

# Inspection of St Michaels Catholic Primary School

St Michael's Road, Widnes, Cheshire WA8 8TD

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Inspection dates: 16 and 17 May 2023

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Outstanding</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Good

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils love coming to this school, which leaders aptly describe as an oasis. Leaders have given careful thought to the school environment, from the calming corridors and unique library to the outdoor spaces. Pupils are very well looked after, and they thrive in this caring environment. Leaders make sure that pupils feel happy and safe. They have high expectations for what pupils can achieve. In many subjects, many pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve well.

Staff have high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Pupils rise to these high expectations. Their behaviour is exemplary. They demonstrate high levels of self-control and have positive attitudes to their learning.

Pupils rarely fall out with each other because they care for, and respect, one another. They also have excellent relationships with teachers and staff. Leaders act very quickly to address any bullying concerns as soon as they arise.

Many pupils enjoy the sports clubs and competitions available to them. They also spoke positively about the annual residential visits.

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

Leaders have designed a balanced, ambitious curriculum for all pupils, including those with SEND. They have ensured that the local area is regularly reflected in this curriculum. Leaders have broadly outlined what they expect pupils to know, and be able to do, within each subject and year group. In many subjects, pupils achieve well.

In most subjects, leaders have broken down exactly what knowledge they want pupils to learn and when they expect pupils to acquire it. This helps teachers to teach curriculum information in a sensible order. It also helps pupils to build their knowledge securely and apply it well to subsequent learning. However, in one or two subjects and the early years, leaders have not provided the same level of curriculum guidance. Occasionally, this leads to a few staff making activity choices and selecting resources that are not well-suited to leaders' intended curriculum. Sometimes pupils do not develop their knowledge and skills as well as they could.

Teachers have well-developed strategies to check on pupils' learning during lessons. Staff are quick to spot any pupils that might be struggling with new learning content. They provide effective feedback and extra guidance straight away. This helps pupils to close their knowledge gaps quickly and address their misconceptions.

Reading is promoted in many ways by leaders and staff. Pupils enjoy regular visits to the double-decker reading bus, which is a permanent fixture on the playground. Younger pupils also relax with a book in the reading sheds. Lately, leaders have begun to reinvest in the training and resources that underpin the school's chosen

phonics programme. This has brought about greater consistency in teachers' delivery of phonics. Children begin to learn the phonics programme as soon as they start school. The majority of pupils read books that are well suited to their learning needs. Leaders arrange extra support for those pupils who are not fluent readers. However, some staff do not have sufficient expertise to target the specific gaps pupils have in their phonic knowledge. In recent times, this has contributed to a number of pupils not learning to read as quickly as they should.

Pupils with SEND have their needs identified and information is shared with staff. Staff support pupils with SEND well across the school. Pupils with SEND access the same ambitious curriculum as their classmates.

Pupils' behaviour throughout the day is exemplary, including for children in the early years. As is their attitude to learning. Low-level disruptions to learning are very rare. They show high levels of courtesy and consideration for others. When pupils walk around the school, they strike up friendly conversations with staff. Pupils undertake duties such as acting as well-being warriors to provide care for each other. They attend school regularly.

Pupils' personal development is prioritised by leaders. The pastoral care provided by leaders and staff, for which pupils have a deep appreciation, is a particular strength of the school. Pupils have a secure understanding of how to maintain their own mental well-being. They also develop respect and tolerance for those from different backgrounds. Leaders arrange plenty of curriculum and life-enhancing experiences which pupils enjoy. Pupils, more so those in key stage 2, have good access to sporting and choir clubs throughout the year.

Staff appreciate the efforts of leaders to consider their well-being and help them to manage their workloads. Many are proud to work at the school.

Governors understand their roles and responsibilities well. They provide appropriate levels of challenge and support to leaders.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are well trained in safeguarding. They are vigilant in their duties and know how to raise any concerns that they have about a pupil's welfare. Governors also play their part in keeping children safe.

Leaders have robust systems in place to address any safeguarding concerns that arise. They take rapid and effective action to protect pupils. They provide excellent pastoral care to pupils and families. When necessary, leaders and pastoral staff are tenacious in quickly securing external support for those who might be vulnerable.

Pupils are taught about staying safe, including when using the internet.

## What does the school need to do to improve?

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils who struggle to read fluently do not receive effective support to help them improve their knowledge of the sounds letter make. This is because some staff lack the expertise needed to provide carefully targeted support. As a result, some pupils do not become confident readers quickly enough. Leaders should ensure that staff are well equipped to help pupils who fall behind in their reading to catch up quickly.
- In one or two subjects, including from the early years, leaders have not broken down the knowledge that they want pupils to learn into a logical order. Sometimes this means that pupils do not build their knowledge securely over time. Leaders should clarify the small steps of knowledge that they expect teachers to teach, and in what order they should teach it, so that pupils are prepared well for future learning.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	111393
<b>Local authority</b>	Halton
<b>Inspection number</b>	10211970
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	240
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Mike Volynchook
<b>Headteacher</b>	Paul Loughran
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.stmichaelscatholicprimaryschool.co.uk">www.stmichaelscatholicprimaryschool.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	20 February 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- This is a Catholic school. The most recent section 48 inspection took place in February 2016.
- Leaders do not make use of alternative provision.
- There is a before- and after-school club at the school, which the governing body oversees.

## 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.
- Inspectors conducted deep dives in these subjects: early reading, history and mathematics. They met with subject leaders and teachers. They visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work and talked with groups of pupils about their

learning. The lead inspector heard pupils read to a familiar adult.

- Inspectors also considered the curriculum, spoke with pupils about their learning and evaluated their work in some other subjects.
- The lead inspector spoke with a group of governors. He also spoke with a representative of the local authority and a representative of the diocese.
- Inspectors also talked to staff about their workload and well-being.
- Inspectors met with the leaders who are responsible for attendance, behaviour and pupils' personal development.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about safeguarding and their wider experience of school.
- Inspectors looked at a range of policies and documents related to pupils' welfare and education. They observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- Inspectors reviewed leaders' policies and procedures to keep pupils safe. They discussed safeguarding arrangements with leaders and staff. They also checked the school's records of the suitability of staff to work with pupils.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils.
- Inspectors met with parents at the start of the school day and took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses.

### **Inspection team**

David Spruce, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Ruth Moran

His Majesty's Inspector

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