

St Michael's Church of England Primary School

Ashford Road, St Michael's, Tenterden, Kent TN30 6PU

Inspection dates

11–12 December 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher has created a learning environment in which both teachers and pupils have high aspirations and are supported to succeed.
- The school's vision and values underpin all of its work and pupils are exceptionally well supported. Their well-being is of prime importance to leaders and staff. The confidence and resilience of pupils are developed so they are emotionally ready to learn well.
- Although several governors are new, they appropriately challenge and support leaders. They know the school well and rigorously check the progress of pupils.
- Leaders and governors accurately evaluate the strengths and priorities for the school. They take the right actions to bring about improvement, and have strengthened pupils' progress. The quality of mathematics teaching and pupils' outcomes have improved substantially.
- Pupils make strong progress as a result of well-planned, high-quality teaching. Teachers know their pupils well and have established strong relationships. These support successful learning. Pupils respond positively to teachers' high expectations.
- The personal development and well-being of pupils are outstanding. Pupils feel safe, happy and enjoy their school. They learn in a genuinely caring and supportive atmosphere.
- The early years is well led and teaching is good. Children make strong progress and are well prepared for the next stage of their education in Year 1.
- Leaders have established effective strategies to support disadvantaged pupils. They recognise they have to ensure that this group of pupils catches up with other pupils nationally.
- Pupils behave well and have positive attitudes to learning. They respect and listen to one another, and work well together. Persistent absence, while improving, presents a barrier to learning for a minority of pupils.
- Leaders' vision and the new initiatives for the development of the curriculum are having a positive impact. The wider curriculum engages pupils and enables them to develop skills and knowledge in all subjects. Pupils develop deep knowledge in some subjects, which informs their high-quality written work.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that actions to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils are sustained so they catch up with other pupils nationally in English and mathematics.
- Embed the new initiatives for developing the wider curriculum so that pupils continue to make strong progress in all subjects.
- Ensure that teaching consistently challenges the most able pupils in all subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher has created a culture of high aspiration for all pupils within a caring and supportive environment, enabling them to achieve well.
- The headteacher has engaged the whole school community in the development of a clear vision based on the school's Christian values. This has ensured that St Michael's does indeed provide a happy, caring learning community in which young minds are inspired to learn. The school's vision and values underpin every aspect of its work.
- The majority of parents value the school greatly. They speak highly of its ethos and the quality of education provided. One parent said: 'We are very pleased with our children's progress at St Michael's. They are happy, confident, well-rounded children, and a lot of that is down to the great education they have received. The care and nurture they have received here is second to none.'
- The headteacher leads her staff ably and sensitively, building their confidence and expertise in such a way that they continually improve the quality of their teaching. There is a sustained drive for improvement throughout the school. Leaders carefully evaluate the impact of initiatives to ensure that they are helping all pupils to learn well.
- Leaders regularly check on the progress of pupils from their different starting points. They appropriately support their colleagues to make adjustments to teaching and provide additional support so that all pupils progress as well as possible. As a result, pupils make strong progress.
- Middle leaders have a clear understanding of their roles and priorities for improvement. They take effective action to secure good-quality teaching and pupils' strong progress. For example, over the last year the mathematics leader has provided training to deepen teachers' subject knowledge. This has resulted in better planning. Pupils' progress in mathematics has improved because teaching carefully builds and consolidates their understanding of new concepts. All leaders diligently check on the quality of teaching and learning by visiting lessons and reviewing pupils' work. Teachers receive accurate, high-quality feedback from leaders which enables them to improve their practice.
- Leaders are committed to the professional development and training of teachers. The school works well with the multi-academy trust (MAT) and other local schools to share expertise and develop staff's professional skills. Teachers feel well supported and confident to develop new approaches to teaching.
- The curriculum is broad, balanced and planned effectively to develop pupils' skills and knowledge. Leaders and teachers have a clear understanding of the appropriate expectations for each year group in each subject. Pupils' skills in writing are a particular strength and this is partly as a result of the high-quality opportunities offered by the wider curriculum. For instance, pupils in Year 5 wrote detailed descriptions of soldiers living in trenches during the First World War. This writing drew on their detailed knowledge from their history topic. Effective use is made of visits and the resources from other schools in the MAT to enhance the curriculum. Some of the new initiatives

in the curriculum need to be embedded. Leaders are aware that they need to strengthen pupils' acquisition of knowledge and skills in some subjects.

