

Inspection of a good school: St Michael's CofE (VC) First School

Weavers Lane, Off Lichfield Road, Stone, Staffordshire ST15 8QB

Inspection dates:

11 and 12 January 2023

Outcome

St Michael's CofE (VC) First School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to school and feel safe. The school's values of 'forgiveness, friendship, thankfulness, respect, resilience and responsibility' feed through the school and the curriculum. Pupils know and understand these values, with one pupil commenting, 'We think about our values in everything we do.'

Pupils behave well in lessons and around school. They have a clear understanding of the school's behaviour systems. There is no difference between how they behave in class, around school and at playtimes and lunchtimes. Pupils value the chance to take on additional responsibilities such as being committee representatives and carrying out tasks around school. Pupils are aware of the different types of bullying and know what to do if they have any concerns. Bullying is rare and is dealt with quickly if it happens.

The school has close links with the local community. Pupils have many opportunities to learn, both in the school grounds and the local area. Pupils enjoy the regular 'wow' days which help to bring the curriculum to life. Leaders share information with parents to support their child's learning at home.

Leaders and staff expect all pupils to do their best, and pupils live up to these expectations. Pupils achieve well.

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

Leaders have created an ambitious curriculum. It reflects leaders' high expectations for all pupils. Teachers have received training to enable them to deliver the curriculum effectively. They make sure that pupils have the right knowledge and vocabulary to be successful in their learning. Teachers check on pupils' learning in lessons and recap any prior learning. This helps pupils to remember what they have learned before.

The curriculum is well structured for children from Nursery to the end of Year 4. In the Nursery and Reception classes, children become gradually familiar with the routines of

formal learning. In Nursery and Reception, children are supported to make sense of the world around them. Teachers also plan activities that prepare children well for learning in key stage 1.

Reading is at the centre of the curriculum. Staff find creative ways to develop pupils' love of reading, for example when 'secret storytellers' read to pupils in class. Staff match books to pupils' interests, so pupils engage well in story times. Some pupils have gaps in their phonic knowledge. Leaders introduced a new phonics programme to help close these gaps. They have made sure that staff received training to deliver the new programme. Pupils who struggle with reading receive effective support to keep up. However, the school still lacks suitable books for pupils to read at home. The books that pupils take home to read are not always well matched to the sounds they are learning in school.

Leaders have developed a mathematics curriculum that enables pupils to know and remember more over time. Pupils' learning is well sequenced to help them build up their knowledge in a logical order. They use this knowledge to solve mathematical problems. Leaders help teachers through effective support and training. This has ensured staff's confidence in teaching mathematics.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have the support they need to learn well. Their needs are identified early. Resources and adult support ensure that they are able to learn alongside their peers and follow the same curriculum. Leaders check that provision for pupils with SEND is effective.

Teachers across the school use assessment strategies well. This ensures that pupils' knowledge is secure before they move on to new learning in lessons. Teachers identify and remedy pupils' missing knowledge. This is especially so in mathematics and English. However, teachers do not always know how well pupils are learning in subjects other than English and mathematics. This is because assessment systems to check pupils' learning are not embedded in all subjects.

Leaders ensure that pupils benefit from opportunities to learn about the world they live in. Leaders involve pupils in exciting activities such as visits from a stone-age man in history. Pupils have many opportunities to engage in and discuss diversity. For example, during the inspection, older pupils spoke passionately about the importance of welcoming new children who have arrived from overseas. Through the curriculum, pupils learn about a wide range of faiths. They are respectful and tolerant of views and opinions that differ from their own.

The school is calm, and pupils concentrate well in lessons. They know what is expected of them. Staff, including those new to the school, implement the recent behaviour policy consistently.

The vast majority of staff are very positive about working at the school. They are confident that their workload and well-being matter to leaders. Staff share the high ambition of leaders for the school to be the best it can be.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The strong culture of safeguarding at this school is underpinned by staff's expert knowledge of systems, pupils and their families. Staff are well trained to spot the signs that any pupils or children may be at risk of harm. They record these concerns quickly so that children and pupils can get the timely help that they need. Staff take every opportunity to help pupils recognise unsafe situations and behaviours and teach them how to protect themselves from them. Leaders secure help for pupils who need it, working in partnership with external agencies.

Pupils learn about online safety. They know how to raise concerns with trusted adults.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- On occasion, the books that some pupils take home to read are not well matched to the sounds they are learning. This hinders some pupils' reading confidence and fluency. Leaders should ensure that the books pupils read at home are more closely matched to the sounds that pupils are learning.
- Leaders do not have robust assessment systems in place for foundation subjects. This means that subject leaders do not always know how well pupils learn the curriculum. Leaders should ensure that the systems for assessment become embedded 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 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 would 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 good in November 2017.

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	124275
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10256989
Type of school	First school
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	223
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Alan Rees
Headteacher	Julia Wass
Website	www.stmichaelsstone.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	7 and 8 November 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Leaders operates a breakfast club and after-school club.
- Leaders do not make use of any alternative provision.
- The school is in the Diocese of Lichfield. Its most recent section 48 inspection took place in November 2022.

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 his evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, the inspector held meetings with the headteacher and four members of the governing body, including the vice-chair of governors.
- The inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority and a representative of the diocese. He also spoke to parents and carers at the end of the school day.
- The inspector viewed a range of safeguarding documentation. He examined checks on

safer recruitment and spoke with members of staff to check their safeguarding knowledge.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and geography. He met with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke with teachers and viewed examples of pupils' work. Inspectors also spoke with pupils. The inspector also spoke to the subject leaders for art and design and history.
- The inspector observed children in the early years and pupils in key stage 1 read to a trusted adult.
- The inspector spoke with members of staff about their workload and their well-being.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school.
- The inspector considered the responses, including the free-text comments, to Ofsted Parent View. He also considered the responses to the staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Barry Yeardsley, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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