

# St Michael's Church of England First School

Watery Lane, Minehead, Somerset TA24 5NY

## Inspection dates

11–12 June 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	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Determined and effective leadership by the headteacher, well supported by local governors and academy leaders, has brought significant improvement over the past eighteen months. Good teaching enables pupils to achieve well.
- Senior leaders check the quality of teaching and the impact it has on pupils' learning and progress effectively. Consequently, they have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas in need of improvement.
- Leaders ensure that their actions bring about the planned improvements. For example, they have provided quality training to improve teaching, particularly of phonics and reading.
- Recent changes in staffing mean that middle leadership is not yet contributing to school improvement well enough.
- Teachers have high expectations and plan work for the pupils that is stimulating and challenging. As a result, all groups of pupils, including the most able, learn well and make good progress.
- The curriculum provides a wealth of interesting learning experiences, especially in physical education.
- Pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. However, pupils' literacy and mathematical skills are not used and developed well enough across the range of subjects.
- Teachers ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who are disadvantaged have their needs carefully assessed and supported well. Consequently, these pupils achieve as well as their classmates.
- Pupils share excellent relationships with each other and with staff. This boosts their self-confidence and supports their keen interest in learning. Pupils behave well and take pride in their work. Pupils say, and their parents agree, that they are very safe at school. Consequently, pupils enjoy school and most attend well.
- Children in the early years Reception class experience effective and motivating learning experiences. They make good progress and are well prepared for learning in Year 1.

## **Full report**

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

- Strengthen the development of pupils' literacy and mathematical skills by teachers using them more consistently and effectively to aid learning across the range of subjects.
- Improve leadership and management by developing the skills of middle leaders so they contribute more effectively to raising standards and developing the curriculum in their areas of responsibility across the school.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since she commenced her duties at the school in January 2018, the headteacher, well supported by local governors and academy leaders, has relentlessly pursued a strong vision for continuous improvement. Her determined actions have been accompanied by high-quality professional development. Staff say this has boosted their confidence and invigorated their drive to develop their own teaching and pupils' learning. As a team, leaders and staff now sustain an effective focus on improving the quality of teaching and pupils' achievements across the school. Consequently, across the school, good teaching is driving pupils' strong progress. For example, the improved standards in Reception and at the end of Year 2 seen in 2018 have been raised further this academic year.
- All the parents and carers who spoke with an inspector praised the work of the school. In the online questionnaire, a small number of parents expressed concerns about frequent changes in staff. Inspection shows that current leaders are managing staff change effectively and demonstrate a strong capacity to sustain improvement.
- Senior leaders evaluate the performance of the school accurately. They have provided effective professional development opportunities, matched well to areas identified for improvement. Leaders, including governors, check to see if training is securing a positive impact on pupils' learning.
- At times, too much is reliant on the work of the headteacher. This is because past and continuing changes in staffing have limited the development of middle leadership. Middle leaders' effective contributions to the development of pupils' phonics understanding and physical education are not yet as strong across other subjects.
- The school uses additional funding to help pupils with SEND and those who are disadvantaged achieve well. This is an example of the school's commitment to equal opportunity.
- The sport premium is managed well to provide pupils with a wide range of sports, including increased after-school clubs and plentiful equipment to support meaningful sport during breaktimes.
- The school provides a broad, stimulating curriculum that captures and draws on pupils' interests. Pupils have good opportunities to extend their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, school acts of worship and singing assemblies cultivate an inclusive community ethos and widen the pupils' understanding of the world beyond school. Learning about British values goes hand-in-hand with the school's respectful promotion of Christian values. Pupils apply these principles well through their work on the school and Christian councils.
- The curriculum covers the range of required subjects. Literacy and mathematics are taught effectively as discrete subjects. However, pupils' writing and mathematical skills are not developed consistently to good effect across other subjects.