- Leaders have also designed the curriculum to draw on the particular expertise of teachers. As an example, the modern foreign languages curriculum draws on the languages spoken by teachers. During their time at St Michael's, pupils experience learning French, German, Italian and Russian. In one class, pupils and their teacher routinely respond to each other in German. Pupils develop a love of languages and, in this respect, are well prepared for the next stage of learning at secondary school.
- Pupil premium funding is effectively used. The family-liaison officer and special educational needs coordinator work well together to provide a range of support to help disadvantaged pupils learn well. Some disadvantaged pupils face significant barriers to learning but the school provides effective support to overcome them. Leaders are aware that this additional provision needs to continue to be developed because the progress of some disadvantaged pupils is too slow.
- The primary physical education (PE) and sport premium is used well to provide a range of physical activity and sporting opportunities. Pupils have developed a love of fencing, for example, which is now taught regularly. Pupils' uptake of extra-curricular sports has increased significantly as a result of the greater diversity of sports being offered. The school also draws on expertise from the secondary school within the MAT to enhance teachers' skills in teaching PE.
- Leaders ensure that pupils develop spiritually, as well as socially, morally and culturally. Pupils have opportunities to lead the worship for the whole school and do so reflectively. Pupils experience prayer and some write their own. This is done with increasing sophistication as they move up through the school. Each class has its own book of prayers written by pupils. Religious education and geography are well used to develop pupils' appreciation of different faiths and cultures. They learn to respect and value as equals people from different backgrounds. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Governance of the school

- Several governors are new to the governing body but have already attended relevant training. They have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities. The governing body knows the school well and holds leaders stringently to account.
- Governors hold the school to account for the spending of pupil premium funding and are aware of the importance of ensuring that all pupils make good progress. They recognise that disadvantaged pupils should achieve as well as other pupils nationally. They carefully monitor pupils' progress and challenge and support leaders appropriately, monitoring the impact of the school's initiatives.
- The governing body oversees plans for improvement and has clearly set out the arrangements for monitoring progress and impact. Governors regularly visit the school, talk to staff and pupils, and receive presentations from leaders on key aspects of the school's work. As a result, the governing body has an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for further development.

- Governors have undertaken training in safeguarding and ensure that the school's policies and procedures are regularly updated and followed. They routinely ensure that all recruitment checks are carried out before new members of staff are appointed.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff are regularly trained and updated in all aspects of keeping pupils safe. As part of the care and support the school provides to its pupils, there is a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff know what to do if they have a concern about a pupil and act swiftly.
- Pupils are reminded regularly about where they can get help if they have a worry; for example, by the use of relevant posters around the school. They also have routine reminders about how to keep themselves safe when online or outside of school. They enjoy regular visitors coming into school to talk about Childline and road, fire, and internet safety.
- Staff give the welfare and safety of pupils high priority. They report their concerns appropriately when they notice a significant change in a pupil's mood or demeanour which may indicate that they are at risk. The designated safeguarding lead takes prompt action and maintains meticulous records to ensure that pupils are kept safe and are suitably supported.
- The school's policies and procedures relating to safeguarding are regularly reviewed and updated. Governors maintain appropriate oversight of these arrangements.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers know their pupils well and have established strong relationships. They plan pupils' next steps in learning well, reflecting pupils' very different starting points and needs. Teachers plan sequences of learning effectively to build on pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding over time.
- In general, pupils respond positively to teachers' high expectations. The majority of pupils make strong progress as a result. High expectations also enable pupils to learn well from each other because the most able pupils model what can be achieved.
- The teaching of writing is a strength. Pupils produce well-structured, accurate and engaging pieces of writing, using a rich vocabulary. The wider curriculum is used to support and develop pupils' writing skills. Pupils write knowledgeably, using what they have learned in topics in other subjects, and employ subject-specific vocabulary. Several pupils said that they love writing and feel they are good at it. They enjoy English lessons because, 'there is no right or wrong answer and it is creative'. One pupil said, 'The teachers push you.' Pupils take pride in their written work and it is generally well presented.
- Teachers skilfully use high-quality children's literature to immerse pupils in the skills of writing well. Books often become the starting points for learning across a range of subjects, while at the same time developing pupils' reading and interpretation skills.

