

Inspection of a good school: St Michael's Primary School

Dee Road, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire RG30 4AS

Inspection dates:

3 and 4 October 2023

Outcome

St Michael's Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending this friendly and welcoming school. All pupils are nurtured and valued. This creates an environment where pupils feel respected and safe. Leaders have high ambitions for all pupils to be successful in their learning. As a result, pupils achieve well across most areas of the curriculum.

Pupils' conduct is good. Routines are established from the early years, where children quickly learn to cooperate and share equipment. Throughout the school, staff model positive behaviours, and pupils mirror these in their actions. Classrooms are calm and purposeful. Pupils endeavour to treat others with kindness and respect. Staff act swiftly on the rare occasions when issues arise, resolving them promptly. Pupils have a strong sense of their impact on others because adults encourage them to reflect on their own actions.

Leaders provide pupils with an impressive range of clubs to build their interests, including 'fusible beads', gardening and drama. Pupils can also access music and drama clubs and they have opportunities to perform to parents and the wider community. Pupils value the range of trips and experiences, such as Ufton Court, which bring their learning to life. They are keen to help, and many take on leadership roles around the school, wearing their responsibility badges with pride.

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

The curriculum is well designed and ambitious for all pupils. In most subjects, leaders have identified the important facts that pupils are to learn and they have carefully sequenced these so understanding builds over time. For example, in history, leaders have precisely sequenced knowledge in themes, such as 'settlement and trade', and pupils are encouraged to make connections across the subject. However, in a small number of curriculum areas, where the curriculum is in the process of being refined, planning is less specific about exactly what pupils are to learn. This leads to gaps in some pupils' understanding because they have not been taught vital bits of knowledge.

Across the curriculum, most teachers' subject knowledge is strong. They explain ideas well and encourage pupils to apply their learning. In the early years, interactions between adults and children encourage a deeper understanding of what children are being taught. For example, adults ensure children are secure in early number by introducing a range of visuals and equipment. The early years curriculum prepares children well for Year 1. Across the school, pupils with additional needs are well supported, and adults provide high-quality guidance to ensure that the needs of all are met in lessons. In mathematics, for example, teachers intervene by pre-teaching important information to ensure pupils can access future learning successfully.

Assessment is used well in the core curriculum, and pupils' progress in these areas is closely tracked by leaders. They use this well to identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and provide teachers with the information they need to provide the right support in class for these pupils. Across the foundation subjects, teachers check pupils' understanding at the beginning and end of topics by using concept maps. However, this information is not always used well to inform future planning. As a result, some activities provided for pupils do not build on their prior learning.

Pupils develop a love for reading. They enjoy the range of books and stories taught across the curriculum, and many choose to read books by the same authors. The school's phonics programme is effective. Children in Reception quickly learn the sounds that letters make. Leaders ensure weaker readers are given more opportunities to practise their reading. This ensures that pupils are able to read with confidence and fluency.

The provision for pupils' personal development is strong. Pupils enjoy debating ideas and are encouraged to 'think, pair and share', developing important listening and reflection skills. They learn about different faiths and can identify similarities and differences between their own beliefs and those of others. This builds an ethos of acceptance and tolerance where pupils are confident to talk about their own beliefs. For example, in a geography lesson, pupils confidently shared stories from their own faith so their peers could understand the beginnings of Islamic culture. Pupils talk about the qualities that make a good friend, including trust and kindness. They understand what makes a healthy relationship.

All at the school work well together. Staff appreciate the consideration leaders give to their workload and well-being. Leaders are well supported by the governors, who bring a wealth of experience from their own backgrounds. Governors share leaders' high ambition for all pupils to succeed and to be well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, the knowledge to be learned is not identified and sequenced precisely. Consequently, pupils are not able to build on prior learning as effectively as they might. The school needs to be clear about the specific sequence of knowledge it wants pupils to learn across all curriculum subjects so that pupils can learn equally well.
- The use of assessment in the foundation curriculum is not always as helpful as for the core subjects. As a result, future learning activities do not always link closely enough to what pupils need to learn next. The school should ensure that assessment is used consistently well across the foundation curriculum to identify what pupils have learned and inform plans for future teaching.

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 October 2012.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium](#)

[funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	109796
Local authority	Reading
Inspection number	10256467
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	403
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Phil Knox-Roberts
Headteacher	Aimee Crofts
Website	www.stmichaels.reading.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	7 November 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher joined the school in September 2023.
- The school's before- and after-school childcare provision is run by an external provider.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. She also met with members of the governing body and representatives from the local authority.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, the inspector 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.

- During the inspection, the inspector met with a range of pupils to discuss their views about the school and talked to them informally during social times.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector spoke to the designated safeguarding lead and scrutinised a wide range of information, including a selection of the school's records. She also spoke to staff and pupils about safeguarding and looked at how pupils learn to keep safe.
- The inspector reviewed the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View. She also took account of staff responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire.

Inspection team

Laura James, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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