

Inspection of St Michael's Catholic Primary School, Esh Village

Esh Village, Durham, County Durham DH7 9QY

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 May 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Not previously inspected under section 5
of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

At St Michael's, the school mission statement, 'Finding Christ in Each Other', is at the centre of every part of school life. Pupils love coming to school. They know how important it is to attend every day. They care about each other and the environment. Adults model positive relationships in school.

Leaders have high expectations for every pupil. The curriculum is well planned. Leaders make sure that what pupils learn covers each subject in the national curriculum. Pupils find lessons interesting. The work in books and on display around the school shows that pupils are proud of their learning.

Behaviour in lessons and at breaktimes is good. Adults have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils say that adults are fair and forgiving. This ensures that pupils behave well when they attend activities outside school too. Parents say that their children feel happy, safe and secure in school. Relationships between pupils and adults are warm and caring. Pupils know that adults will help them with their worries. Pupils say that bullying does not happen. They know that adults will sort it out if it does. They say that they feel safe.

Pupils have many opportunities to develop their interests beyond the classroom. They have a 'voice' in school through, for example, the eco group, the anti-bullying committee and the school council. Pupil's well-being is a priority. Older pupils look after younger children in their role as school buddies, supporting them if they have worries. This helps children to settle into school.

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

Leaders have designed a curriculum around the needs of pupils considering COVID-19. The curriculum is ambitious, ensuring that pupils build knowledge over time. This includes those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The curriculum starts in the early years and prepares children for future learning. This helps children in the early years to be ready for Year 1. As a result, all pupils gain the knowledge they need as they move through the school.

There is a focus on developing language and vocabulary right from the start in early years. Concepts are introduced, practised and developed as pupils progress through the school. For example, in mathematics pupils in key stage 2 choose their own activities. They use their knowledge of vocabulary and arithmetic to reason and solve problems. In early years, children learn to improve the vocabulary they use in their writing, for example replacing 'big' with 'gigantic'.

Curriculum leaders have good knowledge of their subjects. They are enthusiastic. They attend training that helps them to lead their subjects well. Teachers have good subject knowledge because subject leaders make sure that they receive training.

They plan lessons that pupils find interesting. Pupils want to achieve well. In science, teaching ensures that knowledge and concepts taught earlier are revisited and practised. Pupils remember prior learning. For example, pupils in Year 6 built on their work from Year 4. They found reasons why electrical circuits do not work. Teachers' use of assessment identifies gaps in pupils' knowledge. Teachers use this information to plan new learning. In some subjects, such as history and geography, the curriculum has been recently redesigned. Leaders do not know the impact of the updated curriculum on pupils' knowledge and skills long-term.

Reading is a priority. Leaders make sure that staff know how to teach children to read right from the start in Reception. All staff follow the same programme to teach reading. Pupils use their knowledge of letters and the sounds they make to sound out unfamiliar words. Staff support pupils to catch up and keep up when they need it. This helps pupils to become confident readers. Pupils enjoy the books they read. They look forward to choosing books from the school library every week. Pupils have good comprehension skills. Through whole-class shared reading, teachers model reading effectively. Pupils practise reading using correct pronunciation. Teachers guide pupils to learn and understand new vocabulary, which helps them discuss themes and viewpoints. For example, pupils in Year 6 read an extract from 'The Call of the Wild', by Jack London. They worked together, discussing themes, to help them understand the characters.

Pupils with SEND are well supported to access the full curriculum. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has expert knowledge. This enables her to identify pupils with SEND early. Adults provide help without taking away pupils' independence. Extra resources, such as using a laptop to assist with writing, support the needs of pupils. This aids them to concentrate on their learning.

Leaders make sure that pupils have many opportunities to develop the skills to become responsible citizens. Pupils learn about fundamental British values, such as democracy; for example, the eco council elected to recycle batteries and make recycling bins. Pupils want to reduce the impact of harmful waste on the environment. Leaders have constructed a curriculum which aims to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain. However, leaders' promotion of different cultures is not as well established. This is because the curriculum coverage of different cultures is not as well developed.

Governors know the school well. They visit the school to check the impact of improvement plans. Governors carry out their roles and responsibilities effectively. Leaders work well with staff. They consider their well-being, making sure that workload is manageable. Staff are positive about the support they receive from leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders know the pupils and their families well. They provide effective support to vulnerable pupils. Leaders work with external agencies to help keep pupils safe from harm where necessary. Leaders provide frequent staff training and quizzes to ensure that staff and governors have a strong knowledge of safeguarding. Staff are aware of specific areas of concern, such as protecting pupils from sexual harassment. They are quick to identify pupils who need help or are at risk of abuse.

Leaders have developed a curriculum that raises pupils' awareness of safeguarding risks. Pupils know where to get help if they need it.

Appropriate checks on staff ensure that all adults are suitable to work in school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, for example history and geography, the curriculums have been recently introduced. As a result, leaders do not know how well the curriculum is contributing to pupils knowing more and remembering more over time. Leaders should support subject leaders to evaluate the impact of the curriculum on pupils' learning in all subjects.
- Some pupils' knowledge of British values and different cultures is not well developed. Although pupils know how to respect difference, some are not as aware as they should be of what these differences may be. Leaders should ensure that pupils are provided with a wide range of opportunities to engage with views and beliefs different from their own.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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	148262
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10199380
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	161
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Martin Gannon
Headteacher/Principal	Mrs J Bruton
Website	www.stmichaelsesh.durham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is one of 47 schools in the Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust.
- The school joined the trust in March 2021.
- The school's religious character has not been inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 since it converted to academy status.
- The school runs an off-site breakfast club and an after-school club.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, who is also the SENCo, the deputy chief executive officer and the chief operating officer of the trust. A discussion was held with a representative from the Diocese of Hexham

and Newcastle, who is also an appointed member of the trust. Inspectors also held meetings with the school business manager, leaders responsible for attendance, behaviour, and personal development.

- The lead inspector met with six members of the local governing committee, including the chairperson. A sample of minutes from the local governing committee meetings was scrutinised.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: reading, mathematics, geography and science. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding leader and spoke to pupils and staff about safeguarding. The single central register and the school's safeguarding records were scrutinised. Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in other subjects.
- A range of documentation provided by the school was reviewed. This included the school's self-evaluation document, development plan and school policies.
- Inspectors considered the responses of parents who used Ofsted's free-text facility and responses to Ofsted's Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. No pupils completed Ofsted's online pupil survey.
- Inspectors met with several staff and took account of the responses to Ofsted's online staff survey.
- Inspectors met with individual members of staff, including teachers and support staff. They met with groups of pupils, including single-sex groups in key stage 2.
- The lead inspector observed an adult listening to pupils read.

Inspection team

Kathryn McDonald, lead inspector Ofsted Inspector

Deborah Ashcroft Ofsted Inspector

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