

Inspection of St Michael's CofE Primary School, Howe Bridge

Leigh Road, Atherton, Manchester, Lancashire M46 0PA

Inspection dates: 31 October and 1 November 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

This school was last inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 14 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between graded inspections under section 5 of the Act. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy at St Michael's CofE Primary School. They support and encourage each other with care and sensitivity. Pupils told inspectors that everyone is welcome at this school.

Pupils said that staff make sure that they are safe. They told inspectors that staff help them if they are upset or worried. Staff also respond well when pupils need additional support with their learning. This is particularly true when pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

The school expects all pupils to achieve well. It provides an effective curriculum to enable this aspiration to be realised. For example, pupils become accomplished readers. They appreciate how this enhances their learning in other subjects.

Children settle well in the early years. They grow in independence and confidence. Older pupils make a valuable contribution to the smooth running of the school. For example, Year 6 pupils make sure that younger pupils enjoy their breaktimes by supporting them in the dining room and on the playground.

Pupils are respectful, polite and courteous. They understand how this helps everyone to enjoy being at school. Pupils are well behaved in class and as they move around the building. They work well together during lessons.

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

The school provides a well-thought-out and carefully structured curriculum for pupils. This enables pupils to build up a secure body of knowledge as they progress from the early years to Year 6. Consequently, pupils are well prepared for their next stages of education.

Teachers are clear about the key information that pupils should learn. Skilled teachers deliver the curriculum with confidence. They make sure that they design learning that supports pupils to build securely on what they already know.

Teachers ensure that they address any misconceptions or gaps in learning that pupils may have. Pupils benefit from sharply focused additional support when this is needed. This is particularly effective in reading. Pupils achieve well as a result.

Reading is at the heart of the curriculum. The school provides a wide range of high-quality texts for pupils to read. These texts capture pupils' interests and support their learning. Pupils said that they value opportunities to read during the school day. They take pleasure in teachers or other adults sharing stories or talking about their favourite authors with them.

Children start to learn how to use phonics to read words as soon as they begin in the Reception Year. Pupils practise and apply their phonics knowledge to read

unfamiliar words as they progress through the school. Expert staff identify and support pupils who have fallen behind with their phonics knowledge to catch up quickly. Pupils develop fluency and accuracy in their reading.

Pupils learn to use their phonics knowledge to spell words accurately in their writing. However, for some pupils in key stage 1, this process is unnecessarily difficult. This is because some children in the early years do not learn how to correctly form the letters of the sounds that they have learned. From time to time, this hinders these pupils in applying their phonics knowledge to their writing as well as they could.

Pupils listen well to their teachers and to each other during lessons. Their learning is rarely disturbed. This enables pupils to focus and further extend their knowledge.

The school ensures that teachers know how to identify the additional needs of pupils with SEND. Teachers make sure that these pupils receive carefully tailored support. This enables pupils with SEND to benefit from the same curriculum as their classmates. Consequently, pupils with SEND grow in confidence and achieve well. They are enabled to take a full part in the wider life of the school.

The school provides a range of high-quality opportunities and resources to support pupils' broader development. Pupils learn about how diverse the world is. For example, they learn about different kinds of families or the barriers that some people with disabilities overcome. However, the school does not provide sufficient clarity for teachers about what pupils should learn about cultural diversity. As a result, pupils do not build up a secure understanding of different cultures beyond their own. This means that pupils are not as well prepared as they should be to live in Britain's culturally diverse society.

Governors and other leaders work closely with staff to make sure that any changes that are made at the school do not create additional workload. Leaders and governors actively seek out, and respond to, the views of staff, parents, carers and pupils.

The school works closely with parents. Parents feel well informed about how to support their children's learning.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school does not ensure that some children know how to correctly form the letters of the sounds that they have learned by the time they leave the early years. This hinders how well some pupils write their own sentences as they

progress into key stage 1. The school should make sure that teachers support younger pupils to successfully apply their phonics knowledge to their writing.

- The school has not ensured that some teachers know how to build up pupils' understanding and appreciation of a wide range of cultures over time. As a result, some pupils' knowledge of cultures different to their own is limited. The school should clarify the key knowledge about other cultures that pupils should learn.

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	106478
Local authority	Wigan
Inspection number	10242393
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	201
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Debra Wailes
Headteacher	Fiona Quinlivan
Website	www.howebridgestmichaels.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	27 and 28 April 2009, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A new headteacher has been appointed since the previous inspection.
- A new chair of governors has been appointed since the previous inspection.
- The school operates a breakfast club for pupils before school begins.
- The school makes use of one registered alternative provider for pupils.
- The school is part of the Diocese of Manchester. It was last inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 in January 2019. The next section 48 inspection is due by the end of January 2027.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other leaders in the school. An inspector also spoke with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- An inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority. She also spoke with a representative of the diocese.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: 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.
- An inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and music. They spoke with the leaders of these areas of the curriculum. Inspectors also visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work, held discussions with teachers and talked with pupils.
- Inspectors also looked at samples of pupils' work and spoke with pupils about their learning in other subjects.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtimes. They observed pupils' behaviour as they moved around the school. An inspector scrutinised leaders' records of pupils' behaviour.
- An inspector visited the school's breakfast club.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school.
- Inspectors spoke with parents as they brought their children to school.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. Inspectors also considered responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and for pupils.

Inspection team

Claire Cropper, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Joe Dryland

Ofsted Inspector

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