

# Inspection of a good school: St Michael's Church of England Primary School

Houghton Green Lane, Playden, Rye, East Sussex TN31 7PJ

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Inspection date: 26 November 2019

## Outcome

St Michael's Church of England Primary School continues to be a good school.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive in this nurturing, friendly and happy school. They know that teachers expect them to do their best, and most do. Pupils, parents and staff are proud of the school and would recommend it to others.

Pupils enjoy school. They relish taking on responsibilities, such as looking after the reflection area in the playground, visiting the elderly in the local community or by being a house captain. Pupils talk excitedly about their school life, for example the recent talent show which they held to raise money for charity.

Pupils are well looked after and feel safe. They know that there is always an adult they can talk to if they have a worry or concern. Pupils agree that bullying is rare. They are fully confident that adults would deal with any incidents that might occur.

All staff share high expectations of how pupils should behave. Pupils rise to these and so usually behave well, both in lessons and around the school. Older pupils show kindness and care towards younger ones, often playing with them at lunchtime. Together, staff and pupils make this a harmonious place in which to play and learn.

## What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The headteacher, in close partnership with staff, has created a curriculum that is tailored to meet the needs of pupils at St Michael's. Subject plans give clear guidance about what pupils should learn and when, so that pupils' knowledge and skills build securely over time.

Teachers encourage pupils to think deeply about their learning. For example, in the mixed Reception and Year 1 class, pupils considered, 'What if all the animals had to leave their home?' Year 6 pupils build on their historical knowledge of the Victorians by discussing 'What if we couldn't harness the power of water?' Teachers also use these types of questions to promote pupils' personal development. For example, pupils in Year 6 were

discussing the moral aspect of child workers. They reflected on what it might have felt like to be a child during the Victorian times.

Detailed plans show teachers the mathematics skills and knowledge that pupils should master. Teachers use these effectively. They plan lessons which build progressively on pupils' learning. This helps pupils to achieve well. Teachers have the skills they need to teach mathematics effectively. However, not all teachers have the knowledge needed to teach the wider curriculum to a similar high standard.

Leaders have revised the reading curriculum. This is already making a difference. Children are taught phonics and take a reading book home daily from the very start of Reception. Teachers keep a close eye on how well pupils are developing their reading skills and give extra support to those who need it. This is usually effective. However, at times these support activities are too difficult. This means that pupils who fall behind in their reading do not always catch up as quickly as they could.

Teachers choose books which they know pupils will enjoy. For example, younger pupils enthusiastically join in with their favourite stories. However, there is more to do to make sure all pupils continue to develop their enjoyment of reading as they move through the school.

Staff are consistent in the way they encourage good behaviour. Pupils want to learn. They benefit from the many opportunities they have to develop their personal skills. They appreciate the school trips and the 'woodland experience'. These types of activities help pupils to understand what the school's values of 'respect, forgiveness, love, and honesty' mean in everyday life.

All pupils matter. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are fully included in all aspects of school life. This helps them to achieve well and to flourish. Pupils new to the school are welcomed and quickly made to feel part of the school 'family'.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Relationships across the school are strong. Staff know each pupil as an individual. This helps to create a culture of safeguarding. Staff are well trained. They know what to do if they have a safeguarding concern. There are rigorous systems in place to make sure that leaders act on these straight away. Leaders make sure that all staff and volunteers in the school undergo the necessary checks. All who responded to Ofsted's online surveys agreed that the school keeps children safe. This is a caring school where leaders, governors and staff take their safeguarding responsibilities appropriately seriously.

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

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders and staff have created a well-planned, sequential curriculum in English and mathematics as well as in the foundation subjects. While teachers mostly have the high level of skills and knowledge needed to teach English and mathematics effectively, this is not consistently the case for the foundation subjects. Leaders should build on their plans to ensure that all teachers have the subject-specific skills and knowledge needed to teach the foundation subjects consistently well.
- The impact of leaders' work to improve pupils' achievement in reading is already evident. It is clear from the school's development plans, and from discussions with leaders, that this continues to be a focus for the school. Leaders should press on with, and develop, the work already done, so that all pupils develop their fluency, confidence and enjoyment of reading as they move through the school.

### Background

When we have judged a school to be good we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good on 7–8 December 2011.

### How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

### Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	114520
<b>Local authority</b>	East Sussex
<b>Inspection number</b>	10111369
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	98
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The shadow governing board
<b>Chair</b>	Patricia Metham
<b>Headteacher</b>	Cherane Marshall
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.playdenschool.com">http://www.playdenschool.com</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	4 May 2016

## Information about this school

- The headteacher was appointed in January 2019, following a period of being head of school, with the support of two consultant headteachers.
- A shadow governing board was established by the local authority in March 2018 and took over governance of the school from an interim executive board in September 2018. Plans are in place to establish a substantive governing body by the end of the academic year.
- A high proportion of pupils in the school have joined at times other than at the start of their school life. Around half of all pupils in Year 6 were not in the school in Year 3.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized school. The organisation of the classes has changed this year to take account of the needs of the pupils. This year, pupils are taught in three mixed-age classes with a separate class for Year 6 pupils.
- The most recent section 48 inspection of this Church of England school was in May 2017.

## Information about this inspection

- We met with the headteacher and other leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator, and a group of teaching assistants.
- We had a discussion with the interim chair of the shadow governing board and a telephone conversation with an improvement adviser from the local authority.
- We did deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and history. We completed a range of inspection activities in order to explore these subjects in depth, including meetings with subject leaders and teachers, lesson visits, a review of pupils' work and discussions with pupils.
- To inspect safeguarding, we spoke to the designated safeguarding leader, checked the single central record, looked at the responses to the parent, pupil and staff surveys, and spoke to pupils and staff.
- We evaluated pupils' behaviour in lessons, during assembly and at lunchtime and took account of the responses to Ofsted's online surveys.

## Inspection team

Joanna Toulson, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Lesley Fisher-Pink

Ofsted Inspector

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