

St Michael's Church of England Controlled Junior School

Church Lane East, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 3SS

Inspection dates

18 to 19 June 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is inconsistent. Assessment information is not always used accurately. Pupils are not fully engaged in their learning, because tasks are not well matched to their learning needs. As a result, pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Middle leaders have not successfully improved the quality of teaching and learning in the teams or subjects for which they are responsible.
- Pupils make limited progress in some subjects because the curriculum is not well planned. Leaders have not considered the knowledge and skills pupils need to learn.
- Outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics remain below the national average at the end of key stage 2. Current pupils have made better progress this year than in recent years but make too many errors in their basic writing skills.

The school has the following strengths

- Senior leaders have a clear and ambitious vision for the school. They have deservedly regained the confidence of parents.
- Senior leaders have created rigorous systems that are starting to improve teaching and learning. Additional leaders have been appointed to strengthen this work in the future.
- Senior leaders have raised the expectations about what staff and pupils can achieve. Teachers feel well supported by senior leaders to make the improvements needed.
- Governance has improved. Governors now offer appropriate support and challenge to leaders.
- Pupils enjoy attending the school. Behaviour is good. Pupils develop into confident, respectful and polite individuals.
- Leaders have developed a strong safeguarding culture so that pupils feel safe in school and know that they will be listened to if they have any concerns.
- The school no longer works in isolation. It benefits from partnerships with other schools in the area and from effective support from the local authority.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - strengthening the work of middle leaders to provide better support in securing consistently high-quality teaching and learning across the school
 - developing the curriculum so that it sets out the expected progression in knowledge and skills for all subjects.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - providing consistent challenge to all pupils through activities that match their abilities
 - ensuring that teachers expect and achieve higher rates of engagement from all pupils in their learning
 - accurately assessing pupils' writing, and focusing on improving spelling, punctuation, grammar and handwriting.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Over the past few years, the school's leaders have not ensured that pupils make the progress of which they are capable. Expectations have been too low, and pupils' outcomes have been inconsistent. The quality of teaching has been variable, and assessment has not been precise. Consequently, pupils have not been sufficiently motivated or engaged in their learning.
- The new headteacher has transformed the culture of the school, raising expectations for what can be achieved and ensuring that all staff focus on improving standards. As a result, the quality of education in the school has begun to improve. As yet, these improvements are not embedded across the whole school, because middle leaders are not fully effective in their roles. However, governors and senior leaders have been quick to prepare a new staffing structure as from September, designed to increase leadership capacity to make the necessary improvements.
- Parents recognise and appreciate the changes that are being made. They rightly link these changes to the appointment of the new headteacher. Many parents made this point in their written comments in the Parent View questionnaire. For example, one parent wrote: 'St Michael's has made a huge improvement since the appointment of the new headteacher. There are clear changes underway with a real positive impact on the education of the school's students.'
- Senior leaders have put in place robust systems to check the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers receive regular feedback on various aspects of their practice, and leaders check that teachers respond to any improvements needed. Teachers understand why more is now expected of them and know that leaders will support them in making the necessary changes. Due to some teacher absence, senior leaders have been teaching classes more frequently. This has restricted the time they have had to help other teachers to improve.
- The school benefits from strong support from the local authority. Several advisers visit regularly to work alongside leaders. This has led to improvements in support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and has helped to develop leadership capacity. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has improved provision for pupils with SEND. Their additional needs are more accurately identified, and appropriate support put in place more quickly. However, they are not yet making consistently good progress in their learning.
- Senior leaders have forged helpful links with other schools, so that St Michael's is now an outward-looking school. Teachers benefit from regular meetings with colleagues in other schools, for example to compare standards being achieved. Collaborative working across schools has also led to some improvements in teaching and learning. One example of this is the school's involvement in a research project, which led to the introduction of useful new approaches to learning in mathematics in some classes.
- The curriculum includes a wide range of subjects, though some of these are not covered in sufficient depth. Leaders are aware that they need to do more to plan the progression of knowledge and skills expected in each subject. Work to develop this

approach is at an early stage. In subjects where work has already been done, such as science, work in pupils' books shows that setting out this progression is helping to improve the progress that is made.

- There are many opportunities for pupils to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. Pupils think reflectively about different cultures. For example, they gained valuable insights into the life experiences of refugees in an assembly that took place during the inspection.
- Disadvantaged pupils benefit from more support in class than at the time of the previous inspection. Leaders have ensured that all teaching staff are aware of the learning needs of disadvantaged pupils and strive to meet them. As a result, these pupils now make better progress.
- Leaders use the sports premium funding effectively in order to enhance the school's provision for physical education and sport. An increasing number of pupils participate in sporting activities and they enjoy the extra-curricular sports clubs on offer.

