

# Inspection of St Michael's Primary School and Nursery, Colchester

Camulodunum Way, Berechurch Hall Road, Colchester, Essex CO2 9RA

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Inspection dates:	14 and 15 January 2025
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Outstanding</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Good

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

Pupils consistently display the school values of 'include, achieve, inspire' in their behaviour and attitudes. They say that everyone is kind at the school.

Pupils are safe. They enjoy their lessons and their time at school. They remember their learning and achieve well in most subjects. Pupils particularly enjoy visits that show how their learning relates to the outside world. These include visiting a theme park, science and war museums, zoos and conservation areas.

Pupils have extensive opportunities to develop their talents and interests. These include playing various musical instruments, singing publicly in the choir and participating in public speaking events. Pupils fulfil active roles in school productions. These include choreographing younger children and staging a talent contest. The wide range of clubs are very well attended by pupils, including disadvantaged pupils. These clubs include sports, music, young carers and military troopers.

Pupils, including children in the early years, are proud to undertake active and meaningful roles within the school learning council and the 'anti bullying league'. Many pupils relish the opportunity to work in collaboration with pupils from other schools. These opportunities help to prepare them to be responsible future citizens and develop their self-confidence.

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

The school has developed a curriculum that is ambitious. It is designed to motivate and inspire all pupils, including children in early years. The curriculum builds the most important knowledge that pupils should learn over time.

Learning to read is prioritised from the moment children start school. In Nursery, children listen carefully to environmental noises, stories, songs and rhymes. The emphasis on communication and learning language ensures that children are very well prepared for their formal phonics learning in the Reception Year.

Staff are highly trained to teach the phonics programme. Their interactions are skilful. They help pupils to learn to read and quickly identify those who need additional help to keep up. The school ensures the books that pupils read match the sounds that they have learned. This supports them to become confident and fluent readers. As a result, most pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, achieve well in reading.

Some pupils did not achieve as well as they could last year. Consequently, the school has revised and improved the curriculum to address this. For example, the school has successfully made changes to improve the quality of pupils' writing. Pupils now write extensively, practising handwriting as soon as they begin in the Reception Year. Pupils use complex vocabulary and language structures accurately as they write, taking care to use the spelling, grammar and punctuation skills they have learned. However, in some other subjects, the school's expectations for writing are not consistently reinforced. This means

that, sometimes, pupils' errors in their spelling, grammar and punctuation are not identified and addressed. As a result, some pupils' writing is difficult to read and does not reflect their depth of knowledge in these subjects.

The curriculum is carefully designed to build on the solid foundation of learning that children have secured in the early years. However, in a few subjects, the school's approach to checking what pupils have understood is not consistent. This means that gaps in pupils' subject knowledge are not fully identified and addressed. Consequently, in these subjects, pupils do not progress as well as they might.

The school's provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is a strength. Identification of individual pupil's needs and the initiation of support are rapid and effective. Staff are highly trained to adapt learning activities and to understand pupils' behaviour and support their emotional well-being. The school's well-being club, life skills programme and therapy dog all provide therapeutic support. Consequently, pupils with SEND achieve well from their various starting points.

Pupils' personal development is exceptional. They gain a rich understanding of different faiths and beliefs through the curriculum, visits and visitors to the school. This means that pupils understand the importance of tolerance and respect for all. The school is committed to ensuring that pupils are very well prepared to be active citizens in modern Britain. Pupils hear from visitors about potential careers that banish stereotyping, for example female firefighters and mechanics. Regular 'core values events' give pupils the opportunity to work with different age ranges. This develops their team building, collaboration and resilience skills in preparation for secondary school.

Staff are highly positive about working at the school. They feel very well supported by leaders in terms of their well-being and in managing their workload. The governing body holds the school to account effectively. It has a strong understanding of the school's strengths and continuing areas for development.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

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

- Across the wider curriculum, pupils do not consistently receive the support that they need to resolve weaknesses in their spelling, punctuation and use of grammar. As a result, the quality of pupils' written work across the curriculum does not always reflect how well they are learning. The school should ensure that expectations of pupils' written work are consistently high across all subjects and throughout the school. This will enable pupils to develop the necessary skills and confidence to prepare them well for their next steps.

- In a few subjects, the school's approach to checking what pupils have learned is not yet consistent. This means that pupils do not always consolidate or make links within their learning. The school should ensure that the strategies used to check pupils' understanding enable future learning to build effectively on their prior knowledge.

## 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>	114817
<b>Local authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	10345131
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	233
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Jamie Clements
<b>Headteacher</b>	Gail Morgan
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.stmichaelsprimary.co.uk">www.stmichaelsprimary.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	18 July 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school hosts a breakfast club and after-school club.
- The school uses the services of one unregistered alternative provider.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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 lead inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.

- The inspectors met with school leaders, members of the local governing body and the local authority school effectiveness partner.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, art and geography. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector also listened to a sample of pupils read to a familiar adult. Inspectors also looked at samples of pupils' writing across the wider curriculum.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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.
- The inspectors considered the responses and free-text comments made by parents in Ofsted Parent View. The inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils.

### **Inspection team**

Rowena Simmons, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Danny Wagstaff	Ofsted Inspector
Stuart Pope	Ofsted Inspector

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