

Inspection of St Michael's Community Academy

Holland Street, Crewe, Cheshire CW1 3SL

Inspection dates: 22–23 October 2019

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Early years provision

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a warm, welcoming school where pupils feel well looked after and safe. Leaders and staff work closely as a team and have pupils' best interests at heart. They have high expectations and ensure that every pupil studies the full range of national curriculum subjects. They also take great care over pupils' physical and mental health. Pupils enjoy taking part in the impressive range of sporting and outdoor activities available. They also enjoy visiting places of interest and working with artists and other visitors to the school.

Pupils behave well. They show respect for each other and for adults. In lessons, pupils of all ages work with great enthusiasm and concentration. Pupils say there is some bullying, but this is usually sorted out quickly. Attendance has improved and pupils arrive at school on time.

The provision for early years is exemplary. The youngest children make great strides in their learning. Seven-year-olds also do as well as other pupils nationally. For the last two years, eleven-year-olds have not done nearly as well as they should.

Parents and carers are pleased with the school. They say that staff are approachable and helpful and that their children enjoy coming to school.

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

Reading is central to the school's work. Nursery children spend considerable time looking at and talking about books. In the Reception Year, children quickly move on to reading simple words and sentences. The books they read in school and at home closely match the sounds they learn. Parents receive advice on how to read with their children. Most pupils reach the expected standard in the national phonics screening check by the end of Year 1. Those who fall behind have extra help to catch up.

Teachers read regularly to pupils, bringing stories vividly to life. Pupils read a wide range of fiction, non-fiction and poetry. They talk knowledgeably and enthusiastically about their favourite authors and books. However, their grasp of grammar and punctuation is not good enough. This is because their learning in the past has not set them up well to remember this aspect of English.

Teachers are well trained and have good subject knowledge. They plan lessons carefully, so that pupils learn more and remember more. In history, pupils understand the sequence of events over time. In physical education (PE), they build on existing skills to perform more complex moves. In art, they use sketch books to develop ideas for drawings. In science, they apply their knowledge of different types of light rays to new experiments. The curriculum meets the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and

disadvantaged pupils. They take a full part in lessons.

Pupils contribute to running the school as play leaders, safety officers and council members. They also collect for charities. They study the major world religions and know about life in modern Britain. They learn to respect different lifestyles. Even the youngest show great determination and perseverance in their learning.

Leaders work well together. They have a shared vision for giving pupils a good education. The trustees and governors hold leaders appropriately to account. Leaders know what improvements need to be made and have clear plans to tackle weaknesses. They have brought about major improvements in pupils' behaviour and attendance. They are also making a positive difference to pupils' outcomes. For example, the proportion of early years children reaching a good level of development has gone up at a faster rate than elsewhere in the country.

For two years, outcomes for 11-year-olds were far too low. Lower down the school, those pupils had lots of different teachers, often temporary teachers, for short periods of time. This led to an uneven delivery of the English and mathematics curriculum, which stopped some pupils from learning as well as they should. The behaviour of some pupils made it difficult for others to learn. Staffing is now stable and pupils behave well. Steps have been taken to make sure that they are taught English and mathematics in a logical order. For example, a new mathematics programme is in place which helps teachers to carefully organise pupils' learning. Even so, the disruption to learning in the past has led to gaps in pupils' knowledge. This is especially true of pupils in Year 6.

Staff say they enjoy working at the school. They appreciate how much leaders care for their well-being.

Early years staff have created a unique environment where children work with tremendous enthusiasm on a wide range of exciting activities in very safe, attractive surroundings. Two-year-olds were enthralled as they looked through a story book together and reacted in mock horror when a witch appeared. Other children in the early years were totally absorbed as they counted and compared groups of objects of different colours, adding and taking away to challenge each other. They spoke confidently and politely, using a wide, interesting vocabulary. Many children often start school with skills and knowledge that are below those typical for their age. The time they spend in early years sets them up well for the future. They end up achieving in line with or better than the national averages.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All the staff know the pupils well and take great care of them. They know how to spot possible signs of abuse and what to do if they have any concerns about a pupil. The school works very closely with a range of services to give extra support to pupils or families who need it. Leaders check very carefully on the suitability of

adults to work with children and pupils. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations, including when using the internet and social media. They told inspectors that they feel happy and safe at school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In the last two years, the attainment and progress of 11-year-olds have been extremely low. Leaders need to ensure that teachers deliver the planned curriculum in English and mathematics so that, in Years 5 and 6 particularly, pupils learn more and remember more and that gaps in their knowledge are eradicated.
- Pupils in Year 6 have an insecure understanding of grammar and punctuation. This is mainly because they have difficulty remembering what they have learned. Leaders need to ensure that pupils are given frequent opportunities to apply and consolidate their understanding in these areas.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	140175
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10087923
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	432
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Johnny Anderson
Principal	David Jobling, executive principal
Headteacher	Rosemarie Patrick, head of school
Website	www.stmichaelscommunityacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	3–4 June 2015

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, the school has extended its Nursery provision to include two-year-old children.
- In the past, there have been frequent changes of teachers in the school. Staffing is now stable.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- During this inspection, we met with the principal, the head of school and senior leaders.
- We held meetings with teachers, support staff and subject leaders.
- The lead inspector met with three governors, including the chair of the local governing board. He also spoke to the chief executive officer of the trust and two other trustees.

- We visited lessons in each key stage. We spoke to pupils from each key stage and viewed examples of their work. We spoke to pupils about behaviour and expectations in the school and observed behaviour around the school and in lessons.
- We considered the 24 responses to Ofsted Parent View and the 10 responses to the staff survey. The lead inspector spoke to parents of pupils from each year group as they brought their children to school.
- We examined records in relation to safeguarding.
- As part of this inspection, we considered carefully how phonics and early reading are taught at the school. We also considered how the curriculum is planned in mathematics, science, history and geography, art, physical education and sport. During these activities we met with subject leaders and visited samples of lessons. We spoke to the teachers about the lessons they had taught and to the pupils about their learning. We also examined examples of pupils' books and listened to pupils read.

Inspection team

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