

# St Michael's Nursery and Infant School

Station Road, Workington, Cumbria, CA14 2UY

**Inspection dates** 20–21 January 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- St Michael's is an extremely caring school community where staff go to great lengths to support pupils and their families.
- From their typically low starting points, learning gets off to a good start in the early years. Children are encouraged to learn a raft of new skills and develop a desire for learning.
- Throughout their time at the school, pupils make good progress in their personal development and academic achievement. In 2014, the standards of attainment reached at the end of Year 2 were much higher than average.
- Pupils who are disadvantaged make at least the same good progress as other pupils in the school, as do those with special educational needs.
- Teaching is good. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to provide a good level of support to pupils with any additional needs.
- Attendance has improved and is now average.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They learn to respect each other and the adults around them. Pupils settle quickly to their work and enjoy their learning.
- The school has exceptionally strong links with families and external agencies. This ensures that they all work extremely well together to provide support for those pupils whose circumstances might put them at risk. As a result, pupils say they feel very safe.
- The dedicated headteacher is highly ambitious for every pupil. She has gained the full confidence and support of all staff. Together, they are a strong team who share the ambition to ensure pupils reach their full potential both in their personal development and academic achievement.
- School leaders, including governors, have maintained pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching through a period of significant turbulence. The school continues to improve.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Children in the early years do not always have enough opportunities to reinforce their learning of letters and the sounds they make when they learn outdoors.
- Pupils sometimes do not pronounce words correctly and this reflects in errors in grammar and spelling in their writing.
- Middle leaders with whole-school responsibility do not consistently check on the quality of marking in books, particularly in Key Stage 1.
- Some parents are not yet fully engaged in supporting children's learning beyond school.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in lessons taught by teachers and sessions led by teaching assistants. Some of these were observed jointly with the headteacher. The inspector also listened to pupils read.
- Discussions were held with school staff, groups of pupils, the headteacher, governors and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including safeguarding documents, the school's procedures for gaining an accurate view of its own performance, development plans, records of pupils' standards and progress, documents relating to attendance and behaviour, and pupils' work in their books.
- There were not enough parental responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) to generate a report. However, the inspector met informally with several parents as they brought their children to school and took into account the schools' own parental and children's surveys. The 18 responses to the inspection questionnaire for staff were also reviewed.