## Governance of the school

- Governance is effective. Members of the local governing body have made key appointments and participated in training to widen and strengthen their skills and understanding of their roles. Governors' rigour in holding leaders to account and resolute support of their actions have been instrumental in sustaining the school's successful drive for improvement. Governors have improved the way they check the performance of the school to ensure that teaching secures pupils' good achievement. Governors make frequent visits to the school and question and challenge the headteacher to achieve the desired outcomes of the school improvement plan, for example to ensure effective use of additional funding to secure the good progress of disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The headteacher and governors, well supported by academy leaders, ensure that safeguarding policies and procedures fully comply with statutory requirements. Leaders make sure that all staff undertake regular training and know what to do to keep pupils safe. For example, staff are clear about how they should act should a pupil disclose an incident that threatens their safety and well-being. School and academy administrative staff assist the headteacher and chair of governors in checking the single central record to ensure the suitability of staff and all those who work at the school. Leaders and staff work well with outside agencies to support pupils considered vulnerable and are diligent in tackling and reducing persistent absence. Almost all the parents and all the staff and pupils who responded to the online questionnaires expressed the view that pupils feel safe at school.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- The headteacher has empowered teachers through motivating support and well-targeted training opportunities to raise their expectations and extend their subject knowledge. Teachers and teaching assistants have responded well. Teachers meet the pupils' different needs and challenge them at the right level. They teach reading, writing and mathematics effectively. The positive impact of good teaching is evident in the consistently strong teaching of phonics and the pupils' above average performance in phonics screening checks. Pupils also make strong progress in reading.
- Pupils, including the most able, enjoy taking part in discussions and learn effectively through the sharing of ideas with others. When questioned, pupils say, 'Teachers structure learning so we can work through things together.' Parents also appreciate the way teachers take care to enthuse and engage their children in learning and promote their good behaviour.
- Teachers assess pupils' learning and work accurately. They give good information to pupils about what needs to be improved. They set meaningful and interesting tasks that help pupils to make good progress. In recent terms, teachers have raised their expectations and insist on pupils presenting their work neatly in mathematics and when writing in their English books. This is particularly effective in helping pupils to develop good handwriting skills. When enthused, pupils write perceptively and at length in some subjects, for example in religious education, describing what colours mean to

people in different communities. However, teachers are not yet as consistent in ensuring that pupils record their work as neatly and further develop their literacy and mathematics skills in other books across the curriculum.

- Teaching assistants support pupils well. Their additional guidance of individual pupils or of small groups boosts pupils' self-confidence in learning, including during after-school club activities. Teachers and teaching assistants use their training and work diligently to get to know the pupils with SEND. As a result, they are well equipped to teach and support these pupils effectively. Parents of pupils with SEND are especially appreciative of the individual attention they receive.
- Disadvantaged pupils derive similar benefit from the personalised nature of the additional adult support they receive. They are challenged well by work, which provides the relevant next steps in learning and sustains good progress.
- Sports coaches contribute well to the school's good physical education curriculum. For example, school staff are able to advance their teaching skills effectively alongside the pupils' improving tennis skills.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils have good attitudes to learning. They are keen to please adults, respond eagerly when questioned and show a genuine desire to learn. Pupils enjoy expressing and sharing ideas during lessons. They value the views and contributions of others. These qualities strongly support their good learning and progress. Most pupils sustain good levels of concentration and work hard during lessons. On occasion, more often when challenged to work independently, a small number of pupils need and receive additional guidance to remain focused on their work.
- Pupils share excellent relationships with each other and with the caring staff in the school. They are especially proud of their school. They demonstrated high levels of respect and consideration to the inspectors during the inspection. Pupils said that bullying is very rare. They showed their understanding of bullying by adding, 'Bad behaviour doesn't happen on purpose in our school.' Records confirm this view and show that pupils respond well to guidance from the school and their parents to improve their behaviour when necessary.
- Pupils welcome the many opportunities to work and play together during after-school clubs. They are especially enthusiastic and show good teamwork when using the school's stimulating range of equipment during breaktime sporting activities. Pupils sing wholeheartedly but respectfully together during assemblies. They show mature understanding when discussing and writing about different cultures and beliefs across the world. Pupils take their responsibilities seriously, for example on the school and Christian councils, when organising activities and events.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. All the pupils who spoke with an inspector agreed that behaviour is good. Pupils say they enjoy school. This view is endorsed by the very large majority of parents who responded to the online questionnaire. Most pupils attend well. A small number of pupils are still prone to persistent absence, but this is being reduced year on year by the diligent work of school leaders.
- Pupils say they feel safe at school. They understand know how to stay safe. For example, when questioned, pupils made specific reference to the school's fire alarm. Older pupils are particularly mindful of younger children. For example, they participate energetically but sensibly together during their breaktime sports.

## Outcomes for pupils

### Good

- Observations of pupils' current learning in class, analysis of their work in books and school assessment of their developing skills show that pupils are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This demonstrates a sustained trend of rising standards first seen in national assessments in 2018.
- During the inspection, pupils in all classes responded well to typically sharp questioning, which deepened their thinking. Encouragement from staff boosts their confidence and interest in learning. Pupils in all classes offer and share ideas willingly and demonstrate good speaking and listening skills for their age. This supports effective learning across the range of subjects. It is particularly evident in teamwork during physical education and when pupils sing together in assembly.
- Improvements in teaching have ensured that pupils can explain their ideas, for example when solving problems in mathematics. Most-able pupils in all classes, and especially in Years 2 and 3, are increasingly demonstrating deeper levels of understanding than those expected for their age. However, pupils do not use and further extend their mathematical skills well enough across other subjects.
- Pupils' progress in writing fluctuates. It is at its best when pupils are stimulated by interesting topics and can write imaginatively, for example when writing as an archaeologist opening an Ancient Egyptian tomb. Pupils' good use of meaningful vocabulary shines through when writing about 'unicorns in space' and other fictitious creatures. The current whole-school focus on improving pupils' handwriting is proving successful. However, pupils do not consistently maintain their good standard of writing when writing in subjects other than English.
- Pupils in all classes are developing their reading skills well in response to much improved and consistently effective teaching of phonics. This is evident in the year-on-year increase in the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in Year 1 phonics screening checks. Pupils read with enthusiasm and benefit from adult support and books that are well matched to their abilities and interests.
- Across the school, disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND benefit from bespoke adult support and extra teaching that is well matched to their different needs. Consequently, these pupils progress as well as other pupils in the school.