Governance of the school

- Governance is considerably stronger than it was at the time of the previous inspection. Governors are committed to their role, providing effective challenge and support to leaders in their quest to improve the school. They recognise that the impact of leaders' efforts has been limited since the previous inspection but have a realistic sense of optimism about the future.
- Newly appointed governors have added helpful expertise and experience to the governing body. All governors understand that an important part of their role is to challenge leaders and they successfully do so. They ask insightful questions to understand better the information that they are given by leaders.
- Governors make regular visits to the school, focusing on specific aspects of the school's work. They check that changes discussed in meetings are actually happening. They discuss improvements with pupils and staff to check the impact of changes. Governors therefore have a secure understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school's provision. They share the headteacher's drive to improve the school further.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All staff receive regular training about how to keep pupils safe from harm. As a result, they know the signs to look for that suggest a pupil might be at risk. Staff are vigilant in following up any concerns, with leaders involving external agencies whenever necessary. Governors have a sound oversight of the school's safeguarding arrangements. They help to ensure that safeguarding procedures are robust.
- Leaders have created an open culture, in which pupils and parents are able to share any concerns with school staff. Pupils feel safe and secure in and around the school site. They learn how to keep themselves safe online.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inconsistent across classes and subjects. Planning and resources are the same for each class within a year group. However, the quality of teaching is variable. Weaker teaching does not enable pupils to make sufficient progress.
- When teaching is weaker, time is not well used for learning. Pupils are not sufficiently challenged. Tasks are not always well matched to the abilities of different pupils. Pupils become disengaged from their learning and this limits their progress.
- Although teachers check the quality of pupils' work regularly with colleagues in their school and in other local schools, their assessment of the standard of work is not always accurate. This is especially true in writing, where teachers are sometimes too generous in their evaluation of how well pupils are achieving. As a result, teachers' plans for pupils' next steps in learning are not always appropriate. Pupils cannot always securely recall previous learning.
- Interactions between teachers and pupils are focused increasingly well on improving pupils' learning. For example, questioning is sometimes used well to develop pupils' thinking. Pupils in all classes enjoy discussing their learning with each other and benefit from doing so.
- Leaders have introduced new systems to track pupils' progress, including for vulnerable groups. They set ambitious targets for what pupils should achieve. Pupils in danger of underperforming are quickly identified. However, teaching does not always ensure that these pupils catch up with their peers.
- Teachers' expectations for pupils' basic writing skills, including handwriting, spelling, punctuation and grammar, are often too low. Teachers do not address weaknesses in these areas consistently. Consequently, pupils do not always make the necessary improvements in these aspects of their writing.
- Pupils develop their knowledge of vocabulary in English lessons. They enjoy learning new words and using them in their writing. For example, in one Year 3 lesson, a group of most-able pupils were having an animated discussion about how they could correctly use the word 'surreptitiously'.
- In mathematics, there is a clear focus on developing pupils' calculation skills, and pupils also develop their ability to describe their mathematical thinking in a range of contexts. However, not all pupils have regular opportunities to apply these skills in problem-solving situations, and this tends to restrict their progress.
- Pupils with SEND usually receive effective additional support in the classroom, including from learning support assistants. Consequently, they are able to access the same learning as their peers. Similarly, disadvantaged pupils benefit from additional support in class, so that their progress is accelerated.
- In some subjects, including science and art, teachers have begun to think about how knowledge and skills are taught progressively. In science, pupils are acquiring scientific knowledge. However, science learning is not always practical enough for pupils to develop strong scientific skills. Conversely, pupils use their sketchbooks in art lessons

to practise skills methodically, resulting in some striking artwork.

- In many areas of the curriculum, pupils are not taught subject-specific content in a progressive way. Individual pieces of work are mostly at an appropriate level, but opportunities to develop greater depth of learning and make strong links between aspects of learning are not grasped.

