

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

Crowthorne Road, Easthampstead, Bracknell, Berkshire RG12 7EH

Inspection dates:

6 and 7 June 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good 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. Inspectors are recommending the next inspection to be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

St Michael's has been through an extended period of leadership and staffing instability. During this time, school improvements stalled. The achievement and broader experience of some pupils, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), have not been good enough. A new leadership team is now in post. This is bringing much needed consistency and stability. There are now green shoots of improvement across many areas of the school.

Pupils are happy here. Children in early years make a strong start to their education. Pupils feel safe and trust staff to help them if they have a problem. Staff expect pupils to conduct themselves well. Almost all do. Relationships are warm and productive. Around the school, pupils are polite and courteous. However, some pupils do not always focus well enough in lessons.

The school values of 'Love, honesty, kindness, aspiration and respect' form part of daily life. Pupils try hard to live up to these values. They are determined that everyone should be treated fairly and equally. Pupils attend a range of extra-curricular clubs and activities, such as sports, art and musical theatre. They enjoy educational trips, such as experiencing life as an Anglo-Saxon as part of their history topic.

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

Since the arrival of new leaders last year, there has been renewed drive and focus on the school. Leaders rightly identified that the curriculum was not good enough. They

prioritised improving English and mathematics first. The curriculum in these subjects is now appropriately sequenced so that pupils can build on their learning. The early years curriculum is a strength. Children develop their communication and mathematical skills well. Leaders know that in other subjects in key stage 1 and 2, the curriculum is not planned with enough precision. It is not clear what pupils need to learn and remember. Sometimes, teachers plan activities without fully considering what knowledge pupils need. Consequently, pupils do not develop their understanding as well as they should.

Leaders are prioritising increasing staff's understanding of how to teach well. They know that staff have varying levels of expertise. Some staff present ideas clearly and check pupils' understanding regularly. However, this is not consistent across the school. Some subject leaders are new in post and have not yet had a strong enough impact. Staff require additional support to fulfil their subject leadership roles well.

Leaders have ensured that reading is a priority. Staff deliver the phonics programme well. Children are taught to read and write as soon as they start Reception. Teachers ensure that children have ample opportunity to develop a love of stories and rhymes. Staff are adept at spotting and giving more help to pupils who struggle to read. As a result, pupils are well supported to read confidently and with increasing fluency.

Provision for pupils with SEND has been historically weak. However, new leaders have made significant strides in improving the timely identification of SEND during the current academic year. Leaders liaise persistently with external agencies to secure more rapid support and assessment for pupils with SEND. Staff receive regular training to help pupils with SEND do better in class. This is now starting to improve how well pupils achieve, as staff are increasingly skilled. Parents of children with SEND appreciate the improved communication from the school. Some, nonetheless, feel that not enough is done to ensure their child learns well.

Almost all pupils behave well. Expectations are now becoming increasingly established. Leaders have recently put a clear behaviour policy in place. Pupils and staff understand this straightforward approach. Nevertheless, a small minority of pupils still struggle to behave well. This can sometimes disrupt learning in lessons. However, caring and patient staff intervene to help get them back on track.

Leaders know that pupils' wider personal development could be even better. Pupils are taught to respect difference and understand equality well. They learn through the curriculum about healthy relationships, well-being and growing up. However, recently introduced pupil leadership roles, such as reading buddies, librarians and play leaders, are not yet well established. Pupils welcome the development of these roles because they value the responsibility of being actively involved in school life.

The governing body is committed, experienced and knowledgeable. Governors fulfil their statutory duties around safeguarding and SEND well. They undertake training and have an accurate and realistic view of the school's context. Governors have helpfully productive and open relationships with leaders.

Staff are committed to the school and dedicated to its pupils. Staff appreciate the stability brought by leaders this year and value the renewed sense of direction. They feel that leaders engage with them well. While parents have understandably mixed views about the work of the school over time, many are pleased that the school is now turning a corner.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that there is a strong safeguarding culture in the school. They know pupils and their families well. Leaders work tirelessly to get appropriate support for vulnerable pupils. Leaders work with external safeguarding partners effectively. Well-trained staff are vigilant. They know that no concern is too small to report. There are clear systems in place for staff to raise concerns. Governors monitor safeguarding procedures to ensure they remain strong. The curriculum helps pupils to stay safe and recognise risks they may face. Pupils understand potential risks when they are online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum in some subjects is not planned with enough precision. This means that teachers are not clear about the knowledge that pupils need to learn, remember and apply. This limits pupils' achievements. Leaders should make sure that the knowledge that pupils should learn across all subjects is precisely identified.
- Not all staff have strong pedagogical knowledge. This results in staff planning activities that do not support pupils, including those with SEND, to know and remember more. Leaders should put in place systems to ensure that staff's pedagogical knowledge is strengthened.
- Not all subject leaders are clear on what their role requires. They do not have a clear understanding of how to determine the strengths and areas for development within their subjects. Senior leaders should ensure that subject leaders understand their responsibilities and are able to evaluate their subjects effectively.
- Opportunities for pupils to develop their characters are currently underdeveloped. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to play a meaningful part in school life. Leaders should ensure that pupils benefit from a range of enrichment activities.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in 2013.

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	110010
Local authority	Bracknell Forest
Inspection number	10256452
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	215
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Louise Hodgkinson
Headteacher	Caroline Johnson
Website	www.stmichaelseasthampstead.com
Date of previous inspection	17 October 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The substantive headteacher has been in post since September 2022.
- The school sits within the Diocese of Oxford.
- The school uses three alternative providers.

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 her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, other school leaders, the local authority adviser, a Diocesan representative and five members of the governing body.
- The inspector undertook deep dives in the following subjects: reading, mathematics and history. She met with subject leaders, teachers and groups of pupils. The inspector visited lessons and looked at pupils' work.

- The inspector spoke to leaders about curriculum development in personal, social and health education and wider personal development.
- To inspect safeguarding, the inspector checked the single central record, reviewed safeguarding records and spoke to leaders, staff and pupils. The inspector considered how well the school manages safer recruitment and how it manages allegations against adults.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documentation, including the school development plan and governing body meeting minutes. She also reviewed external reports.
- The inspector talked to pupils about their learning, what behaviour is like in the school and whether they feel safe.
- The inspector considered responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including free-text comments. She also considered emails sent from parents and comments from parents and carers on the playground.
- The inspector considered the 25 staff survey responses. There were no responses to the pupil survey.
- The inspector spoke to the three alternative providers used by the school.

Inspection team

Maria Roberts, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2023