## Inspection team

Naomi Taylor, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- St Michael's is smaller than the average sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, those supported by the pupil premium, is much higher than that found nationally. The pupil premium is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is much higher than that found nationally. Increasingly, pupils join the school other than at the usual times.
- Although almost all pupils are from a White British heritage, there are a few pupils who speak English as an additional language. There are a few who are from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The early years provision is part time in the nursery and full time in the Reception class.
- The school runs a pre-school club.
- In 2014, the school was awarded the Bronze School Games kite mark.
- Since September 2014, there has been extensive building work taking place in school, which has led to pupils being taught in areas other than their own classrooms.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been higher than usual changes in staff due to maternity leave.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching even further so that it is outstanding, in order to raise pupils' achievement further, particularly in writing, by:
  - taking every opportunity to encourage pupils to use correct grammar and pronounce words accurately when they are speaking in order to help them improve their grammar and spelling when they are writing
  - increasing the opportunities in the early years to reinforce the learning of letters and the sounds they make when children are learning outdoors.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management further by:
  - developing the role of middle leaders with whole-school responsibility in checking the quality of marking in Key Stage 1 and measuring how effectively pupils are responding when teachers correct their work so that pupils can learn from their errors
  - continuing to develop opportunities for parents to build their confidence in how they can support their children's learning beyond school and ensure they always arrive to school on time.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- The inspirational headteacher is whole-heartedly driven to ensure that pupils get the best possible start to their school life. She is, quite rightly, very highly regarded by all staff, parents and pupils. Several parents told the inspector of how they travel from beyond the immediate area to enrol their children at St Michael's. Some talked about how their children have blossomed here having struggled in other schools.
- Priorities are clearly stated in the school's improvement plan and the school's own view of its effectiveness is both realistic and rigorous. This is because school leaders effectively check on the quality of learning and teaching in the school and have a clear view of how they can continue to raise standards.
- The headteacher does not accept teaching which is less than good. Teachers are well supported to improve the quality of their teaching, particularly through staff appraisal and the training they receive. When this support does not improve teaching, action is taken. Staff work in partnership with other schools to continually improve their practice. This is having a positive impact, such as, on the way in which reading is taught. The local authority judges the school to be effective and that it works well in partnership with other schools, it therefore only provides minimal support.
- Middle leaders are quickly growing in confidence and developing their skills in checking the quality of teaching and pupils' progress in their areas of responsibility. However, they are not always meticulous enough in working with class teachers to ensure that when pupils are taught by those who are not their regular class teacher, pupils' progress is swift enough. They are yet to ensure that the quality of marking in Key Stage 1 is consistently good so that pupils always correct their work and learn from mistakes.
- Pupils' progress is monitored regularly. Any differences in the progress of the different groups of pupils, such as disadvantaged pupils, those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language, are effectively closed as they progress through the school. The pupil premium funding is used very effectively to help disadvantaged pupils. Pupils with additional needs, including the most-and least-able are identified quickly and supported through intervention activities that are closely matched to learning needs. This contributes to the school's success in promoting equality of opportunity for all.
- The curriculum meets the needs of all pupils and it is made more exciting by the range of trips and visitors to school that provide pupils with memorable experiences. For example, older pupils are already excited about and being prepared for a residential trip to an outdoor centre in Northumberland. This trip is aimed at providing new challenges for pupils and broadening their horizons.
- The school effectively promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils have a well-developed understanding of British values, as seen in Key Stage 1 work last term in relation to their understanding of Armistice Day. Pupils are able to make comparisons of religions and cultures which are different from their own. For example, when pupils explored the Hindu Festival of Light, they engaged in the practice of yoga. This kind of experience helps to foster good relations and tackle discrimination and prepares them well for life in modern Britain.
- The school successfully promotes exercise and healthy living. The primary school sport funding is used to provide a specialist sports coach who delivers the PE curriculum throughout school. It also provides specialist coaches for sports including cricket, multi-skills and tennis. This allows pupils to participate in a wider range of sports and is having a positive impact on their health and well-being. Specialist coaches also work with staff to develop their skills, so that sporting activities are taught more effectively. These coaches also act as male role models and some pupils have been inspired to join local sports clubs.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors are highly committed to and supportive of the school. They attend training so they have the knowledge and skills needed to hold school leaders to account for standards at the school. The governing body have an accurate view of pupils' achievement, including by reviewing data showing how well the school performs in comparison to others. They have a good understanding of the quality of teaching because they receive comprehensive reports from the headteacher which they meticulously question and challenge. Governors check that systems to manage staff performance, including tackling any underperformance in teaching, are implemented and that pay reflects how effective teachers are. They also ensure the pupil premium funding is used to support those pupils for whom it is intended and spending has a positive impact on eligible pupils. Governors make sure that statutory requirements, including those for safeguarding pupils, are met. Arrangements to keep pupils and staff safe are effective and the budget is prudently spent.

**The behaviour and safety of pupils are good****Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well in lessons, around school and at lunchtimes and break times. This is a view shared by staff, parents and pupils. From an early age, children learn to respect each other and the adults around them. However, some children need the incentives of rewards for choosing appropriate behaviours, as this is not yet second nature.
- Several parents told the inspector how much their children's behaviour has improved here, having previously struggled at other schools. Parents acknowledge how much they appreciate the support they receive to ensure good behaviour continues in the home.
- Pupils really value being trusted to take on the range of responsibilities available to them. For example, the older pupils take turns in being playground buddies and sensibly distribute and collect equipment at the start and end of break times.
- Members of the school council are elected annually and they are helped in organising fundraising activities for those less fortunate than themselves. They take pride in their work and show consideration for others.
- There are generations of families who have attended this school and a growing number of pupils who have come from overseas. They all get on well together and are happy to come to school.