- During the last year, leaders have acted to improve the quality of mathematics teaching. This has deepened teachers' knowledge and enhanced their skills. Mathematics teaching carefully builds up pupils' understanding of concepts through well-planned sequences of lessons. As a result, pupils' progress in mathematics has strengthened.
- Teaching is engaging and tasks are well planned and secure pupils' interest and motivation. Where teaching is strongest, teachers regularly check on pupils' understanding and move learning on quickly. In a small number of lessons, pupils are not challenged enough to make good progress.
- In the majority of lessons, the most able pupils are appropriately challenged and deepen their learning. For example, in mathematics they are challenged to 'test out' their thinking through problem-solving and reasoning. In a minority of lessons, this does not happen quickly enough. Some most-able pupils could be further challenged to read more demanding children's literature.
- Teachers have well-developed subject knowledge, enabling them to question pupils skilfully. Questioning is used to assess and challenge pupils' thinking well and move learning forward.
- Phonics is systematically taught through a highly structured approach. Pupils quickly develop the ability to identify letters and the sounds they represent, blending and segmenting sounds to read and write simple words. Pupils make good progress in acquiring early reading and writing skills.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- St Michael's offers a genuinely caring and supportive atmosphere in which all are valued and treated equally, regardless of their background. Pupils feel safe, happy and enjoy their life at school. Several parents commented on the friendly, safe and caring nature of the school and say their children thrive.
- Leaders and staff have a well-developed understanding of the needs of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils. They have effective strategies in place to ensure that these pupils thrive and have the same aspirations as other pupils. The family-liaison officer provides a range of support for families who face particular challenges, so that their children do well at school.
- The school's vision and values promote pupils' well-being. Pupils' welfare is at the core of its work. Staff skilfully support all pupils, building confidence and resilience to ensure that all pupils are ready and prepared to learn.
- Pupils are respectful, listen carefully to one another and work collaboratively. This enables all pupils to feel confident and able to take appropriate risks while learning.

- Pupils feel safe and are free from bullying at school. If a pupil sometimes feels upset, as a result of a friendship issue, they are confident that adults will help them sort it out. Leaders and staff are quick to tackle the very rare use of derogatory language.
- Pupils are encouraged to lead worship once a week. This develops their sense of responsibility, as well as their presentation and public-speaking skills. Pupils show awareness of their role as citizens and of wider issues affecting society beyond the school. For example, Year 6 pupils led an assembly and challenged pupils to think about a video showing children giving their pocket money to a homeless person rather than spending it on ice cream. The Year 6 pupils skilfully moved from this scenario to reflect on the true meaning of Christmas.
- The school's use of primary PE and sports premium funding has increased pupils' physical activity. More pupils are involved in a range of sporting activities and tournaments, which has added to their confidence and self-esteem. Pupils value the regular PE sessions provided by the sports coach from the MAT's secondary school, who also talks to them about how to stay fit and healthy.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and behave well in lessons. They are motivated and take responsibility for their own learning. They also behave well on the playground and during lunchtimes. Pupils respect one another, play well together and enjoy positive friendships. They are polite and welcoming to visitors, and respond well to staff. New pupils receive a warm welcome.
- A minority of pupils sometimes present more challenging behaviours. However, these incidents are well managed by staff and do not disrupt learning. Pupils feel that they can trust adults to deal with instances of poor behaviour and value the behaviour policy, which is implemented consistently. Pupils enjoy receiving the gold and silver stickers from the headteacher and deputy headteacher, and say that these motivate them.
- While overall attendance is in line with the national average, the learning of a small number of pupils is affected by persistent absence. The school is diligent in supporting families to make sure that pupils' attendance is regular.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The attainment and progress of pupils currently at the school are good. Leaders' actions to improve the teaching of mathematics have resulted in pupils' stronger progress by the end of key stage 2. In 2018, pupils' progress in mathematics was in line with the national average, following a dip in 2017. Key stage 2 progress for both reading and writing were in line with national averages in 2018. At the end of key stage 1, in 2018, pupils' outcomes in reading and writing were above the national averages and in line for mathematics.

