

Inspection of a good school: St Michael's RC Primary School

Hills Terrace, Chatham, Kent ME4 6PX

Inspection dates:

5–6 November 2019

Outcome

St Michael's RC Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils love coming to this school and speak about it with a sense of pride. They feel well supported by adults in school. They enjoy their learning because teachers make it relevant to them. Leaders and staff want the very best for their pupils. Consequently, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Pupils enjoy having extra responsibilities. For example, they have opportunities to be digital leaders, eco-warriors and language ambassadors.

Pupils feel safe because the teachers and other adults in school care for them. Pupils say they feel protected. They know staff will help them if they are worried about something.

Pupils behave well. They are extremely polite. The school values of church, independence, resilience, caring, learning and enjoyment for all are understood by pupils. They adhere to these closely, showing care and concern for each other. They treat each other with respect. Pupils say that incidents of bullying or poor behaviour do not happen often, but, if they do, adults sort things out quickly. Pupils play well together and often support each other in lessons.

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

Leaders, staff and governors are determined for all pupils to achieve well. Pupils follow a broad and interesting curriculum that is meaningful to them. They often learn about the local area and their cultural heritage. Pupils learned a great deal from the work they had completed during black history week. Leaders give careful consideration to how lessons are sequenced. Overall, teachers deliver lessons that are well planned and build on what pupils already know. This means that pupils know more and remember more across a broad range of subjects. However, leaders have already identified that there is more work to do to improve planning in art and music.

Pupils across the school have a love of reading. This is because leaders make the teaching of reading and phonics a priority. Children begin to learn phonics in the Nursery. The

teaching of phonics is well organised and effective. Teachers quickly identify and support pupils who fall behind in the phonics programme. Pupils read to adults in school often. In the early years and key stage 1 pupils read books that are at the right level for their reading ability. However, in key stage 2 books are not as carefully selected to help pupils who find reading more difficult. Leaders are aware of this and already have plans in place to strengthen the teaching of reading further. Pupils enjoy story times. Carefully chosen texts inspire their learning in other areas of the curriculum.

In mathematics, teachers plan well-structured lessons to meet the needs of all pupils. There is a strong, consistent approach to teaching mathematics throughout the school. Teachers plan engaging lessons that allow pupils to apply their skills to real-life situations. For example, pupils in Year 4 interpreted tables and charts confidently to plan and cost a holiday.

The curriculum is not limited to academic subjects. Pupils enjoy a wide range of clubs. For example, choir, street dance, cheerleading, football and karate club. Leaders organise exciting events to bring pupils' learning alive such as going to the museum, the castle, the library and London. As a result, pupils are keen to learn about themselves, others and the world around them. They develop the skills they need to flourish in the future.

Leaders hold the same high ambitions for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teachers and teaching assistants know these pupils well. Staff have the expertise to adapt lessons effectively. Consequently, they support this group of pupils so they achieve well.

Children get off to a flying start in the early years. Staff form strong relationships with the children and care for them well. Children settle quickly and happily into school routines. Teachers provide children with many interesting activities which engage the children and promote their learning. For example, children searched for the gingerbread man with excitement. Staff ensured that they explained where he was to develop their use of positional language.

Staff are proud to work at this school. Teachers told me that they look forward to leaders watching them teach as it helps them to develop their expertise. Leaders, including governors, consider the well-being of staff when making decisions.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

A culture of safeguarding exists at the school. There are good relationships between staff and pupils, parents and the wider community. This allows them to work together well to identify any concerns and act upon them swiftly. Leaders and governors ensure that all pre-employment checks on staff and volunteers are carried out carefully. They are meticulous in this work. However, leaders and governors have not ensured that training to update staff takes place as quickly as it should.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders provide pupils with a rich range of learning across a broad range of subjects. However, the curriculum is not deliberately planned and sequenced equally well in all subjects, especially art and music. Leaders should ensure that teachers build systematically on what pupils already know so that, over time, they remember more across the curriculum.
- Leaders have taken steps to improve leadership. They now need to develop the expertise of all subject leaders, particularly those who are less experienced, and governors so that they can better challenge and support school improvement and ensure that all staff training is appropriately up to date.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good on 3–4 February 2016.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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	118756
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	10111287
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	454
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Mr D Coleman/Ms J Drummond
Headteacher	Katharine Sexton
Website	www.stmichaelsrcp.org
Date of previous inspection	3–4 February 2016

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- This is a voluntary aided Catholic school.
- The school has 16 out of 17 possible ethnic groups.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above the national average for primary schools and in the top 20% of schools nationally.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is above the national average for primary schools.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND, including those with education, health and care plans, is above the national average for primary schools.

Information about this inspection

- I met with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, subject leaders, class teachers, staff, pupils and the co-chair of the governing body. I spoke to a representative from the local authority on the telephone. I looked at a range of safeguarding documents, including behaviour and racial incident logs. I checked the

school's register of pre-employment checks and records of statutory training for all staff.

- I did deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and art. I visited lessons where the subjects were being taught. In addition, I held discussions with senior and subject leaders to find out why they were being taught in the way they were. I held discussions with pupils reviewing the work in their books. I also met with class teachers. I visited a range of teaching sessions and listened to pupils reading to the deputy headteacher.

Inspection team

Linda Taylor, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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