

Inspection of a good school: St Michael and All Angels Catholic Primary School

New Hey Road, Upton, Wirral, Merseyside CH49 5LE

Inspection dates:

23 and 24 June 2021

Outcome

St Michael and All Angels Catholic Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

The cheerful welcome that pupils receive as they enter the school gates provides a good insight into the warm relationships that they share with staff and each other. Adults treat all pupils with care and affection. Pupils reward this positive approach with their unyielding trust, good behaviour and respect for all. This makes St Michael's a calm, purposeful and safe place to be for everyone.

Pupils live and breathe the school's Christian values. They do their utmost to treat others as they wish to be treated themselves. If bullying occurs, or if anyone falls short of leaders' high expectations, pupils have absolute confidence that adults will make it stop. Staff expect pupils to give of their best. Pupils respond by working hard and making the most of all that is on offer within the classroom and beyond the school grounds.

Pupils told inspectors that they love their school. It is easy to see how they have formed this view. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve well across a range of subjects. They eagerly take part in a wide range of sporting activities, proudly representing their school. Their contributions to the school and the local community mean that they develop as thoughtful young citizens. By the end of Year 6, pupils have a firm footing on the path towards their ambitions and dreams for the future.

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

The headteacher, staff and governors are united in their ambition for all pupils to find their place in the world as healthy, valued and educated citizens. To this end, leaders have spent their time and resources wisely, constructing a coherent and relevant curriculum that meets pupils' needs and interests. The curriculum is understood fully by well-trained staff.

Pupils gain a deep body of knowledge by the time they leave Year 6. They achieve well. This is because the curriculum that they enjoy is rooted in the national curriculum. All subjects are valued. In part, this is due to the expertise of subject leaders. They champion their subjects very well. They make sure that all teachers, including those new to the profession, have the knowledge and skills to teach the planned curriculum. In turn, teachers deliver the curriculum in a logical order, choosing the right approaches and resources to facilitate pupils' learning across a range of subjects.

In almost all subjects, curriculum planning carefully sets out pupils' learning journey from the time they enter the Nursery Class to when they leave Year 6. This ensures that pupils build on what they already know. The end points for each unit of work make it crystal clear what pupils should know before they move on to new ideas. This allows staff and leaders to keep a check on pupils' progress through the curriculum, as well as offer additional support to anyone who is not keeping up. Guidance for staff is less explicit in a very small number of subjects. This means that, at times, too much is left to chance. For example, it is unclear how pupils' knowledge of working scientifically will develop from year to year.

Pupils with SEND, and those who attend the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND, enjoy the same access to the curriculum. Teachers are adept at amending their plans to make sure that these pupils make equal strides in their learning.

Pupils enjoy the many incentives that are in place to encourage them to read widely and often. That said, the pure pleasure of curling up with a good book is a reward in itself for many older pupils. The programme for promoting early reading is understood by all staff and it is delivered well. For instance, the work of staff in the early years ensures that children see phonics as their 'go to' strategy for reading unfamiliar words. Pupils use their phonics knowledge confidently to read with accuracy and increasing fluency. Pupils who need extra help with reading are carefully identified and supported to catch up.

The recent investment in new books means that pupils at the earliest stages of reading now benefit from texts that help them to practise the sounds that they know. However, staff's thinking about the books that pupils take home is unclear. Too often, pupils are able to select books that do not help them to strengthen their phonics knowledge. This gets in the way of unlocking their reading potential.

Pupils are eager to learn. They behave well in lessons and around the school. Children in the early years set a very high standard for the rest of the school to follow. At times, their very mature attitudes to school make it easy to forget that many are under five years old. Similarly, pupils who attend the specially resourced provision become absorbed in their learning. They manage their own behaviour well due to the strong support that they receive from adults in the resource base. Pupils told inspectors that behaviour is pretty good most of the time, but not quite perfect. Even so, pupils are very confident that adults deal with any behaviour that spoils learning or causes individuals to be upset or afraid.