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's values introduced by the new headteacher – respect, resilience and courage – are becoming well established. They are known by all pupils and underpin their personal development. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong and nurturing, based on mutual respect. Pupils are polite and well-mannered at all times.
- Pupils display positive attitudes to their learning. Pupils of all ages talk confidently about what they are learning in class. They enjoy collaborative work and being active participants in their learning.
- The school has an inclusive culture. One pupil told an inspector: 'Everyone is treated fairly. No one is left out.' This is indeed the case. For example, in Year 6, every pupil takes on a position of responsibility. Through these roles, which include eco-monitors, sports leaders and house captains, pupils help to take care of their school.
- Pupils' physical and emotional well-being is given a high priority at St Michael's. Pupils enjoyed the recent healthy eating week. They like participating in the 'golden mile' run regularly. Three members of staff provide effective support for pupils experiencing emotional problems.
- Pupils and parents have few concerns about bullying. Bullying, including cyberbullying, does occasionally happen, but teachers and leaders deal with it effectively.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils conduct themselves well in lessons, assemblies and as they move around the school. They also behave well at breaktime and lunchtime.
- Classrooms are orderly and calm learning environments. Pupils are almost always attentive and respond promptly to instructions. Pupils understand what is expected of their behaviour. Only when teaching is weak does their attention wander.
- The school's approach to managing behaviour is consistently implemented by staff. They keep detailed records of any incidents of misbehaviour. Leaders check these records to ensure that incidents are dealt with properly. There have been no exclusions this year, because behaviour is well managed.
- Pupils attend school regularly, and the overall attendance rate is above the average for all schools nationally. Vulnerable groups also have high rates of attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- In the last three years, attainment at the end of key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics has often been significantly below that achieved in other schools. Historically, too few pupils have been well prepared for secondary school.
- Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND, are making stronger progress this year than previously. However, progress varies from class to class because of the variable quality of teaching.
- Disadvantaged pupils make stronger progress than in previous years because they are now better supported in class. Consequently, gaps in attainment in reading, writing and mathematics are closing. The learning needs of pupils with SEND are now identified more accurately, and better provision is in place to meet them. Their progress has improved during this year.
- While pupils learn to write for a variety of purposes and use a wide range of vocabulary, they often make less progress in developing their spelling, punctuation and grammar skills. Handwriting is also a weakness for many pupils.
- In mathematics, current pupils typically make good progress in their calculation skills, due to many opportunities to practise techniques and methods. Many pupils are also making good progress in their ability to explain their mathematical thinking. Because pupils only occasionally apply their mathematical skills in problem solving, progress is less strong in this area of mathematics.
- Pupils make better progress in those subjects from the wider curriculum for which leaders have started to outline the expected progression in knowledge and skills. These subjects include science and art. In other subjects, pupils do not currently make strong progress, because learning is often planned around activities rather than the intended development of knowledge and skills.

School details

Unique reference number	116333
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	10088128

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	334
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian White
Headteacher	Steph Tyler
Telephone number	01252 322 933
Website	www.stmichaelscejunior.co.uk
Email address	adminoffice@st-michaels-jun.hants.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	1 to 2 March 2017

Information about this school

- St Michael's is larger than the average-sized junior school, with three classes in each year group.
- The percentage of pupils who are eligible for pupil premium support is smaller than for other schools nationally.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND has increased this year and is currently slightly above the national average.
- The percentage of pupils who come from minority ethnic groups is below the national average, as is that for pupils who speak English as an additional language. The majority of pupils come from a White British background.
- St Michael's is a Church of England school. Its most recent Section 48 inspection took place in November 2015.

- The current headteacher was appointed in April 2018. Prior to this, there was a period of interim headship. The deputy headteacher took up her post in September 2018. Most of the governors, including the chair of the governing body, are newly appointed since the previous inspection.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes, making a total of 32 visits to classrooms, 14 of which were with senior leaders. An inspector attended an assembly. Inspectors observed behaviour around the school, including at breaktime and lunchtime.
- Two groups of pupils met with inspectors and there were many informal discussions with pupils throughout the inspection to gather their views. One inspector listened to a selection of readers from Year 3 and Year 6. Inspectors looked closely at pupils' work in books and on display around the school.
- There were 143 responses to the Parent View questionnaire, including 83 written responses. All these views were taken into account, and inspectors also spoke informally to parents at the beginning of the school day.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and deputy headteacher several times to discuss various aspects of the school's provision. They also met with the SENCo, some middle and subject leaders and two groups of teachers. They considered 29 responses to the Ofsted staff questionnaire. There was a meeting with four governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- The lead inspector met with an adviser from the local authority and had a telephone conversation with a representative of the Diocese of Guildford.
- A wide range of school documentation was scrutinised, including information relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Chris Donovan, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Mo Galway	Ofsted Inspector
Doug Brawley	Ofsted Inspector

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