

Inspection of an outstanding school: St Michael's CofE Aided Primary

Back Lane, Aldbourne, Marlborough, Wiltshire SN8 2BP

Inspection dates:

14 and 15 November 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of outstanding 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. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to attend St Michael's C of E Aided Primary School. They describe the school as a friendly place. Pupils talk confidently about how the school values of respect, honesty and love help them to become 'better people'. Parents speak highly of the role the school plays in the local community and the way in which staff help pupils settle into school life.

The school has high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Pupils are polite and courteous, greeting visitors with a smile. They understand the school rules and follow them well, both in and outside the classroom. This starts in the early years where children take turns and respond well to the clear routines that are in place.

Pupils feel safe. Relationships between pupils and adults are warm and respectful. Pupils trust adults to listen to them and support them with any worries.

Pupils enjoy the range of clubs on offer to them, such as hockey, tag rugby and performing arts. They value the opportunities they have to become worship leaders, buddies and members of the school council. Pupils say these roles make them feel proud and enable them to make a difference to their school.

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

The school has high expectations for what all pupils can achieve. In all subjects, an ambitious curriculum identifies precisely what pupils need to know and when they need to know it from the early years to Year 6.

Reading is prioritised. Pupils read a range of texts with increasing fluency, accuracy and expression. They say that reading helps to take them away to different places. Pupils

enjoy listening to adults read stories to them. They understand how this helps them to build their knowledge of concepts such as diversity.

Children begin learning phonics as soon as they start school. They learn and remember new sounds well. All staff benefit from the training they receive to teach phonics and reading effectively. Books that pupils read match the sounds they learn, which helps them gain confidence and fluency. If pupils fall behind, they receive the support they need to help them catch up quickly.

The school's mathematics curriculum is designed and sequenced well. This starts in the early years. Children confidently use words such as 'more than' to describe number patterns. As pupils move through the school, teachers explain new concepts clearly. They model mathematical vocabulary well. Pupils build their understanding well because of this. For example, older pupils confidently explain their thinking when working with cubed numbers.

While the school has designed an ambitious and well-planned curriculum, the implementation of this curriculum is not as effective in a minority of subjects. Pupils' knowledge is less secure. In computing, for example, some pupils find it difficult to remember what they have learned about algorithms. Others struggle to make links between what they have learned before when creating and removing errors from simple computer programmes. This is because the systems that the schools has put in place to check on what pupils know and remember are not yet used well enough to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge. This prevents pupils from developing the depth of knowledge they need and slows the progress that some pupils make.

The school is ambitious for what all pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) can achieve. The school works closely with parents and external agencies to ensure that these pupils receive the help they need. Staff make appropriate adaptations to learning to meet individual pupils' needs. Pupils with SEND benefit from this. They develop their use of language and understanding of number well. As a result, most pupils learn the same curriculum as their peers.

Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. Children in the early years are eager to learn and follow instructions well. Pupils particularly enjoy using the play equipment during social times, which develops their imagination and helps them keep active. Across the school, the atmosphere is calm and purposeful.

The school has high expectations for pupil attendance. The procedures for tracking and improving attendance are effective. The school intervenes early to stop pupils having too much time off.

Pupils' personal development is a strength. Pupils know why fundamental British values, such as the democracy and individual liberty, are important. They talk confidently about protected characteristics and understand why discrimination is wrong. Pupils develop their sense of character by raising money for charities and working at the local nursing home. This enables them to help others in their community.

Governors are ambitious for the school. They provide well-considered support and challenge to the school. Staff value the time and training they receive to carry out their roles effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some wider curriculum subjects, the curriculum is not yet implemented as the school intends. Assessment is not yet used well enough to check that pupils have remembered the knowledge they have been taught. Consequently, some pupils have gaps in their knowledge or do not build their knowledge well enough over time. The school need to ensure that assessment is used effectively so that pupils build the depth of knowledge they need.

Background

When we have judged outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. 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 outstanding in July 2016.

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	126392
Local authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	10229065
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	197
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Nigel Payne
Headteacher	Judith Arkwright
Website	www.stmichaelsaldbourne.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	6 and 7 July 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Diocese of Salisbury. The last section 48 inspection took place in May 2016, where the school was judged to be good.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provider.
- There is an after-school club managed by the governing body.

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 leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, the subject leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, the staff, the pupils and the representatives from the governing body. He also held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in the following subjects: reading, mathematics and computing. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, looked at samples of work and spoke to pupils about their learning.
- The inspector spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- The inspector listened to pupils in Years 1, 2 and 3 read to an adult.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site. Additionally, the inspector spoke to pupils to discuss their views about the school.
- The inspector considered the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View. He also took into consideration the staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Ben Jordan, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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