

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

Champion Road, Sydenham, London SE26 4HH

Inspection dates:

26–27 February 2020

Outcome

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders and staff encourage pupils to behave well and to be proud of their achievements. Pupils are happy at this school. They know that their teachers care about them as individuals and want them to do well. This reflects the school's motto, 'small enough for everyone to count and big enough to make a difference'.

The school's values remind pupils how to treat people with respect, understanding and kindness. The atmosphere during break- and lunchtimes is lively and friendly. Many pupils enjoy the breakfast and early morning reading clubs, alongside a wide variety of extra opportunities such as sports clubs. Pupils say that when bullying happens, adults deal with it. There is no tolerance of bullying in the school. Pupils' attendance is good.

Parents and carers feel their children are happy and safe. All parents would recommend the school to others. They have lots of opportunities to visit the school during the day, including regular 'Bring a Parent to School' days. This helps them to see how their children are learning. One parent summed up similar comments made by others, saying, 'This is a lovely school with a family feel.'

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

Leaders are quick to respond when improvements are needed in the school. In 2019, pupils did not achieve as well as they should have done by the end of Year 6 in reading and writing. Leaders took swift action to review the teaching of reading. The new reading plan is well designed and sequenced. This ensures that pupils build their phonics knowledge over time. Staff have all received training that makes sure they have the necessary expertise to teach phonics with success.

Teachers help children to learn phonics as soon as they join Reception Year. As a result of this strong start, pupils quickly learn the sounds and the words they need to read fluently. Pupils across the school have reading lessons every day. This promotes a love of reading. Teachers make sure that pupils read books that match their interests and reading skills. This extends pupils' vocabulary and helps them to achieve well. Pupils develop their writing skills in different subjects so that they write confidently and accurately.

When children are at risk of falling behind, staff help them to catch up. Support for pupils who find reading more difficult continues through Year 1 and Year 2. Teachers plan activities to help all achieve well, ensuring that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive the right support.

Leaders are reorganising how all subjects are taught. Leaders are developing their plans to enable pupils to study all subjects in more depth. Teachers are adapting the content of each subject to provide more exciting and relevant experiences for pupils to broaden their horizons.

Teachers regularly check what pupils recall from their previous work and give them helpful ways of remembering key facts. This enables pupils to achieve well across a broad range of subjects. From Reception onwards, teachers make sure that pupils build on what they have learned and to see links between what they know and what they are doing now. For example, in early years, children move from reliably counting out to performing simple calculations. Some children then go on to explain the process of adding two numbers together. In art, pupils learn about shading and shapes in a logical order so that their work develops to create mosaics. They can explain how this links both to their work on the Romans in history, and to work on shapes in mathematics.

However, leaders' plans are not as fully established across all subjects. Some plans are at an earlier stage of development. Routines for enabling pupils to recall and deepen their knowledge are firmly in place for subjects including writing, art and history. Leaders rightly recognise that these routines not as well embedded in all subjects.

Leaders also provide well for pupils' personal development. Pupils are responsible, kind and thoughtful. Pupils' attitudes are positive. Classrooms are calm and orderly places where pupils and teachers focus on learning without disruption.

The experienced leadership team is stable and very effective. Subject leaders and other staff are trained well. Leaders communicate well with staff. They are mindful of the pressures teachers and support staff may experience and take steps to manage their workload effectively.

Governors want the school to succeed and are generous with the time given to their role. Leaders value the strategic challenge and support that governors provide.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The headteacher and senior leaders take responsibility for safeguarding. They ensure that staff receive regular training and updates. They review policies and practices every year. Adults who work at the school are confident to report issues when children may be at risk. Leaders work well with families and external agencies when serious issues affect children.

Pupils learn how to stay safe as part of the curriculum and in assemblies. They know what not to do when using the internet and social media. The school organises talks from external visitors about the risks pupils may encounter in their everyday life.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders are redesigning their plans for how subjects are taught in the school. The teaching of specific knowledge and vocabulary is planned and sequenced well in reading, writing, art and history. However, in some other subjects, there is variation in how well leaders' plans are established. Leaders should ensure that staff receive the right training and support so that pupils acquire the same depth of knowledge and technical vocabulary in all subjects.

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 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 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 in May 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 are the school and you are 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

Unique reference number	100731
Local authority	Lewisham
Inspection number	10110454
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	192
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Ms Beryl Fielder
Headteacher	Mrs Riana Gouws
Website	www.stmichaels1871.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	28 January 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is located on two sites on opposite sides of the road. It has a breakfast club and an after-school club.

Information about this inspection

- During the inspection, I spoke with pupils about their work and school life. I spoke with members of the governing body, a representative from the local authority and a representative from the Diocese of Southwark. I held several meetings with the headteacher and a range of senior leaders and other members of staff.
- I reviewed a range of documentation, including information about attendance and behaviour.
- I reviewed safeguarding records, including the central record of recruitment checks on staff. I spoke to leaders, staff and pupils about safeguarding and reviewed policies, documents and the school's system for recording concerns.
- I spoke to parents and carers at the school gate, considered the 26 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, the 38 responses to the online staff survey and the 53 responses to the pupil survey.

- I did deep dives in these subjects: reading, writing, history and art. This entailed discussions with curriculum leaders, visits to lessons, looking at examples of pupils' work, discussions with teachers, discussions with pupils and listening to pupils read.

Inspection team

Jacques Szemalikowski, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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