

Inspection of St Michael's RC Primary School

Clumber Street North, Elswick, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear, NE4 7RE

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 September 2021

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive at this vibrant and inclusive school. Staff expect pupils to work hard, respect one another and behave well. Pupils live up to these high expectations. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Pupils understand the significance of being good friends to one another. They say that they care and look out for each other. Pupils told inspectors that lessons on relationships and themes in assemblies teach the importance of this.

Pupils' individual differences are valued and celebrated at St Michael's. Pupils told inspectors that school is like a family. Some pupils take on responsibilities to do 'good works' in the local community. Others have roles which develop their leadership skills. Pupils talk with pride about being a school councillor, an eco-warrior, a hygiene hero or a well-being warrior.

Pupils understand the importance of attending school regularly. They enjoy coming to school and develop into confident and resilient learners.

Pupils told inspectors that bullying is extremely rare. They recognise types of bullying and tell someone immediately if it happens. Pupils use the 'worry box' in each classroom to share any concerns, no matter how small. Adults sort out concerns quickly. Pupils look out for each other and are honest with one another about how they feel. Pupils say adults help them to learn from their mistakes through discussing the choices they have made.

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

Senior leaders have a determination that pupils will excel. Subject leaders share that vision for the curriculum. They identify the crucial knowledge they want pupils to learn in every subject. Leaders set out clear, aspirational goals in curriculum plans. Teachers are clear on the steps that pupils need to take to reach these end points. Leaders check how much pupils can remember and have learned in every subject, across each year. However, the way that teachers use assessment to plan what pupils learn next, day to day, is variable. The way that teachers set work to match what pupils know and can do is not consistent across key stages, classes and subjects.

Leaders of English and mathematics have secure subject knowledge. Pupils practise calculation skills and methods. Leaders ensure that pupils apply their phonics knowledge to write and spell words. Pupils develop this as they move through school to produce high-quality writing. During some lessons, some pupils find the task too easy. At other times some pupils find it too difficult. Teachers identify pupils who need support to attend additional sessions to catch up and keep up with learning in English and mathematics.

The leader of geography has high aspirations for pupils. Pupils learn about their immediate surroundings in the early years. They build on their knowledge of locations and geographical features to learn world geography. A partner secondary school has provided training for staff on developing geography fieldwork skills.

Pupils receive a daily phonics session and opportunities to practise their reading. Pupils' reading books match their phonics knowledge. This is helping them to be confident readers. In key stage 2, pupils learn the skills of reading, such as how to infer meaning. Leaders promote a love of reading. For example, pupils participate in 'snuggle up with a book'. Pupils take home a story book to share with a family member, some hot chocolate, and a cuddly toy.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified early. Leaders have invested heavily in high-quality training in SEND for all staff. A sensory room enables pupils with sensory needs to access a bespoke curriculum. Adults provide support in class for pupils with SEND.

Children enter the Reception class from a wide range of pre-school settings. Teachers wait for children to settle into Reception before beginning some of the curriculum plans. This means that for children joining from the school Nursery, there is a delay until other children are ready to begin learning. Children are happy in their learning. Staff plan a communication-rich learning environment. They develop vocabulary by immersing children into stories, songs and rhymes. Some parents of children in Nursery attend 'small talk' sessions where they can play, chat and read with their children. The early years learning space both indoors and outside is inviting and well resourced.

Leaders have created a highly inclusive environment. Pupils have positive opportunities to develop in many diverse aspects of life. Leaders promote democracy, mutual respect, individual liberty, rule of law and different faiths exceptionally well. Pupils demonstrate a very high level of maturity and self-control. They have highly positive attitudes to learning and excellent relationships with peers and adults. The nurture provision supports pupils well to develop their confidence, resilience and self-esteem.

Staff are overwhelming positive about working at this school. They say that leaders ensure staff do not feel overburdened with their workload. Staff morale is high. Governors bring a wide range of skills to their roles. They have checked leaders' actions over time to ensure rapid school improvement takes place. All parents who gave their views during the inspection would recommend this school to others.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The designated safeguarding leader (DSL) acts promptly on all safeguarding concerns raised by staff or pupils. She is supported well by three deputy DSLs.

Records checked show that pupils stay safe because leaders act swiftly and appropriately.

The welfare officer works well with pupils, their families and external professionals to keep pupils safe. Pupils and their families get the support and guidance they need. Leaders make sure that pupils who are absent are safe. Leaders carry out appropriate and thorough recruitment checks before staff, governors and all volunteers work with children.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers' use of assessment in lessons is inconsistent across the school, including in the early years. This means that sometimes teachers plan day-to-day tasks that do not fully match what some pupils know or can do, or the exact next steps they need. Therefore, some pupils find their work in some lessons too easy or too difficult. Leaders should ensure that teachers' assessment on a day-to-day basis is accurate and they use this knowledge to plan precisely what each pupil should learn next.

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.

If you are the school and you are 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	144971
Local authority	Newcastle upon Tyne
Inspection number	10200749
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy special sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	213
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Anita Bath
Headteacher	Charlotte Chapman
Website	www.st-michaels.school
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- St Michael's RC Primary School is part of The Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this 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 school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- During this inspection, inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher, the welfare officer, the early years leader and the special educational needs coordinator. Inspectors also met with representatives from the governing body, including the chair of the governing body, and the chief executive officer of The Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust.

- Inspectors met with a range of staff, including teachers and support staff, during the inspection. Inspectors considered 25 responses to Ofsted’s staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors met with pupils both formally and informally during lessons, breaktimes, lunchtime and breakfast club. Inspectors considered 131 responses to Ofsted’s pupil questionnaire.
- To check leaders’ management of safeguarding, inspectors read the relevant school policies, examined the single central record, considered the school’s procedures for the safer recruitment of staff and met the designated lead for safeguarding. Inspectors talked to staff, governors and pupils to check their views on safeguarding.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, geography and personal, social and health education. Inspectors met with subject leaders, visited lessons, talked to pupils and looked at pupils’ work. Inspectors listened to pupils read to a familiar adult.
- During the inspection, inspectors considered 27 responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including 14 free-text responses.

Inspection team

Alison Aitchison, lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Andy Jones

Ofsted Inspector

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