**Safety**

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- There are exceptionally strong links with professional agencies beyond school which contribute to supporting pupils and their families who may be at risk of being vulnerable. All staff, volunteers and governors go the extra mile in ensuring pupils develop their capacity to cope with changes in family circumstances.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of different types of bullying but are adamant that it just does not happen at school. They are aware of how to keep safe when using the internet both in school and at home.
- The butterfly room provides a sanctuary for pupils who need to share their concerns and build their resilience to changing circumstances. Such nurturing is highly effective.
- The police community support officer works very closely with pupils to raise awareness of 'stranger danger', and safety when near water, fireworks and roads. This helps pupils to stay safe in their local community.
- Attendance has improved and is now broadly average. The school works closely with parents to help them understand the importance of children attending school regularly. Not all parents respond positively to the school's requests to improve pupils' punctuality.

**The quality of teaching is good**

- The headteacher's relentless drive to tackle and eradicate any teaching that requires improvement has successfully raised the quality of teaching. Pupils make good progress because of the good quality of teaching across the school. This is confirmed by evidence of teaching observed during the inspection, work seen in pupils' books and through the checks made by school leaders.
- Staff provide good support for disadvantaged pupils, those who have special educational needs, those at the early stages of learning English and those joining school other than at the usual times. Highly-skilled teaching assistants and volunteers provide tailored activities for pupils.
- From an early age, children develop a love of books. This was seen at the start of the day in the Nursery class when children, after being helped by parents to find their name and place it in the attendance box, quietly sat down on the carpet and chose a book to read. This gave a very calm start to the school day and helped children to settle quickly. Staff take the Nursery children to enrol at the local library where they change their books each half term and develop reading for pleasure.
- Pupils who read with the inspector demonstrated the good impact of the teaching of phonics (matching letters to the sounds that they make). Pupils are encouraged to use these skills to work out unfamiliar words and even surprised themselves when they persevered to work out the word 'abracadabra.' Additional training for staff, including visits to other schools to observe best practice in the teaching of phonics has led to better teaching. Even so, in the early years opportunities to reinforce the learning of letters and the sounds they make as they play and learn outdoors are still sometimes overlooked. The

progress of those who read to adults at home is quicker than those who do not.

- Effective teaching of mathematics ensures that pupils make good progress. Learning is often practical and active and this brings learning alive and makes it fun. For example, Year 1 pupils had to work out the ratio of shoe sizes for their class so that pumps could be ordered. They learnt how to measure ratios and then illustrate them on a bar chart. New resources have been purchased to speed up progress in mathematics even further. However, there are some examples in pupils' books in Key Stage 1 where teachers' marking has identified errors but which have not subsequently been corrected. This means that pupils do not always learn from their mistakes.
- Since the previous inspection, the gap between the progress that boys make compared to girls in writing has closed. Boys are now given more scope in terms of finding aspects within a topic that capture their imaginations and this inspires their writing. For example, a recent visit to a castle included being locked in a dungeon. Key Stage 1 boys talked animatedly about this experience and how it motivated them to write.
- Pupils do not always pronounce or spell words correctly. For example, the word 'with' is sometimes written as 'wif.' Staff do not always correct pupils' inaccurate use of grammar when they are talking. This leads to spelling and grammatical errors when writing.

