

# St Michael's Primary School and Nursery, Colchester

Camulodunum Way, Berechurch Hall Road, Colchester, CO2 9RA

**Inspection dates** 30 June–1 July 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	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.

- The headteacher has made sure that all staff share her ambitions for the school and how they are to be achieved. This has led to the considerable improvements seen in teaching and the pupils' achievement since the last inspection.
- Governors have participated fully in the school's journey of improvement. They support the school closely in its actions and check very carefully that their targets are being met.
- Leaders have been, and remain, sharply focused on improving teaching. They are helped in this by expert support from consultants from the local authority.
- The new team of subject leaders has rapidly become effective and is now contributing significantly to the drive to improve teaching.
- Teaching is now good and leading to pupils making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The teaching of phonics (the sounds made by letters) has improved considerably, along with the pupils' ability to apply their phonics skills when reading.
- Improvements to provision in the early years have made classrooms more interesting places in which to learn. Children enjoy learning through play and investigating the resources available. As a result, they make good progress.
- The pupils behave well and are courteous and well mannered. They are kind towards each other and help newcomers to settle in quickly.
- Most pupils are keen to do well and they take pride in their work. Their hard work contributes to their good progress.
- Pupils feel safe in school and say they are confident that staff do all they can to look after them. Great care is taken to support pupils, particularly when they first join the school.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always challenge the pupils to think through and solve problems. At times, this slows their learning.
- Children in the early years do not have enough opportunity to develop and extend their writing skills.
- Not all teachers follow the school's procedures for marking pupils' work; they do not give pupils clear enough guidance on how to eliminate mistakes and improve their work.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in 20 lessons, four of which were visited with the headteacher. They looked at work in pupils' books from the current academic year.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, school staff, and with the Chair and three other members of the Governing Body. A meeting was also held with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 33 responses to Ofsted's online Parent View questionnaire. They also met informally with parents at the start of the school day and looked at the results of surveys undertaken by the school over the last year.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at the school's own information on pupils' current progress, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors also took account of the 16 responses to the staff questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Martin Beale, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Gayle Jenkins

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The Nursery caters for 25 children on a part-time basis in the morning only. Children attend the one Reception class full time.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by funding through the pupil premium is well below average. This is additional government funding which, in this school, supports pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals.
- Over two-fifths of the pupils are from military families.
- The proportion of pupils who join or leave partway through their primary education is much higher than in most primary schools.
- The school is part of the Colchester Consortium of schools and works in partnership with The Stanway Federation.
- The school hosts privately run daily breakfast and after-school clubs. These are inspected separately.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that teachers:
  - extend the pupils' learning by providing them with opportunities to think more deeply about ideas and solve problems themselves
  - use their marking to help pupils improve their work more rapidly.
- Provide more opportunities for children in the early years to develop, apply and extend their writing skills.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- The school's performance has improved greatly since its last inspection. The headteacher has established a clear direction for the school and a culture in which teaching is improving and good behaviour flourishes. Careful evaluation of the school's work enables leaders to identify what needs to be done to improve pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching.
- The new team of subject leaders has quickly made its mark, as it encourages teachers to try out new ideas. Leaders' expertise has been extended through training within the consortium. Leaders have developed a good understanding of what good teaching looks like. They rigorously check the quality of teaching and the performance of each teacher. The headteacher puts in place individual support and training to enable teachers to meet challenging targets that are tightly linked to salary.
- Along with federation leaders, the local authority has played a prominent role in supporting the school in its drive to improve. Regular reviews to check progress of actions have acted as milestones on the school's journey. Expert support from consultants has led to improvements in teaching phonics and better use of the outside area in the early years.
- The school works tirelessly to identify the specific learning needs of individual pupils and eliminate potential barriers to learning. Pupil premium funding is used well to support eligible pupils, and staff work closely with parents, particularly to ensure that their children settle in quickly when they join the school. The school meets its responsibilities well to promote equality of opportunity and tackle discrimination.
- The curriculum focuses well on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, while at the same time engaging pupils' interest by linking learning in different subjects through topics. Every opportunity is taken to promote the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school's core values, which permeate the life of the school, help pupils to develop a good understanding of fundamental British values. Pupils learn tolerance and mutual respect, and understand the features of democracy, the rule of law and individual liberty.
- The school uses the sports premium well to help pupils develop healthy lifestyles and enjoy sport. An increased number of pupils now participate in sports competitions, both in and out of school. Working with specialists is extending teachers' expertise and enables them to provide high-quality teaching in physical education.
- Safeguarding procedures are robust, and policies and procedures are effective. Staff are well trained and vigilant in identifying and monitoring any concerns.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors have high aspirations for the school and set a high level of challenge for the school's leaders through the targets they set. They monitor performance rigorously to ensure that the school's aims are being met. They have high levels of expertise, particularly in their understanding of assessment data. Governors challenge school leaders over the quality of teaching and are fully aware of the action being taken to support teachers to improve. They make sure that pupils are making good progress before their teachers are rewarded with any increase in salary. They manage the school budget effectively. They are fully involved in deciding about how the pupil premium is used and checking its impact.

