

St Michael's Church of England Primary School

Ashford Road, Tenterden, Kent TN30 6PU

Inspection dates 11–12 November 2015

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	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher leads the school with relentless determination. This has been pivotal in improving teaching and achievement across the school. She has successfully changed the culture in the school so that all staff share her high expectations of how well pupils should achieve.
- The governing body knows the school well and provides good support and challenge. This is helping the school to continually improve.
- Teaching is good. Teachers use the information they have about how well pupils are learning to plan activities which interest and engage them.
- Pupils' achievement has improved since the last inspection. All groups of pupils make good progress.
- Parents are supportive of the headteacher. They are pleased with the improvements in the school since the previous inspection.
- Strong relationships across the school mean that pupils feel confident and safe. Safeguarding arrangements are robust.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare are good. Pupils of all ages are well behaved. They play and work well together.
- Good-quality early years provision means that children make a good start to school life. They are well taught in a nurturing environment and make good progress.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The role of subject leaders is not fully developed to support improvements in teaching.
- Sometimes pupils are not given activities which challenge them to achieve their best.
- Not all teachers consistently follow the school's marking policy.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the role of recently appointed subject leaders so that they play a full part in school improvement.
- Help pupils to make rapid progress by making sure that:
 - teachers provide more difficult work when pupils show that they are ready to move on in their learning
 - all teachers consistently follow the school's marking policy so that pupils respond fully to, and are challenged by, the comments made by teachers on how to improve their work.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Staff value the leadership of the headteacher. They share her high aspirations and ambitious vision for the school.
- Following her appointment, the headteacher quickly identified where teaching needed improving. She has taken effective action, including appointing new staff, to improve the quality of teaching and make sure pupils benefit from a good education. Staff encourage and support each other. As a result, there is a shared sense of purpose and morale is high.
- Leaders are very clear about the school's strengths. Plans for school improvement are sufficiently detailed and prioritise appropriate actions to raise pupils' achievement still further.
- Subject leadership is not well developed. New leaders show enthusiasm and commitment but have not yet had time to support senior leaders to improve teaching and learning.
- Leaders know pupils very well. They make frequent checks on how well pupils are learning and are quick to provide additional help to those who are in danger of falling behind. In this way, leaders make sure that there are equal opportunities for all pupils to do well.
- Teachers have received effective training to improve their practice. They have visited other schools to share good practice. Teachers and teaching assistants are set challenging targets as part of the management of their performance. The pay that teachers receive is tightly linked to how well pupils achieve.
- The leader of the provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is well qualified and experienced. She works successfully with staff to make sure that support is targeted on the individual needs of pupils. Close links with parents, as well as with health and other professionals, all support the good progress that pupils make.
- Leaders make sure that pupils are safe in school. The well-being of pupils is a high priority. A specialist teaching assistant works closely with families to provide extra guidance and support where it is needed. Parents appreciate the help that they receive from the school and say they like being able to talk to staff at the beginning of the school day. In this way, pupils who may have difficulties at home or at school can be quickly identified and supported.
- Leaders work well with parents to support pupils' learning. They make sure that parents can speak to them if they have a concern or question. The parent forum which meets regularly enables parents to keep up to date about what is happening in school and also gives them opportunities to contribute their ideas and suggestions.
- Parents spoken to during the inspection, as well as those who responded to the online questionnaire, were positive about the changes the headteacher has made since the previous inspection. Leaders take account of the views of parents, as evidenced when parents helped to choose the new school uniform. The school provides opportunities for parents to learn about how to help their children at home. Recent information sessions for parents have included how to help with reading, mathematics and developing their child's speaking and listening skills.
- Pupil premium funding is used appropriately. Apart from providing additional support in class, the funds are used to subsidise the cost of school trips and school uniform. As a result, these pupils have the same opportunities in school as their peers and achieve well.
- Additional funding for primary physical education and the sport premium is used well to increase pupils' participation in a range of physical activities. Pupils benefit from taking part in a variety of different sports including gymnastics, golf and tennis. Pupils also compete in an increasing number of inter-school competitions, for example in football and netball.
- Pupils benefit from a broad, balanced and interesting curriculum. Termly topics link different subjects together to make learning meaningful for pupils. For example, through the topic 'Into the woods', Year 2 pupils learn about living things, look at maps to find woods in the United Kingdom and visit local woods. Leaders have introduced more clubs and most pupils attend at least one. As well as sports clubs, other clubs include a gardening club, where pupils grow a selection of flowers, fruits and vegetables, a homework club and a choir. These opportunities promote pupils' good personal development and achievement. They also promote pupils' enjoyment of learning.
- Assemblies are used well to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. During the inspection, pupils showed respect by being silent to remember the war dead on Remembrance Day.

