

# Inspection of St Michael's Primary School

Station Road, Withyham, Hartfield, East Sussex TN7 4BP

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Inspection dates: 31 October and 1 November 2023

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Early years provision

**Good**

Previous inspection grade

Good

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils enjoy attending this welcoming and caring school. They are happy here and form positive relationships with one another. As one pupil said, 'We make lots of lovely friends.' Pupils behave well, both in class and when at play. They engage in imaginative games at playtime and read together in the 'Earth Pod'. Pupils feel safe and are confident that if they have a worry, they can speak to a trusted adult who will help.

The school has clear ambition for the development of pupils' learning in mathematics and reading. However, the recent focus on mathematics and reading has been at the detriment of other subjects. As such, not all pupils achieve well in subjects beyond reading and mathematics. After a time of turbulence in staffing, the school is now ready to address the improvements needed to strengthen the ambition for pupils in all subjects.

Pupils learn about the school's values in assembly time. This helps them to see the relevance of the school values in their lives and in the lives of others. Pupils take on responsibilities, such as being school councillors. This develops a culture of care for others. Children in the early years settle well and form a very positive attitude to life in school.

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

Too many pupils have gaps in their knowledge and understanding in subjects beyond reading and mathematics. The school does not provide teachers with enough detail about the content of the curriculum in too many subjects. This means that teachers are not always clear about what to teach and when. Furthermore, as the content of learning is not clear, teachers do not routinely check what pupils know and remember. As such, teachers do not recognise and address gaps in pupils' learning consistently. This means that too many pupils do not achieve as well as they could in some subjects.

The school develops pupils' knowledge and skills in mathematics and reading well. Teachers receive helpful training that supports their practice in class. They help children in the early years to settle quickly into routines and learn to read simple words. As pupils move into key stage 1, they secure their ability to read well. Teachers check that pupils understand and can recall what they have learned. This helps teachers to provide support for pupils who have fallen behind in their reading. As a result, pupils catch up swiftly. Older pupils use the vibrant school library to explore their interests and develop a love of reading. While outcomes in mathematics in key stage 2 in 2023 were low, the school is now addressing this well.

Teachers ensure that pupils are interested in learning and eager to know more. They ensure that children in the early years develop the knowledge and skills needed to succeed. They provide meaningful opportunities for children to explore learning through play. Parents are kept informed about the progress of their child through

stay-and-play days, where teachers share children's work. Teachers use questioning to develop pupils' thinking well. They encourage pupils to talk about their learning with their peers, which helps them to make sense of what they learn. Teachers identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) effectively. They support pupils with SEND who need individualised programmes to learn through a range of activities that address their needs. Teachers provide resources that help pupils with SEND to access their learning alongside their peers. However, teachers do not always provide the support needed for some pupils with SEND to help them to succeed in all subjects.

Teachers encourage pupils to behave positively in class. Pupils are respectful to adults and one another in lessons and around school. As one pupil said, 'Friends look after you really well here.' Pupils learn about diversity and equality. For example, pupils talk eloquently when explaining their views about gender and racial equality.

The school provides a wide range of opportunities for pupils. Pupils experience trips beyond the school, and visitors to the school enhance pupils' learning. For example, multicultural dance workshops develop pupils' awareness of diversity. The school provides a range of clubs that develops pupils' interests. The school ensures that clubs are accessible to pupils with SEND. Staff support pupils' emotional well-being through a range of helpful activities. For example, pupils attend art therapy sessions that build their resilience and visit the school's forest school to enhance their confidence in decision making. These activities and others support pupils who are anxious about settling into life in school confidently.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Leaders have not yet clarified the curriculum progression in many subjects beyond reading and mathematics. This means that teachers are not clear about the component knowledge and skills needed in some subjects. Too many pupils do not achieve as well as they could in some subjects. Leaders need to provide teachers with clearly defined subject progression to ensure that teachers know the essential knowledge and skills to teach in all subjects.
- Teachers do not use assessment effectively enough. This means that pupils have too many gaps in their knowledge in subjects beyond reading and mathematics. Leaders need to clarify the essential knowledge and skills pupils must remember in all subjects so that they can identify pupils who have gaps in their knowledge and help them to catch up quickly.
- Teachers do not always think through the adaptations needed to best support pupils with SEND in some subjects. As a result, some pupils with SEND struggle

to access learning alongside their peers in class. Teachers need to provide purposeful adaptations for pupils with SEND to help them to succeed in all subjects.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	114423
<b>Local authority</b>	East Sussex
<b>Inspection number</b>	10287859
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	77
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Co-Chairs of governing body</b>	Lisa Gibbs Murray and Alex Baptie
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Catherine O'Shea
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.st-michaels.e-sussex.sch.uk">www.st-michaels.e-sussex.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	13 March 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school is part of the Crowborough Alliance, a group of primary schools coordinated by the local authority.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- 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 inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher, other leaders and a range of staff at the school. The inspectors met with members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.

- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, art and design, history and science. For each deep dive, the 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. The inspectors also considered the curriculum in other subjects.
- The inspectors reviewed a wide range of documents, including those related to the governance of the school.
- The inspectors considered the views of parents and carers through their responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View. The inspectors spoke to staff and pupils during the inspection and took account of their responses to Ofsted's online surveys.
- To inspect safeguarding, the inspectors met with the designated safeguarding lead and considered safeguarding documents and records. This included the school's records and plans for supporting pupils who have been referred to outside agencies. The inspectors also talked to pupils, staff, trust staff and parents.

### **Inspection team**

Graham Chisnell, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Adnan Ahmet	Ofsted Inspector

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