

Education and boarding inspection summary for St Michael's School

Harts Lane, Burghclere, Newbury, Berkshire RG20 9JW

Inspection dates: 26 to 28 September 2023

Outcome

The education overall effectiveness judgement is: good

The judgement for the experiences and progress of children in the boarding provision is: good

What is it like to attend this school?

St Michael's religious ethos is central to the school's work and guides everything it does. Morning prayers in the school's chapel provide pupils with regular opportunities for quiet reflection, contemplation and worship. Pupils learn about the importance of values such as charity, tolerance and respect.

The school fosters a love of learning which is reflected in lessons across the school. Pupils develop an impressive commitment to hard work and a determination to do well as they move up through the school. They behave exceptionally well and work diligently in lessons, which are quiet, calm and purposeful.

Adults lead by example. They combine very high expectations with warmth, understanding and good humour so that pupils feel comfortable and secure. Pupils are impeccably polite, greeting visitors cheerfully and with interest. They enjoy school. The youngest arrive happily at the start of the school day, hanging their coats up, putting their things away quickly and settling into their classrooms ready to learn.

Pupils speak enthusiastically about subjects such as cookery, computing and art, while the older pupils appreciate activities such as rugby and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. They are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

The inspector made **two recommendations** to help the school improve, covering the quality of support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and school development planning.

The school **meets all of the independent school standards**.

What is it like to board at this school?

Children benefit from the care and support of dedicated, passionate and professional staff. The strong ethos of the school informs practice in all areas of children's lives. Staff focus on the rounded development of the children. They place equal value on academic, personal, emotional and spiritual development. Staff aim to support children to become healthy, happy and successful adults whose lives are enriched by the spiritual values of the school.

Since the last inspection, staff have invested time in developing some sophisticated tools for tracking the progress of children through their school lives. This has been further enhanced by the introduction of a well-received programme of incentives and rewards that encourage children to think about their conduct, engagement and personal contribution to the school community.

Staff are able to demonstrate progress in children's education, behaviour and attitude. Children are positive about the impact of the school on their personal growth.

Staff share information effectively with colleagues across the school and work cohesively to support children through any challenges that they face.

Children feel well supported and express deep levels of trust in the staff. They feel confident that they can share any personal concerns and worries with them. They are confident that they will be listened to and that their views are taken seriously.

Children are given opportunities to engage in decision-making and express their views and opinions through formal channels, such as the school council and suggestion boxes, and informal opportunities, including day-to-day discussion with staff. Children gave examples of changes that have been made as a direct result of their feedback to senior staff.

Children have access to a wide range of age-appropriate recreational facilities on site. Outside school hours, children are active and busy (some children highlighted that it is also important to have unstructured time).

Some children approaching the end of their studies at the school talked about feelings of isolation from the local community and having limited chances to mix with children from other schools. They expressed the wish to make more use of resources in the local community.

The school environment is clean and well maintained. However, some of the spaces that children use after school are underdeveloped and could benefit from investment. In particular, the Year 11 senior common room needs updating and renovating.

Staff manage new admissions to the school well and new children and their parents are given high-quality resources that provide all the information they need to maximise chances of a successful transition into the school. Staff show a well-developed understanding of the emotional and practical challenges that children face as they arrive. Staff give much care and thought to helping children to settle into the community.

Children's behaviour and conduct are of a very high standard. In general, children support each other and demonstrate high levels of respect for staff, other children and the guiding principles of school life.

Parents express consistently high levels of regard for the quality of support that their children receive in the boarding provision.

The school **meets all the national minimum standards**.

The inspectors made **three recommendations** to help the school improve, covering pupils' personal development, the development of opportunities for pupils to interact with children from outside the school, and engaging pupils in reviewing the use of available spaces in the school.

- View the full inspection report for the education provision:
<https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/27/116594>
- View the full inspection report for the boarding provision:
<https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/1/SC012016>



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