### The achievement of pupils

is good

- Although children make good progress in the early years, the majority start in Year 1 with skills lower than those typically found. Good progress continues through Key Stage 1.
- Since the previous inspection, standards at the end of Key Stage 1 have fluctuated. Following a dip in standards in 2013, in 2014 pupils reached standards in reading and mathematics that were significantly higher than average. Standards in writing were just above the national average. All pupils in Year 2 in 2014 reached the expected Level 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. This represents good achievement from their previous lower starting points.
- The achievement of disadvantaged pupils has improved and, as a result, they now achieve equally well and sometimes better than other pupils in school. In Year 2 in 2014, for example, disadvantaged pupils made outstanding progress in reading. Although the small numbers of disadvantaged pupils in each year group can make it difficult to make accurate statistical comparisons between their attainment and that of others in the school or with other pupils nationally, their generally above average levels of attainment means that the standards they achieve compare favourably with others. This reflects the school's effective use of the pupil premium.
- Pupils who join the school other than at the usual times often have skills which are lower than their classmates. Some arrive with severe behavioural difficulties. Whatever their circumstances, staff ensure that pupils make great strides in their personal development and academic achievement. This was evident in class, from data showing pupils' progress and from talking to parents.
- Unavoidable changes in staffing and disruptions because of building work have led to some inconsistencies in the progress of some pupils. Variability in the quality of marking, for example, means that pupils do not always correct their work in order to learn from their mistakes. Achievement in writing, particularly their grammar and spelling skills, is sometimes held back because opportunities to encourage pupils to use these skills correctly when they write are sometimes overlooked.
- The school supports pupils, including those with special educational needs and those in the very early stages of learning English, to develop their speech, language and communication skills so they are prepared for the next stage in their learning. The school's information showing pupils' progress and work seen in pupils' books shows that pupils develop their skills in reading, writing and mathematics more rapidly as they move up through the school. This is because their language and communication skills are improving quickly at the same time. As a result, pupils are well equipped with the skills they need when they transfer to junior school.
- A love of reading is effectively encouraged. Even the very youngest children are encouraged to borrow books from the school's library. They quickly become familiar with books and understand the pleasure that reading them can bring.
- The proportion of Year 1 pupils reaching the required standard in the national screening check of pupils' ability to match letters to the sounds that they make varies from year to year. In 2014, it was much lower than in 2013 and much lower than the 2014 national average. Leaders are already taking steps to further develop the teaching of letters and their sounds, including in the early years. Reading for pleasure is becoming increasingly well embedded from the time children start school. Even so, those who do not read regularly to an adult at home do not make as much progress as those who do.
- The most able pupils achieve well overall. A much higher than average proportion of pupils reached the

higher Level 3 in reading in Year 2 in 2014 and an average proportion did so in mathematics. Given pupils' generally much lower than average starting points, this represents a good achievement for the school's brightest pupils.

### The early years provision

is good

- Good teaching results in children being supported to make good progress particularly in developing their speaking and listening, and personal and social skills. All groups of children develop good attitudes towards learning in preparation for Year 1. However, because children's starting points are often significantly lower than those typically found, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of Reception is lower than the proportion that do so nationally. The majority of pupils start Key Stage 1 with reading and writing skills that are not yet at the level expected.
- An increasing number of children are joining the school with special educational needs. Children's skills and abilities are assessed quickly. External agencies work well with school staff to meet any additional needs and help these children to make good progress.
- There are children who, prior to their starting at St Michael's, have had limited experiences outside the home. Several are still using nappies and drinking from bottles rather than cups when they join the Nursery. Some children eat their lunch separately from other children while they learn to use cutlery and develop acceptable behaviour towards others.
- Effective communication with parents is important to staff. Staff visit parents and children in their own home before they start in school, so that they can all get to know each other. Parents are able to speak with staff at the start and end of each day. Everyone shares relevant information to promote good learning.
- The 'learning journeys', which are records of a child's achievements, are informative for parents and staff. Some parents record 'star moments' on the gold stars provided by school to celebrate personal and academic achievements seen outside school. Staff take photographs of achievements in school and together this builds up a complete picture of progress.
- Staff provide advice to parents on how they can support their children at home and this helps children's learning and supports them to achieve well. However, some parents lack confidence in doing so. For example, several parents do not regularly listen to their children read at home.
- The early years is generally well resourced both indoors and out. The outdoor area for the Reception children ensures learning and especially children's physical skills develop at a good rate. Children were eager to investigate and explore the 'mud kitchen'. Opportunities to develop children's number skills outdoors are good, however, activities in which children can develop and reinforce their understanding of letters and the sounds they make, are not as well developed. Families have collected plastic bottles which have been used to make a greenhouse where children plant seeds and grow plants. First-hand experiences like this make learning real and fun.
- Pupils learn to follow routines in early years. They understand the need to use aprons when painting and playing with water. They play happily together, learning to share equipment and take responsibility for tidying up the areas they have been using. The development of these personal skills ensures that by the time they join Year 1, they have the right attitudes towards learning and behave well.
- Leadership and management of the early years are having a good impact on improving provision. Leaders ensure that all staff are diligent in keeping children safe and secure. The outdoor areas are well supervised.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	112143
<b>Local authority</b>	Cumbria
<b>Inspection number</b>	453355

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	88
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Ann Hymers
<b>Headteacher</b>	Anne Tait
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	25 January 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01900 608111
<b>Fax number</b>	Not applicable
<b>Email address</b>	admin@smhwkt.cumbria.sch.uk

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