the school day. Twenty responses to the Ofsted staff questionnaire were also examined.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including: leaders' self-evaluation of the school's performance; the school improvement plan; minutes of governing body meetings; information about pupils' outcomes, behaviour and attendance; and several key school policies. Inspectors considered a range of documentation in relation to child protection, safeguarding and the recruitment of staff.

## Inspection team

Lea Hannam, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Jon Hills

Ofsted Inspector

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