

Inspection of an outstanding school: St Michael's Church of England C Primary School

Maple Road, Pelsall, Walsall, West Midlands WS3 4JJ

Inspection dates:

6 and 7 December 2022

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of outstanding as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are keen to come to school. They feel safe and enjoy learning. Pupils say that adults at the school help them with any problems or worries they have. Bullying is rare and, if it happens, staff deal with it quickly. There is a strong sense of community at St Michael's and parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school.

Pupils behave well during lessons and at breaktimes. They model the school's Christian values of honesty, forgiveness and respect in all they do. Pupils are eager to have extra responsibilities and to help others whenever they can. This includes elected roles, such as school council members, but also as classroom monitors. Older pupils help younger children to join in with a variety of activities during breakfast club and at breaktimes.

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum. They want all pupils to achieve well and they do. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and try their best. Pupils particularly enjoy opportunities to learn outdoors in nearby woodlands.

Pupils attend a variety of clubs throughout the year. They relish the chance to perform in the choir, the school band and in plays. Pupils enjoy visits to church and say that worship is an important time at school.

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

Leaders have put in place an ambitious curriculum that begins in the early years. They have identified the knowledge they want pupils to learn and the subject-specific vocabulary that pupils should understand and use. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve well in a broad range of subjects across the curriculum. The mathematics curriculum is particularly effective. Pupils gain a

secure understanding of calculation strategies. They know how to apply these when solving problems and explaining how they have reached an answer. Leaders have introduced the 'drip-effect' to provide regular opportunities to revisit mathematical topics. This helps pupils to remember what they have learned. A small number of subjects are at an earlier stage of development. Leaders do not know how well these subjects are being taught or how well all pupils are learning the intended curriculum.

Subject leaders are knowledgeable and provide effective support for teachers in all year groups. Teachers have secure subject knowledge. They use this to provide clear explanations and clarify any misconceptions that pupils may have. Teachers use assessment information to identify gaps in pupils' learning and to plan the next steps. Leaders are refining how assessment is used in some foundation subjects. They want to ensure that all pupils build on what they know and can do as well as possible.

Leaders prioritise reading. Children in the early years are enthusiastic about learning the letters and the sounds they represent. They enjoy listening to stories and join in with their favourite rhymes. Most pupils learn to read fluently and accurately. Sometimes, the books given to pupils who find reading difficult are not matched closely enough to the sounds they know. This means that these pupils struggle to read confidently and do not make the progress they need to catch-up with their classmates. Pupils read every day. They can choose from a wide selection of library books.

Pupils with SEND receive effective support to access the curriculum. Staff know the needs of these pupils and make appropriate adaptations to lesson activities. Support for pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties is particularly effective.

Children in the early years are happy at school. They learn and play well together. Relationships between adults and children are very positive. Adults ensure that there is a focus on developing children's language skills in all activities. This is helping children to build a broad vocabulary.

Pupils at St Michael's grow to be confident and articulate young people who are ready for their next steps and future lives. Adults regularly promote pupils' resilience and independence. This includes the three residential visits to outdoor activity centres and to London. Leaders ensure there are a variety of opportunities for pupils to develop their talents and interests. Pupils are particularly proud of their musical performances. Pupils are respectful of differences and say that everyone is welcome at the school. Pupils build their awareness of different cultures in subjects like art and design and music. Leaders know that there is work to do to ensure that pupils are more knowledgeable about world religions.

Governors are dedicated to the school. They support, challenge and hold leaders to account effectively. Staff are very positive about the leadership of the school. They say that leaders are mindful of their well-being and do all they can to reduce their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff receive regular training and updates. They can spot the signs that a pupil might be at risk of harm, and they report any concerns quickly. Leaders work well with external agencies and make timely referrals when this is appropriate. Leaders put support in place for pupils who need extra help.

There are many opportunities for pupils to learn about keeping themselves safe. This includes online safety, road safety and about the risks strangers can pose. Older pupils gain an age-appropriate understanding of what makes a safe relationship.

Leaders ensure appropriate pre-employment checks are carried out before adults can work at the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Subject leaders have not checked how well the curriculum is being taught or how well pupils are achieving in a small number of subjects. As a result, they do not know how effective the curriculum is in these subjects. Leaders should ensure that subject leaders check how effectively the curriculum is being taught and how well pupils learn the intended curriculum in all subjects.
- Sometimes, adults do not provide pupils at the early stages of learning to read with books that are matched well enough to the sounds that they know. This means that some pupils are not making strong enough progress towards becoming confident, fluent readers. Leaders should ensure that reading books are matched closely to the sounds pupils know so that those who find reading difficult catch-up with their peers more quickly.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school may now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in 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 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.

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	104227
Local authority	Walsall
Inspection number	10211935
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	428
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Megan Smylie
Headteacher	Paul Martin
Website	www.stmichaels-pelsall.co.uk/
Date of previous inspection	4 and 5 May 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher was appointed as interim headteacher in September 2022.
- Leaders provide before- and after-school childcare which is managed by the governing body.
- The school had its most recent Statutory Inspection of Methodist and Anglican Schools in March 2017.
- The school is not currently using any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher and other members of staff. The inspector also met with three members of the governing body and spoke to a representative of the local authority on the telephone.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and art and design. The inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To inspect safeguarding, the inspector scrutinised the single central record and a wide range of safeguarding files. The inspector spoke to the designated safeguarding leads, staff, pupils and parents.
- The inspector considered the responses, including written responses, to Ofsted Parent View, the online inspection questionnaire. They also took account of the responses to the pupil survey and the responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Jo Evans, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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