

Inspection of St Michael with St Thomas CE Primary School

Spinney Avenue, Hough Green, Widnes, Cheshire WA8 8LD

Inspection dates: 3 and 4 July 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, including children in the early years, blossom at this school. They feel very happy and safe. Leaders, members of the local governing board (school committee), members of the trust (directors) and staff are united in their ambition to give all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), the best start in their education, academically and socially.

Pupils achieve well across a range of subjects. They leave the school well-prepared for the next stage of their education.

Pupils respond very well to the high expectations leaders have for their behaviour and learning. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary, and their attitudes to learning are extremely positive. Relationships at all levels are highly respectful and pupils are exceptionally kind towards one another. Pupils know that adults will help them if they have any worries or concerns. Any incidents of bullying are dealt with swiftly. Leaders place great importance on pupils' mental health. For example, pupils, including children in the early years, take part in daily mindfulness sessions. As a result, the school is calm and purposeful.

Pupils relish the time they spend outdoors, where they access an extensive range of activities and enjoy active times with their friends.

Leaders, informed by pupil voice, provide a wide and rich set of experiences to broaden pupils' experiences beyond the academic. All pupils, including pupils with SEND, are encouraged to develop their interests and talents in sport, music, art and poetry. Through their many leadership roles, pupils contribute considerably to leaders' decision-making about the school.

Pupils appreciate, value and celebrate the differences between themselves and others. Pupils are highly tolerant and respectful of one another. For example, they told inspectors that all pupils are welcome at this school regardless of race, gender or culture.

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

Leaders have successfully implemented a new curriculum. As a result, pupils, including those in the early years and pupils with SEND, enjoy a good quality of education.

Pupils, including pupils with SEND, access all of the national curriculum subjects. Leaders have thought carefully about the knowledge that pupils should learn and the order in which this content should be taught. Leaders have also identified the key vocabulary that they want pupils to know as they move through the school.

Teachers have a secure knowledge of the subjects that they teach. From the early years onwards, they design activities that are well matched to the curriculum.

Teachers present new learning clearly. They typically check that pupils know what they have learned before they are moved on to more complex learning. Teachers deal with misconceptions as soon as they arise. In many subjects, pupils build securely on what they already know. However, in some subjects, teachers do not ensure that pupils have sufficient opportunities to recap and recall earlier learning. As a result, pupils' learning is not fully secure. This makes it difficult when they meet new concepts.

Pupils are curious and attentive learners. They are exceptionally kind and caring towards one another. All pupils, including those in the early years, behave extremely well in lessons, in the dining hall and in the playground.

Leaders place a high priority on the teaching of early reading. Well-trained staff deliver the phonics programme effectively across the early years and key stage 1. Leaders ensure that pupils, including pupils with SEND, read books that are closely matched to the words and sounds that they know. Pupils who need extra support are quickly identified and are given the support that they need to catch up. Older pupils are keen readers and can talk about books they enjoy reading.

Leaders ensure that pupils with SEND, including those in the early years, are identified quickly. Staff make suitable adaptations to the curriculum so that these pupils can learn alongside their classmates. Pupils with SEND take part in all that the school has to offer.

Leaders have made pupils' personal development their top priority. This has ensured that pupils are exceptionally well prepared for their next steps. Pupils access a wide and exciting range of clubs that take place at lunchtime and after school. Leaders go above and beyond to enable all pupils, including those who are vulnerable, to get involved in the wider life of the school.

Leaders instil a belief in pupils that their voice can make a difference. For example, pupils have worked with a national house builder to help protect the wildlife on a local development. Pupils are also encouraged to think globally through their eco-project with a local zoo.

Members of the school committee and directors are committed to the school and provide effective levels of challenge and support. Staff benefit from the expertise and training offered by the trust.

Leaders and directors care about their staff. Staff morale is extremely high. Leaders are mindful of staff's workload and well-being. This makes staff feel valued.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are well trained in safeguarding. They have a secure understanding of what they must do if they are concerned about a pupil's welfare. Staff can identify the

signs that indicate a pupil might need help. Staff know pupils and their families very well. Leaders ensure that vulnerable families receive the support that they need in a timely manner.

Pupils develop a secure awareness of personal safety. For example, they know how to keep themselves safe when they are online and they understand the qualities that make a good friend.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, teachers do not ensure that pupils have sufficient opportunity to recap and recall earlier learning. This means that pupils sometimes start to learn new concepts when their previous understanding is not secure. Leaders should ensure that teachers are well equipped with suitable strategies to help pupils revisit and consolidate what they have been taught.

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	147262
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	10294415
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	193
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Amy Bradley
Headteacher	Michelle Slingsby
Website	www.smwst.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- St Michael with St Thomas CE Primary School converted to become a Church of England academy school in August 2019. When its predecessor school, Spinney Avenue Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to require improvement.
- The school is part of the Three Saints Academy Trust.
- Leaders make use of one registered alternative provider.
- The school's last section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, was carried out by the Diocese of Liverpool in March 2018.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded 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 carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- An inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors spoke to leaders about the curriculum and sampled pupils' work in other subjects.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents and carers who responded to Ofsted Parent View, and the views of staff who responded to the staff survey. This included free-text comments. There were no responses to the pupil survey.
- Inspectors met with pupils from across the school to ask them about safeguarding. Inspectors reviewed documentation, including the school's safeguarding policy, register of the checks carried out on new employees and safeguarding records.
- Inspectors spoke with school leaders, the chief executive officer of the trust, members of the school committee and the chair of the trust.
- An inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority and the Diocese of Liverpool.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons, at breaktimes, in the dining hall and when walking around the school. They discussed behaviour and bullying with pupils, senior leaders, teachers and support staff.
- Inspectors spoke with staff about the culture of safeguarding across the school, their workload and well-being.
- An inspector spoke with parents as they dropped their children off at school.

Inspection team

Frith Murphy, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Sheila Iwaskow

His Majesty's Inspector

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