Assemblies are used effectively to reinforce the school's values of the 'Fruits of the Spirit' which promote love, joy, kindness, peace, self-control and faithfulness. Pupils were involved in establishing these as school values and understand how they can show them in everyday life.

- British values are promoted well. Pupils learn about democracy by voting for school councillors and having a say in school life. Pupils raise money for different charities, including the local hospital. Pupils learn to take responsibility by doing jobs around the school. Pupils take care of the school's chickens, collect the eggs and sell them. Pupils learn about different religions and their celebrations, for example Diwali. These activities help pupils to develop the skills and attitudes needed for life in modern Britain.
- The local authority has provided good support since the previous inspection. Visits twice a term by the adviser have given the headteacher valuable support and guidance. Support has also been provided to the early years provision and the governing body.
- The school makes good use of the links it has with neighbouring schools and those schools within the Tenterden Rural Alliance. These links have helped the school to make the improvements needed.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The review of governance following the previous inspection triggered substantial changes to the work of the governing body.
 - Governors know the school well and have high aspirations for the pupils. They make frequent visits to the school and work closely with school leaders. They check the impact of actions taken to improve the education the school provides. Governors provide a good balance of support and challenge to leaders.
 - Governors know the quality of teaching and make sure that teachers' pay is linked to how well pupils achieve. They understand how their school performs compared to others.
 - Governors make sure that funds are used effectively.
 - The governing body plays a key role in promoting the school. For example, governors work closely with the Parent Teachers Association, the local nursery and the local church to strengthen the school's role in the local community.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The quality of teaching is good. Teachers are enthusiastic and committed to improving their teaching still further.
- Teachers have good relationships with pupils. Teachers use the information they have about pupils to plan lessons which effectively meet their needs. Teachers make sure lessons have a clear purpose and pupils know how to be successful. As a result, pupils' achievement is good in a range of subjects, including English and mathematics.
- While work is usually at the right level of challenge for pupils, occasionally pupils are ready to move on more quickly before the teacher has been able to set them more difficult tasks.
- The teaching of reading is good. Phonics (the sounds that letters make) is taught well and this helps pupils to read new or tricky words. Pupils read in school every day. They practise their reading skills in different subjects and this helps them make good progress.
- Pupils make good, sometimes rapid, progress in their writing. Pupils write for a variety of purposes. They present their work carefully and this reflects the pride they take in their work. When writing, pupils use the prompts that teachers provide, such as word lists, suggestions for how to start a sentence and punctuation guidance. Pupils also use dictionaries and thesauruses to help them.
- The teaching of mathematics has improved markedly since the previous inspection and is now good. Teachers make sure that pupils apply their mathematical knowledge to solve problems and are quick to fill any gaps in pupils' understanding as they emerge.
- While teachers always mark pupils' work, not all teachers consistently follow the school's marking policy. This means that, occasionally, pupils are not given guidance which moves their learning on and they do not always have enough time to respond fully to the comments their teachers make.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils want to do well. Their books reflect their positive attitudes towards learning. They talk with enthusiasm about their school and the opportunities it provides for them. These attitudes make a good contribution to the progress that pupils make.
- Pupils learn about how to deal with their emotions. For example, during the inspection, pupils in Year 1 discussed how they might feel if they were lost, when their class pet rabbit 'disappeared' for a while from its cage. Pupils then went on to learn about how to keep safe and what to do if ever they were lost.
- During the inspection, Year 6 pupils watched a video and enthusiastically discussed the dangers associated with drugs. The teacher gave a strong message about how to avoid peer pressure and pupils devised a drama in which they practised saying 'no' to drugs, alcohol and solvents. Discussions with pupils indicate that these types of activities are showing them how to keep safe. The vast majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire agreed that the school keeps their child safe.
- Pupils understand about the different types of bullying, including cyberbullying. Pupils told inspectors that bullying does not happen in school. School records show that bullying is very rare, but that it is dealt with appropriately when it does occur.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their regular attendance and good punctuality.
- All staff and most parents who responded to the online questionnaire agree that behaviour is good. Pupils agree and school records show that behaviour is typically good.
- Pupils told inspectors they liked the 'Stop it, I don't like it' approach. This gives pupils the confidence to say this to others who might be saying or doing something wrong.
- Pupils work well in lessons. However, occasionally they lose focus when they are not given challenging work soon enough in lessons.