The curriculum is thoughtfully enhanced with trips and visitors to help pupils to flourish and appreciate the society in which they live. Pupils understand and accept differences

between people. This does not stop them from reaching out. For example, their charity work shows their desire to help those less fortunate than themselves.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They believe that leaders, including governors, do all they can to reduce burdensome tasks that steal time away from staff's lives outside of work. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school. One parent nicely summed up the views of many in stating, 'this school is worth its weight in gold'.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Keeping pupils safe is at the very core of all that leaders, staff and governors do. All staff are well trained to spot the signs of possible abuse or neglect, and to report their concerns promptly. Leaders work in close partnership with a range of external agencies to ensure that pupils and their families receive the help that they need.

Leaders help pupils to keep themselves safe. For example, pupils learn how to stay safe online and how to avoid peer pressure. Older pupils know what to do if the actions of other pupils or adults make them feel uncomfortable or unsafe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The reading books that pupils take home sometimes do not match those that they read in school. Too often, these texts are not easily accessible to those at the early stages of learning to read. This inhibits pupils' progress. Leaders should ensure that pupils who are building their knowledge of phonics have consistent access to decodable books. This will enable pupils to consolidate their knowledge of the sounds that letters represent in order to read with even greater accuracy and fluency.
- Curriculum planning is less effective in a very few subjects. In these areas, the guidance for staff on the essential knowledge that pupils must have in order to progress through the curriculum is less secure. This can be seen in science, for example, in the development of pupils' knowledge to conduct scientific investigations or to explain scientific phenomena. Leaders should revisit the curriculum planning in these subjects to ensure that pupils gain the knowledge that they need to be successful now and in the future.

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 outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that a good 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 first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good on 24–25 May 2016.

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 [here](#).

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	105090
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	10193941
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	229
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Rev Patrick Regan
Headteacher	Mrs Susan Ralph
Website	www.smaaawirral.com
Date of previous inspection	24 and 25 May 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Three members of staff have left the school since the previous inspection. During this period, governors appointed a new class teacher, a new deputy headteacher and a new assistant headteacher. At the time of this inspection, there were two temporary teachers in post. They are covering the extended leave of two members of staff.
- The school hosts specially resourced provision, on behalf of the local authority, for up to eight key stage 1 pupils. Pupils who attend this provision have additional social, emotional and mental health needs. At the time of this inspection, seven pupils were on roll.
- St Michael and All Angels is a voluntary-aided Catholic Primary School. The most recent section 48 inspection took place in March 2016. The date of the next section 48 inspection has been delayed due to the pandemic. It is likely to take place in the spring or summer term 2022.
- The governing body manages the before- and after-school provision at the school.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school has received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders and members of staff. An inspector met with a representative of the local authority and a representative from the Diocese of Shrewsbury. Inspectors also met with five members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms and during playtime and lunchtime. Inspectors also met with different groups of pupils to discuss their learning and their views of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, science and geography. Inspectors met with subject leaders, visited lessons, talked to pupils and teachers and reviewed the work in pupils' books. Inspectors visited the early years and the specially resourced provision as part of the deep dives. An inspector also observed children and pupils from the Reception Year to Year 3 reading to an adult. In addition, inspectors reviewed the curriculum planning for a broad range of subjects, including art and design, design and technology, computing and physical education. An inspector also spoke to the subject leader for mathematics, visited mathematics lessons and reviewed pupils' mathematics books.
- Inspectors reviewed the policies and procedures in place to keep pupils safe. They also considered the checks that leaders have taken to ensure that all adults at the school are suitable to work with children and pupils.
- An inspector spoke with six parents at start of the school day. Inspectors also considered the 16 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. This included the 14 responses to the free-text facility. Inspectors also reviewed the seven responses to the pupils' questionnaire and the 24 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Jo Olsson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

John Tomlinson

Her Majesty's Inspector

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