

Inspection of a good school: Maidstone, St Michael's Church of England Junior School

Douglas Road, Maidstone, Kent ME16 8ER

Inspection dates:

21 and 22 November 2023

Outcome

Maidstone, St Michael's Church of England Junior School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

A feeling of community and family permeates St Michael's Junior School, evident in the warm relationships that exist between pupils, staff and parents and carers. Parents say that they 'couldn't recommend this school highly enough' and note how leaders 'bring the best out of every child in their care'.

Pupils are proud to attend this school. They know it to be inclusive and welcoming, and they regard one another as members of the family. Staff know their pupils well and have high expectations of pupils' conduct and what they can achieve.

Pupils are confident and articulate. They are keen to engage with visitors and explain what makes their school special. They talk with pride about their values of respect, friendship, happiness and perseverance. They know what these mean, and why they matter both in the school and also when they leave and go out into the wider world. In assemblies, the school comes together to share where they have demonstrated these values, talking about 'wow moments' and what they are working on to be even better.

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

The school has identified the key pieces of knowledge and skills that pupils need to know, and has built these into well-developed sequences of learning. This is inclusive of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and staff know how to adapt their input to ensure that all pupils are supported well in their learning.

In lessons, pupils concentrate and engage readily with their learning. They are keen to answer the questions staff ask of them, and a sea of hands flies up in the air as pupils are eager to be the one to share what they know. Staff are quick to identify where there might be any misconceptions and they adapt their explanations and input carefully to

ensure that these do not persist. This might involve one-to-one explanations, or pulling the class together to clarify a more complex idea. As a result of this consistently effective teaching, pupils achieve well, including in published end-of-key-stage assessments.

Pupils talk confidently about what they know, and in some subjects they are able to connect their learning to what has come previously. However, this is not the case across all subjects, and leaders are already starting to think about how they can support pupils in remembering their learning more consistently well in the longer term.

Behaviour around the school site is exemplary. At social times, pupils play well together and enjoy the range of activities they are able to undertake, including a range of play equipment. Pupils are well mannered, greeting visitors and holding doors open for one another. This is a school where people take care of one another, modelled by the adults in the school, but enacted just as much by the pupils themselves. If pupils have worries, they know to use the 'worry monsters' in their classes, or the displays around the school to support them when talking about their feelings and emotions. They are confident that they can share these with adults and that adults will take care of them.

The wider development of pupils is well thought out. Pupils have a range of clubs and activities to hold their interest, such as choir, crafts, British Sign Language and a range of sports. They hold different responsibilities in classes to contribute to their school running well. Younger pupils aspire to hold wider responsibilities when they reach Year 6, such as being librarians or leading worship. The school ensures that pupils are taught about being inclusive and valuing difference, with the recent example of 'international week' having been an opportunity to celebrate the range of cultures and languages found within the school community.

Leaders are caring and hardworking, with the needs of pupils at the heart of their decision-making. They support their staff well, ensuring they consider their workload and well-being in their plans to develop and improve the school and make it a place where every child thrives.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school has identified the small steps of component knowledge and skills in each of their curriculum plans. However, in some subjects there is not yet in place a systematic process for supporting pupils to retain their learning over time. Leaders need to develop systems to support pupils in connecting and revisiting their learning regularly, to support them in retaining this in the longer term.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in March 2018.

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	118625
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10287920
Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	180
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Joanne Cox
Headteacher	Lisa Saunders
Website	www.st-michaels-junior.kent.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	13 and 14 March 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school currently uses no alternative provision.
- This Church of England school is part of the Diocese of Canterbury. The last section 48 inspection took place in February 2023.

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 held meetings with the headteacher, other leaders, teachers and pupils. The inspector met with the members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. The inspector also met with a representative from the local authority and held a telephone conversation with a representative from the diocese.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, and geography. For each deep dive, the inspector held discussions about the curriculum,

visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- 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 took account of a range of other information, including the school's development plans, school policies and minutes of governors' meetings.
- The inspector spoke with pupils about their experience of the school. They took account of parent and carer and staff views through conversations and responses to Ofsted's surveys.

Inspection team

Marian Feeley, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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