

Inspection of St Michael's Church of England Primary Academy

South Lawn Terrace, Heavitree, Exeter, Devon EX1 2SN

Inspection dates:	11 and 12 February 2025
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

The interim co-headteachers of this school are Claire Hepher and Emma Bone. This school is part of St Christopher's C of E (Primary) Multi Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Jo Evans, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Andrew Bailey.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a well-loved school that sits in the heart of the community. Pupils talk with pride about their school. Parents and carers view it as a place where their children are supported academically and emotionally. There are strong bonds between pupils and staff that are nurtured from the time children start school. Pupils are safe. They know that if they have any concerns there is a member of staff who will support them.

Pupils have a strong sense of fairness. They explain that making mistakes is okay and it is something to learn from. Through the school's 'courageous advocacy' roles, such as eco-leaders and wildlife champions, pupils build a sense of citizenship and responsibility. Links with a school in Kenya help pupils to know what it means to be part of a global community. Acting as sports leaders and house captains, older pupils build independence and set an example to younger children.

The wide range of after-school clubs such as netball, drama and chess help to develop pupils' talents and interests. Residential trips provide pupils with new experiences, such as rock climbing. This helps them to develop resilience and confidence.

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

School leaders are ambitious for pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school's curriculum helps pupils to build their knowledge and skills effectively from the early years to Year 6. The design of the curriculum takes advantage of local history and pupils talk about what they have learned with passion. For example, older pupils explain in detail the impact of the Romans on the city of Exeter.

In the early years, staff help children to develop a love of reading and writing from the time they start school. Daily phonics lessons help children to learn the letters and sounds they need to be able to read. Those children that fall behind are identified promptly and are supported to catch up with their peers. Activities provide opportunities for children to build new skills. For example, children independently make shakers that simulate sounds that link to character movements from the class book. Visits from the school's 'secret readers' provide an opportunity for children to listen to a range of storytellers who come from different cultural backgrounds.

The school quickly identifies the needs of pupils with SEND. This means that most pupils with SEND are supported to learn the same rich curriculum as their peers. Learning is suitably adapted and most pupils with SEND produce work of a high standard. However, at times, provision and strategies to support those pupils with SEND who have more significant needs are not effective enough. This means that these pupils do not build levels of independence successfully and do not achieve as well as they could.

The school is calm and most pupils have positive attitudes to learning. This is reflected in high rates of attendance. If pupil's attendance starts to decrease, leaders and staff support families quickly to resolve any barriers to pupils attending school.

Recently, the school has implemented a new behaviour policy which has led to an improvement in pupils' conduct. However, the school's new approach and high expectations are not fully understood by all staff and pupils. This means that inconsistencies persist in how some staff address poor behaviour. As a result, there are reoccurring incidents of poor behaviour by a minority of pupils.

The provision for pupils' personal development is a strength of the school. For example, the annual diversity day celebrations provide pupils with an opportunity to experience different cultures by tasting food, listening to music and viewing art. Pupils say that through such experiences they, 'get a real glimpse of each other's lives'. Pupils talk positively about the range of trips that deepen their knowledge of the curriculum. For example, pupils visit local estates to mill grain and recreate Anglo Saxon bread recipes.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They appreciate the support of ongoing training to help them be effective in their roles. Governors and trustees have a wealth of expertise that helps them to provide the school with an effective balance of challenge and support. The school is well supported by interim co-headteachers and the trust in the process of recruiting a new headteacher. Together, with the support of governors, they have ensured that the school's recent and progressive work around the curriculum has not lost momentum.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some measures to improve pupils' behaviour do not have the impact that the school intends. Some staff do not fully understand the school's high expectations of how pupils should behave. Sometimes, poor behaviour is not managed effectively. As a result, there are reoccurring incidents of negative behaviour. The trust should ensure that measures to improve pupils' behaviour are shared, understood and applied by all staff.
- Sometimes, the school does not support pupils with significant SEND effectively so that they build their independence. When this occurs, these pupils do not learn as well as they could. The trust should ensure that staff help pupils to build their independence and be well prepared for the next stage of their education.

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	139818
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10371331
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy special sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	419
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Andrew Bailey
CEO of the trust	Jo Evans
Headteacher	Claire Hepher and Emma Bone (co-interim)
Website	www.stmichaels.stcmat.org
Date of previous inspection	July 2015

Information about this school

- This school is part of St Christopher's C of E (Primary) Multi Academy Trust.
- The school does not currently make use of alternative provision.
- The school has co-interim headteachers.

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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, art and design, science and history. For each deep dive, the inspectors discussed the curriculum with teachers, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- 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 met with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, the special educational needs coordinator, the CEO, trustees, subject leaders, and members of the governing body.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site.
The inspectors gathered parents' views by considering the responses to Ofsted Parent View and by talking to parents. The inspectors also reviewed responses to Ofsted's online staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

James Gentile, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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