

Inspection of St Michael's Church of England Controlled Junior School

Church Lane East, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 3SS

Inspection dates: 28 February and 1 March 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy to attend this caring and welcoming school. They appreciate the staff, who are always kind and help them if they are worried or sad. Pupils learn to treat each other with kindness, for example, through being play leaders organising games at lunchtimes. Some pupils act as young interpreters for those joining their class at the early stages of learning English. Pupils are also taught to show kindness and contribute to the wider community through donating items to the local food bank.

Pupils develop the core virtues of respect, courage and resilience which run through the school's curriculum and daily assemblies. Through consistent modelling from leaders and teachers, pupils learn there are different faiths and opinions, and that differences should be celebrated. They are encouraged to be brave and determined when learning is difficult. Pupils visit museums, the science centre, and places of historic interest to widen their range of experiences.

Behaviour is consistently calm and purposeful. Pupils are polite and courteous, opening doors for visitors and greeting them with 'Hello, how is your day going?' Bullying happens rarely, but if it does, teachers deal with instances quickly through restorative conversations. Pupils live up to the strong expectation that everyone is valued here.

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

Leaders have worked tirelessly to refine the well-sequenced curriculum already in place. The key knowledge has been precisely identified and teachers know exactly what they must teach and when. Teachers' subject knowledge is strong in all areas because leaders accurately feed back development points from curriculum monitoring visits. Leaders also give regular coaching and high-quality training to develop their staff continually. As a result, staff have the expertise to ensure pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), learn the curriculum well. Pupils find their learning interesting, so they focus and behave well in lessons.

In consultation with staff, leaders have introduced new ways of delivering and assessing the curriculum. These initiatives have reduced teachers' workload as well as better supporting pupils to remember the key information they are taught. At the beginning of every lesson, pupils revisit what has been taught before by using 'Can I still remember?' recap sessions. Teachers ask questions thoughtfully, so pupils are challenged to articulate what they know. Any pupils at risk of falling behind are methodically targeted for support during the lesson or in the next lesson, when they are retaught key concepts. However, a small number of teachers do not yet do this consistently.

Reading is taught well. Teachers assess pupils new to the school and quickly identify any who need to catch up. Pupils have daily phonics lessons and practice until they are fluent readers. All staff are trained to teach reading, though a small minority do not always sound out letters precisely. Once pupils are fluent, reading continues to be a high priority. Teachers further develop pupils' reading skills through daily comprehension lessons. Pupils, including pupils with SEND or those at the early stages of learning English, succeed because anyone needing support is prepared for lessons by learning new vocabulary and practising reading the text. Staff promote a positive reading culture through regular use of the well-stocked school library and weekly reading incentives. Whole-class reading sessions are a high point of every day. Teachers make reading to their classes enjoyable and memorable.

Leaders prioritise pupils' personal development. They create an inclusive culture in the school, where pupils learn, for example, that there can be many types of families. Pupils know that it is never right to leave anyone out or to be unkind because they are different. They learn about democracy through elections to roles of responsibility in school, where pupils' voices are heard. They know how to look after their physical and mental health and how to use the internet safely. Pupils have many opportunities to widen their interests through clubs such as drama, design technology and mindful drawing.

The governing body supports and holds school leaders to account effectively. Governors carry out their statutory responsibilities well and champion the shared vision for every pupil to succeed.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure all staff are trained to identify any pupil who may need help. Staff know how to report any concerns, no matter how small, about pupils or adults. Leaders carefully consider anything reported and take swift action to support pupils and their families. Leaders regularly review any pupils needing help and refer to external agencies in a timely way. Careful tracking enables leaders to anticipate possible further needs and put pre-emptive actions in place.

Pupils are taught how to keep safe in their local area and on the internet. They learn how to keep themselves physically and emotionally healthy.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A small number of staff do not deliver the school's phonics programme precisely enough. As a result, weaker readers do not always hear sounds enunciated correctly. Leaders should ensure all staff are experts in teaching phonics.

- Some staff do not consistently check pupils' understanding of the concepts taught. This means that misconceptions are not always identified. Leaders should continue to monitor how teachers are using assessment as new systems become embedded.

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](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	116333
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	10257081
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	368
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Alan Jenner
Headteacher	Jenny Jones
Website	www.stmichaelscejunior.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	18 May 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A new headteacher started in January 2022.
- This school is a Church of England school in the Diocese of Guildford. Its most recent section 48 inspection for schools of a religious character took place in April 2016.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- During the inspection, inspectors met with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. The lead inspector also met with representatives from the governing body, the local authority and the Diocese of Guildford.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into these subjects: early reading, mathematics, art, geography and religious education. For each deep dive, the inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors reviewed the arrangements for safeguarding through scrutinising safeguarding records and discussions with leaders, staff and pupils.
- The views of parents and carers were considered through their responses to Ofsted Parent View. Further views of pupils and staff were gathered through Ofsted's online surveys, interviews and discussions conducted throughout the inspection.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of the school's documents, including self-evaluation reports, minutes of governing body meetings, attendance records and behaviour incident logs.
- The inspection team observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at playtimes. They spoke with pupils about bullying, behaviour and leaders' expectations of pupils' behaviour.

Inspection team

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