

Inspection of St Michael's Church of England Primary School

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

Inspection dates:	1 and 2 October 2024
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

The headteachers of this school are Sara Williamson and Jo Paskhin. This school is part of the Tenterden Schools Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Stuart Reeves, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Clive Thomas.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils have a love for learning at this warm and friendly school. They demonstrate this through their hard work and enthusiastic discussion of the subjects they learn. The school has high expectations of all. This enables pupils to learn the important skills and knowledge they need.

Starting in early years, pupils learn the school's well-designed routines. This helps them to feel safe and happy. Pupils are polite and move carefully around the school. They are happy and know that staff will deal with any concerns they may have. Pupils also receive high-quality support to manage their emotions. For example, play therapy sessions help pupils to express their worries.

Pupils have ample opportunities to develop their skills and talents. They learn about a wide range of sports in their physical education lessons, these include cricket and handball. Pupils further develop these talents through the high-quality extra-curricular clubs the school offers. They also compete regularly and excel in a variety of sporting competitions. All pupils have the chance to represent the school in house competitions and against other local schools. As a result of this approach, pupils have a strong understanding of the value of exercise and how to stay healthy.

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

The school's ambitious curriculum identifies the important knowledge that pupils must learn and the order in which they need to learn it. This begins in early years, where children learn the foundational knowledge they will need to access the wider curriculum. The school has prioritised phonics and writing as a result of low published outcomes in these subjects. The impact is clear in phonics, where well-trained staff teach the chosen scheme consistently well. However, the teaching of writing is not consistent. Consequently, some pupils do not always learn how to form letters or spell well enough.

The school identifies the needs of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), accurately. As a result, staff understand pupils' barriers to learning and help them to overcome these through effective adaptations and support. The school works well with other agencies to support pupils who require additional help. For example, pupils with communication needs receive regular speech and language therapy.

Teachers have secure subject knowledge and have benefited from high-quality training. They use this to explain learning clearly and to accurately model the important vocabulary that pupils need. Teachers check pupil's understanding in lessons carefully. They address misconceptions quickly.

The school checks pupils' understanding in all subjects. In some, this is very effective. Staff identify gaps in pupils' learning accurately. They design interventions that help them to address gaps in pupils' knowledge swiftly. However, in some subjects, the work to spot pupils who need to catch up is not careful enough. Teachers do not always address gaps in these subjects quickly enough.

Pupils love reading. Teachers select a range of high-quality texts that enhance pupils' learning. Younger pupils read books that are well matched to their phonics knowledge. Staff listen to pupils read frequently and help them to catch up quickly if they fall behind. Weekly 'reading for pleasure' sessions allow pupils to share their favourite novels or read stories that teachers recommend. Pupils say this helps them to read widely.

The work that most pupils produce, including those with SEND, shows they are well prepared for their next steps. They have secure mathematical knowledge and read at age-appropriate levels. They develop a clear understanding of the world beyond their community. For example, they can identify the importance of holy books in world religions and how these may help people to live their lives.

The school has prioritised pupils' personal development. They enjoy a range of trips that enrich their learning. For example, they visit the Houses of Parliament when learning about democracy. Pupils learn leadership skills through the varied responsibilities they hold. 'Good Samaritans' represent the school community. They work with leaders to share the views of pupils. All pupils elect team leaders, who work hard to encourage pupils to participate in school competitions. Pupils are proud of these roles.

The school analyses incidents of behaviour rigorously. Incidents are quickly followed up and repeat incidents of poor behaviour are rare. The school tracks pupil absence precisely and speaks to parents and carers promptly. Key staff also offer a range of additional support to help the most vulnerable pupils to attend frequently. Consequently, pupil attendance has improved significantly. Governors and trustees maintain a strong balance of support and challenge. They hold leaders to account well. Staff are positive about the support they receive to manage their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The schools' newly introduced approach to writing is not yet fully embedded. Consequently, it is not having the required impact as the teaching of transcription is not yet consistent. As a result, pupils are not always accurate in letter formation and some older pupils do not spell well enough. The school should ensure that they continue to embed the programme and develop consistency so that all pupils can write accurately and spell important vocabulary correctly.
- In some subjects, the use of assessment is not precise enough. It does not consistently identify gaps in learning and inform next steps for teaching accurately. As a result,

some pupils do not catch up with their learning swiftly. The school should ensure that teachers use assessment to spot gaps in learning and to plan support to help pupils catch up quickly.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	143788
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10341829
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	167
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Clive Thomas
CEO of the trust	Stuart Reeves
Headteacher	Sara Williamson and Jo Paskhin
Website	www.stmcep.school
Dates of previous inspection	11 and 12 December 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- St Michael's Church of England Primary School is a Church of England voluntary controlled school. The school's most recent section 48 statutory inspection of Anglican and Methodists Schools took place in June 2023. The school's next section 48 inspection will take place within eight school years.
- The school uses no alternative provision.
- The school manages wraparound breakfast and after-school clubs for pupils.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form

provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024, will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of the school's education provision.
- This is the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The lead inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspection team met with the headteacher as well as with other leaders and staff. The lead inspector met with governors and representatives of the trust. They also held a telephone conversation with a representative from the diocese.
- The inspection team carried out deep dives in the following subjects: reading, mathematics, physical education and religious education. For each deep dive, the inspector held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspection team considered the views of parents and carers through their responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View. The inspectors spoke to staff and pupils during the inspection and took account of staff responses to Ofsted's online staff survey.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Gavin Thomas, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Catherine Hylands

Ofsted Inspector

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