Outcomes for pupils are good

- The proportion of children who reached a good level of development when they left Reception in 2015 was similar to the national average. This represented good progress for these children, several of whom joined Reception with levels of skills and knowledge below those typical for children of their age.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check in 2015 was higher than the national average. Pupils know their sounds and use this understanding well in their reading and writing.
- Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 has improved steadily and in 2015 was above the national average.
- In 2015, attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 was similar to the national average in reading and writing but lower in mathematics. From their different starting points, pupils made rapid progress in writing and good progress in reading. Although this cohort of pupils made good progress in mathematics in Years 5 and 6, weaker teaching of mathematics in Years 3 and 4 slowed their overall progress in Key Stage 2.
- With the improvements in teaching over the past year, and especially since September with the arrival of new teachers, pupils' achievement has improved markedly. Evidence gathered during the inspection from lesson observations, the school's own data and work in pupils' books shows that all groups of pupils now make good, and sometimes rapid, progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils who join the school at times other than at the beginning of Reception receive good support. Other pupils make them welcome and, as a result, they make good progress.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress because of the good support they receive. The gap between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils is closing. Pupils who are most able, as well as those who need to catch up, make good progress. This is because leaders and staff keep a close eye on the progress of pupils and take action straight away to give extra support to those who need it.

Early years provision

is good

- The newly appointed leader of early years is passionate about providing high-quality provision to the school's youngest children. She is already showing good leadership and management of the provision.
- The environment is safe, well organised and provides exciting activities. The role play area builds on the children's visit to the local post office and gives them opportunities to write letters, count stamps and sort envelopes, stamps and string into the correct drawers.
- Children behave well and play cooperatively with each other. They make good progress in developing social skills, such as taking turns. Adults are kind and take good care of the children. As a result, there is a very happy atmosphere where children feel safe and grow in confidence.
- Good links are made with parents. All parents are offered a home visit prior to their child starting school. Children are encouraged to write a diary about their summer holidays and share it with the class at the start of the term. Good transition arrangements, including weekly visits by children in the privately run Nursery on the school's site, help children to settle quickly into school.
- This year, most children have joined Reception with skills similar to those expected for their age. They have already made good progress because adults have taken the time to get to know the children's individual needs and plan activities which interest and motivate them.
- Phonics is well taught. Children enjoy the games which help them to remember the letter sounds and most are able to form some letters correctly.
- Teaching in the early years is good. Any additional funding is used well so that disadvantaged children do as well as their peers. Adults observe children carefully and skilful questioning helps develop children's knowledge, skills and understanding so that they are well prepared for Year 1.

School details

Unique reference number	118670
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10005779

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	150
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Paul Chapman
Headteacher	Mrs Sara Williamson
Telephone number	01580 763210
Website	www.st-michaels-tenterden.kent.sch.uk
Email address	head@st-michaels-tenterden.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	17–18 July 2013

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school. Children in Reception attend full time.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium, which is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after, is slightly below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average.
- A higher than average proportion of pupils join the school at times other than at the beginning of the Reception Year.
- The school meets the current floor standards, which set the government's minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- There is a privately run nursery on site which is subject to a separate inspection.
- There have been several staff changes since the previous inspection. Three new teachers joined in September and another teacher is due to join in January. The deputy headteacher was promoted to headteacher in March 2015, following a period as acting headteacher. The new deputy headteacher was also promoted from within the school. Her post was made permanent in September 2015.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed a range of learning activities. These included 13 lessons, of which five were jointly observed with senior leaders. An inspector listened to several pupils read and attended a school assembly. Inspectors looked closely at pupils' work for the current year.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils informally throughout the inspection. Meetings were held with senior leaders, representatives from the governing body and a group of teaching assistants. A meeting was held with the local authority representative.
- Inspectors took account of 44 responses to the online survey, Parent View. An inspector also met with parents at the start of the school day to gather their views.
- A range of school documentation was scrutinised, including the school's own information about how well pupils are doing, the school's checks on the quality of teaching, the school development plan and records relating to behaviour and attendance.
- A review of safeguarding records and procedures was also carried out.

Inspection team

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Ofsted Inspector

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