## Early years provision

Good

- The leadership of the early years is effective. Staff work together as a cohesive team. They have regular training opportunities to develop their skills. Teaching, learning and assessment is good due to improvements made over the past eighteen months. This is evident in the consistently strong teaching of phonics, which underpins the development of early reading and writing skills effectively. Improvements also include more demanding learning activities, which have increased the number of most-able children exceeding standards expected for their age.
- The teacher's assessments and monitoring of children's learning are used well to plan teaching and learning that match the children's needs. This year, for example, the teacher has adjusted the curriculum to take more regard of the children's interests. As a result, topics such as 'Super Heroes' have proved successful in stimulating boys' engagement in learning and helped them to progress just as well as girls. In addition, building on improved outcomes evident in 2018, an increased number of children now achieve and exceed a good level of development. Children with SEND also achieve well in relation to their different starting points.
- Parents are especially appreciative of the arrangements to help children starting school. They welcome the caring efforts of staff in helping children to settle happily and in enabling them to feel safe and enjoy school. Staff are diligent in implementing effective procedures to support children's welfare and keep them safe. Consequently, children behave and cooperate well with staff and with each other.
- Most children enter the school with skills typical for their age. They make good progress across all areas of learning in response to effective teaching and support. Children learn well in mathematics and benefit from frequent opportunities to count everyday objects. For example, children learned well together, taking turns and challenging each other to count objects in the popular outdoor 'mud kitchen'.
- Teachers have strengthened the development of children's fine motor skills to support their early writing skills. However, this focus has not been in place long enough to fully develop some of the children's handwriting skills. The staff strongly promote the children's physical development, especially their gross motor skills, though using large wheeled toys and additional coaching skills. Children also achieve successfully in their social development and start Year 1 as confident learners.



## School details

Unique reference number	142819
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10088278

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

Type of school	First
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	5 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	151
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Mrs Martina Foster
Headteacher	Janine Donovan
Telephone number	01643 702759
Website	<a href="http://www.stmichaelsfirstschool.co.uk">www.stmichaelsfirstschool.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:stmichaelsminehead@educ.somerset.gov.uk">stmichaelsminehead@educ.somerset.gov.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- St Michael's CofE First School is a member of the West Somerset Academies Trust, which consists of seven schools in total. St Michael's became an academy in September 2016.
- This first school has five classes, Reception and Years 1-4. It is below average in size.
- The majority of the pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is lower than the national average. The proportion of pupils with SEND is broadly average. The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged is broadly in line with the national average.
- The school population is relatively stable, with the proportions of pupils who move in or out of the school typically matching those found nationally.
- The local governing body manages an after-school care club.
- Children experience early years provision full time in a Reception class.



## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning in 18 lessons and saw the work of five teachers, several teaching assistants and two coaches of physical education.
- The headteacher accompanied the inspectors during several of these visits to lessons.
- A wide range of documents was scrutinised, including records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance, safeguarding procedures and the school's self-evaluation.
- The inspection team examined the school's systems for checking progress and records of checks on the quality of teaching.
- The inspectors talked with individual pupils during lessons and breaktimes about the school and their work. The team inspector listened to individual pupils reading and interviewed a representative group of pupils. He also observed the 'Wake and Shake' physical activity session. The lead inspector attended the school singing assembly and visited the after-school club. The inspectors, at times joined by the headteacher, looked at samples of pupils' work across a range of subjects and classes
- The lead inspector met with the chair and other representatives of the local governing body and with the chief education officer of the West Somerset Academies Trust.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and middle leaders. Inspectors also spoke informally with other teachers, teaching assistants and support staff.
- The inspectors examined the views expressed in 16 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View, and in 13 parents' additional written comments. The inspectors gathered the views of several parents as they brought their children to the school.
- Inspectors gathered the views of 13 members of staff in questionnaires and the views of pupils expressed in eight questionnaires.

## Inspection team

Alexander Baxter, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Simon Bissett	Ofsted Inspector

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