

Inspection of Horton St Michael's CofE First School

Horton, Leek, Staffordshire ST13 8RU

Inspection dates: 9 and 10 July 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Rebecca Walker. This school is part of Staffordshire University Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, James Capper, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Mary Walker.

Ofsted has not previously inspected Horton St Michael's CofE First School under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. However, Ofsted previously judged St Michael's CofE (C) First School to be outstanding, before it opened as an academy.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between graded inspections under section 5 of the Act. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Horton St Michael's CofE First School is a small school with a big heart. There is a strong sense of community and team spirit. Staff know pupils and their families very well. One parent summed up the views of many when they described the school as 'warm, friendly and nurturing'.

The school is ambitious for all pupils. As a result, pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), generally achieve well in most subjects. Pupils with SEND are well supported throughout the school. Staff are committed to ensuring that all pupils can learn the full curriculum.

Pupils feel safe and happy in school. They enjoy lessons and pay attention in class. Younger children are enthusiastic and excited by the new things that they learn. Pupils are usually kind to each other at playtimes. Any disagreements are dealt with quickly by staff.

Pupils learn about different religions and cultures through the curriculum. This helps prepare them for life in modern Britain. Pupils benefit from a range of clubs and trips, which broaden their experiences, such as visits to the theatre and places of worship. Staff also enable pupils to become active citizens, for example by raising money for charity.

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

Over the past year and a half, the school has undergone a period of change, with the arrival of new senior leaders. These leaders evaluate the school's strengths and areas for development accurately. As a result of this evaluation, the school has made several changes to the curriculum during this academic year. This is having a positive impact. Leaders and staff are united in working together to ensure that the curriculum is continually improving, and this will continue to be a focus moving forward.

The school has ensured that reading is at the heart of the curriculum. Children learn to read as soon as they are ready. Phonics teaching starts in Nursery, where children are exposed to songs and rhymes and learn to listen carefully for sounds. Leaders have ensured that all staff know how to teach phonics well. Pupils regularly practise reading the letters and sounds that they have learned in books that are well matched to their ability. This helps them remember their phonics knowledge and apply it when they encounter unfamiliar words. Pupils who struggle benefit from high-quality interventions and become increasingly confident and fluent readers over time. Books are used across subjects to enhance learning. Pupils are exposed to a wide range of texts, including those that promote their understanding of diversity.

Teachers have good subject knowledge and present information clearly to pupils. The school's curriculum sets out the essential knowledge and vocabulary that pupils need to know and remember. However, teachers do not always use assessment well

enough to move pupils' learning on. At times, teachers do not adapt their delivery of the curriculum in response to what pupils know and can do. This sometimes means that pupils do not make the progress that they could.

Pupils enjoy coming to school, and this is reflected in their positive attitudes to learning. Staff have consistent expectations of behaviour, both in the classroom and beyond. However, at times, staff do not have high enough expectations for handwriting and presentation of work. As a result, pupils' work is sometimes hard to read and lacks pride.

The school provides effectively for pupils' wider development. A programme of assemblies and lessons helps to keep pupils healthy and safe. There are many exciting opportunities to learn about careers pupils might like to have in the future. This helps to raise their aspirations. Pupils develop their social skills by taking on responsibilities, such as being school and worship councillors. They have recently focused on the new playground toys the pupils would like to have.

The school is led and managed well. There is a team of dedicated and committed staff members. They are proud to work together in the best interests of all pupils. Staff are particularly positive about the school's strong support for their well-being and workload, saying, 'Leaders consistently take workload into account when developing and updating procedures.' Those responsible for governance know the strengths of the school well and understand where further improvements are needed.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some subject curriculums have recently been revised. In these subjects, the curriculum is not as advanced as it is in other subjects and pupils have not learned as much as they could. The school should continue to support staff to embed the revised curriculum so that pupils' progress is secured and pupils can remember and apply their learning over time.
- Sometimes, teachers do not use assessment well enough. As a result, teachers do not adapt their delivery of the curriculum in response to what pupils know and can do. This slows pupils' progress. The school should support teachers to check pupils' learning systematically and use this to inform next steps in learning.
- Staff do not have high enough expectations for handwriting and presentation of work. As a result, work is sometimes hard to read and lacks pride. The school should ensure that teachers consistently have high expectations for handwriting and presentation in all subjects and classes.

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	146126
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10322908
Type of school	First
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	78
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Mary Walker
CEO of the trust	James Capper
Executive headteacher	Rebecca Walker
Website	www.hortonstmichaels.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Diocese of Lichfield. The last section 48 inspection took place in June 2018. Section 48 inspections were suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They restarted in September 2021. The next inspection will be within eight years of the last section 48 inspection.
- Horton St Michael's CofE First School converted to become an academy school and joined Staffordshire University Academies Trust in September 2018.
- The headteacher is the executive headteacher of four schools in the trust.
- The school provides a before- and after-school club on site.
- The school uses one alternative provider.

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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the executive headteacher, the deputy executive headteacher and other staff.
- The lead inspector held discussions with the chair of the trustees, the chief executive officer and the director of learning and school improvement from the multi-academy trust, and representatives from the local academy council, including the chair.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors 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. The lead inspector also considered the curriculum in other subjects, including science, art and design and design and technology.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: 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.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils during lesson visits. They observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at breaktimes and lunchtimes. The inspectors spoke to staff about behaviour and about their workload in the school.
- The inspectors reviewed responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including additional free-text comments. They also took account of responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Emma Gater, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Luke Bridges

Ofsted Inspector

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