

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: St Michael's Church of England First School

Watery Lane, Minehead, Somerset TA24 5NY

Inspection date:

28 January 2025

Outcome

St Michael's Church of England First School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Richard Smith. This school is part of the Beacon Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the interim chief executive officer, Trudy Danby, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Andy Giles.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a friendly and welcoming school. Pupils understand the school values, which include love, respect, perseverance and appreciation. They know they can rely on staff to help resolve any issues or concerns they may have. As a result, pupils are safe, happy and well looked after.

Pupils behave well. They follow instructions and routines with care. Pupils are kind, helpful and polite. They enjoy positive and productive relationships with staff.

The school offers a wide and varied curriculum. Pupils work hard. They talk about their learning with interest and enthusiasm. Most pupils meet the high expectations that the school has for their achievement.

Pupils are proud of their school. They have plenty of opportunities to develop their talents and interests across a broad range of clubs and activities. Particular favourites include football, cricket and art club. The indoor swimming pool provides pupils with the opportunity to swim regularly, starting in the Reception Year. Consequently, most pupils are capable swimmers by the time they leave the school. Pupils are encouraged to take an active role in the wider community, which includes maintaining close links with a local care home.

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

Since the previous inspection, the school has reviewed its curriculum. It has identified the knowledge that pupils need to learn and remember. This knowledge is carefully sequenced, which means that in most subjects, pupils build on what they already know. However, in a few subjects, these changes are still relatively new and not fully embedded. In these subjects, systems to check on what pupils know and can remember are still being developed. Consequently, lessons are not consistently adjusted to address any arising gaps or misconceptions. As a result, pupils are not learning as well in these subjects as they could.

The school is aspirational for all pupils to achieve well and experience success. Key to this is ensuring that children learn to read as soon as they start in the Reception Year. Effective phonics and reading sessions ensure that pupils gain the right knowledge and skills to read with fluency, accuracy and confidence. The books that pupils read match their knowledge well. Staff carefully check the sounds that pupils know. They watch out for pupils who struggle and give them extra support to catch up quickly. As a result, pupils' achievement in reading is strong.

The school ensures that pupils secure fundamental skills in writing and mathematics. Staff give children in the Reception Year lots of opportunities to practise using the sounds that they have been taught in phonics. Children learn how to form their letters correctly and use capital letters and full stops. This helps them to write simple words and sentences accurately. Similarly, in mathematics, teachers model how to use ambitious mathematical vocabulary, and children use these words to explain their ideas. A carefully structured approach to teaching mathematics from the Reception Year lays a strong foundation for children's mathematical understanding.

Staff identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) quickly. Adults support pupils with SEND well. They check that pupils have secured new ideas before moving on. Pupils with SEND immerse themselves in all aspects of school life. They learn the same curriculum as their peers. The school supports pupils with SEND to achieve their full potential.

The school prioritises pupils' high attendance. Leaders carefully track and analyse any absence. They take immediate action if a pupil's attendance starts to decline. As a result, pupils' attendance has improved and is now above the national average. Pupils learn school routines and expectations quickly from the start of the Reception Year. They show positive attitudes to their learning. Across the school, pupils are calm and focused in lessons.

Pupils benefit from a range of opportunities and experiences to develop their character, confidence and resilience. They know how to stay safe and healthy. The school teaches pupils to understand and celebrate differences. However, pupils' knowledge of fundamental British values and a range of world religions is limited. As a result, pupils are not as well prepared for life in modern Britain as they could be.

Governors and trustees support and challenge the school well. They are alert to the challenges staff can face in a small school. The careful consideration they give to staff's workload and well-being ensures that staff feel valued and well supported.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A small number of subject curriculums are not as well developed as others. In these subjects, the school's systems for checking pupils' learning are still developing. Consequently, lessons are not consistently adjusted to address any gaps or misconceptions. As a result, pupils' recall and depth of knowledge is not as strong as it could be. The school needs to ensure that an effective approach to assessment is embedded across all areas of the curriculum.
- Pupils' knowledge of the fundamental British values and of a range of world religions is not secure. As a result, they are not as well prepared for life beyond the local area as they could be. The school should ensure that pupils' experiences of a range of world religions and their understanding of the British values are secure so that they are fully prepared for life in modern Britain.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024, graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged St Michael's Church of England First School to be good for overall effectiveness in June 2019.

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	142819
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10344720
Type of school	First
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	5 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	146
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Andy Giles
CEO of the trust	Trudy Danby
Headteacher	Richard Smith
Website	www.stmichaelsfirstschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	11 and 12 June 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Beacon Education Trust.
- There has been a change in leadership since the previous inspection. The current headteacher started at the school in January 2023.
- The school has a Christian religious character. The school's most recent section 48 inspection took place in March 2023. The school's next section 48 inspection will be within eight school years.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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.
- The inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector also listened to some pupils read.
- The lead inspector held a meeting with those responsible for governance, including a representative from the board of trustees and the interim CEO.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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.
- The lead inspector considered the responses made by parents to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. Responses to the staff survey were also considered.
- Inspectors spent time with pupils at lunchtimes and breaktimes to observe their behaviour and speak to them about school life.

Inspection team

Neil Swait, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Andrew Evans

Ofsted Inspector

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