- Pupils currently at the school are making strong progress. Leaders and teachers keep a close check on how well pupils are learning. Pupils have a wide range of starting points but all are supported and challenged well to develop their knowledge and skills. Teachers understand the needs of their pupil, adjust teaching and provide additional support when needed. Interventions for those pupils who have difficulties with speaking and listening when they join the school ensure that these do not become barriers to learning to read and write.
- The written work of the most able pupils is of a high standard. Their writing engages the reader because it is imaginative, well-constructed and uses interesting vocabulary and a variety of sentence structure. Some of the most able pupils could be challenged further in reading and mathematics. Leaders are aware of this and have already taken action to ensure that these pupils make the strongest progress possible. Where teaching is most effective in mathematics, the most able pupils are challenged to develop their reasoning skills through 'test it' challenges.
- Outcomes in writing are a particular strength of the school. In 2018, attainment at the expected standard, at the end of key stage 1, was above average and in the top 10% nationally. Pupils take pride in their work and present it very well. Pupils' handwriting quickly develops into a mature style and is neat. All this stems from teachers' well-developed subject knowledge, effective teaching strategies and high expectations.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported and make good progress. Their starting points are diverse and their attainment, by the end of key stage 2, is varied. However, their progress is good. Leaders keep a sharp focus on the progress of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND. Their aim is for these pupils to achieve as well as other pupils nationally. Staff know each pupil as an individual and provide specifically tailored support.
- Year 6 pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. The close liaison with the local secondary school, which is part of the MAT, enables smooth transitions.

Early years provision

Good

- The early years provision is well led and managed by a skilled and knowledgeable teacher. The school has very good relationships with local pre-school providers, resulting in a clear understanding of each child's needs when they enter the school. Children frequently visit the school during their last year at pre-school as part of the transition into St Michael's.
- The early years environment is pleasant and well resourced. Children enjoy their play and learning, and sustain activities well. Adults support play skilfully and interact with the children to support their communication skills and social and emotional development. These are a key focus during the first term and pupils make particularly strong progress in these areas. This, in turn, prepares them well for the other areas of learning.
- Children make good progress in the early years. In 2018, the proportion of pupils achieving a good level of development by the end of Reception was above the national average. Children are well prepared for the next stage of their education in year 1.

- Phonics is well taught in Reception. Children quickly acquire early reading and writing skills. There are opportunities to use these skills throughout the day. For example, children read and write in the shop role-play area and when outside, using chalks to write.
- Teaching is good and adults make accurate assessments of children's learning in order to plan their next steps. Adults are also knowledgeable about the particular needs of individuals and target appropriate support precisely. A small minority of pupils play individually, which inhibits the development of their social and communication skills. The majority of pupils have developed their speaking and listening skills well and enjoy explaining their activities to adults. Teachers have high expectations of all children.
- The school works well with parents, maintaining effective communication with home. Parents are encouraged to contribute to their children's learning and to the school's understanding of their children's progress. Early years staff provide sessions on phonics and the teaching of reading to help parents support their children at home. Parents also appreciate the 'stay and play' sessions, which enable them to observe and experience how their children learn at school.

School details

Unique reference number	143788
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10053578

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	138
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Hilary Honeysett
Headteacher	Sara Williamson
Telephone number	01580 763210
Website	www.st-michaels-tenterden.kent.sch.uk
Email address	headteacher@st-michaels-tenterden.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- St Michael's converted to academy status in December 2016, becoming part of the Tenterden Schools Trust, a multi-academy trust (MAT).
- The Tenterden Schools Trust brought together the four schools in Tenterden to provide learning from 0 to 19. The MAT is overseen by four members and a board of directors. St Michael's has its own local governing body that holds the school to account and reports to the board of directors. The school is led and managed by the headteacher and the deputy headteacher, who report to the chief executive officer of the MAT.
- St Michael's works closely with the other schools in the MAT, but also with the Tenterden Rural Alliance. The school is part of a local mathematics hub that provides training and development for teachers.
- The school makes use of facilities, resources and subject-specific expertise provided by Homewood School and Sixth Form Centre, which is within the MAT.

- St Michael's is a voluntary controlled Church of England school within the Diocese of Canterbury. It was last inspected, under section 48 of the Education Act 2005, in October 2015 and is due for reinspection in 2020.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited all classes jointly with senior leaders.
- The inspector looked at pupils' work across all subjects and spoke to pupils about their learning.
- The inspector met with parents at the start of the inspection. Fifty-four responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 50 free-text comments, were also considered.
- The inspector held meetings with senior and middle leaders, the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, governors, the special educational needs coordinator and the family-liaison officer.
- Documents about the local governing body's work were reviewed.
- The single central record of recruitment checks, the school's safeguarding policies and procedures, and several case studies were scrutinised.
- The inspector took account of the views of staff through responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- The inspector held a meeting with a group of pupils. Pupils' views of the school were also gathered through many informal conversations.
- The inspector considered a range of documentation, including: leaders' evaluations of the school's effectiveness; development plans; the school's own information about pupils' progress and attainment; and behaviour and attendance logs.

Inspection team

Peter Wibroe, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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Manchester
M1 2WD

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