### The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

#### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Parents and pupils agree that the school works successfully to improve behaviour. Pupils move sensibly around the school and show good manners and consideration for others. They play happily together at break and lunchtime. Pupils are polite, friendly and show respect for adults and visitors.

- Pupils also make sure they welcome newcomers to the school and help them to settle in as quickly as possible.
- Most pupils' attitudes to learning are good. Pupils respond well to adults' instructions, and lessons flow smoothly and uninterrupted. Pupils readily discuss ideas with a partner and participate constructively in group activities by sharing tasks sensibly. Most pupils are very enthusiastic about what they are doing, although a small number of pupils waste time occasionally talking about matters unrelated to learning.
- The school has robust systems in place to check up on any absences quickly. Patterns of attendance are carefully analysed to identify where action might be needed. As a result, attendance has risen sharply to above average, and persistent absence has fallen.

### Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Parents are very happy with the care the school takes for their children. Pupils feel safe in school and know there is always someone available if ever they need support to resolve a problem.
- Pupils learn how to look after themselves, such as through the weekly focus on internet safety in computing lessons. They are taught how to keep themselves safe when using the roads, particularly when cycling. This helps to make pupils aware of dangers they might come across and how to deal with them.
- Pupils are quite aware of how bullying might be manifested. They say incidents of bullying have decreased and are rare, particularly since the introduction of the 'anti-bullying' team of pupils who are making a big difference in helping to resolve problems.

### The quality of teaching

is good

- Improved teaching is leading to pupils making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. At their most effective, teachers question pupils thoughtfully to draw out their ideas and make them think. They often use discussions with a partner so pupils can share and clarify their thoughts such as when Year 6 pupils devised their own experiment looking at how to slow the decomposition of bread. Teachers adapt subsequent teaching in the light of pupils' responses and use their evaluation of each lesson to adjust planning for the next.
- Support staff working with pupils with acute special educational needs guide their learning sensitively and well. They have developed strong and constructive relationships that give the pupils confidence. They adapt materials and use resources imaginatively to ensure that the pupils concerned learn well and follow similar aspects of subjects as others.
- The teachers set work and use methods which help pupils develop mathematical skills securely and deepen their understanding of number. Where learning is good, teachers provide interesting and challenging opportunities for pupils to apply their skills and extend their reasoning. The more able pupils in Year 2 were set a problem using fractions and were required to develop their own measures of success. This gave them an additional challenge and made them think about the underlying principles involved.
- Good and much-improved phonics teaching is focused on small groups of pupils working at similar levels. Adults follow the structured programme carefully so pupils know what to expect at each stage of a lesson. This keeps them focused and moves their learning on quickly.
- The teaching of basic writing skills and sentence structure is good. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to apply their skills by writing in a range of styles, including in subjects such as science and in their topics.
- Teachers show they have high expectations as they mostly set hard enough work to extend pupils' learning. However, this is not always the case. There are times when teachers and teaching assistants do not challenge pupils to think through problems and how they can be solved or give them enough time to

do so before intervening with methods and answers.

- Leaders have worked closely with teachers to develop their marking so it gives clear guidance about what needs improving and to ensure teachers check that pupils follow the advice they have given. Not all teachers are doing this as effectively as others, so pupils' mistakes are not always swiftly identified and corrected.

### **The achievement of pupils** is good

- The pupils' achievement has improved in reading, writing and mathematics since the school's last inspection. Pupils now make good progress from their starting points, whether they enter in the early years or later. Attainment is broadly average. Newcomers are helped to settle in smoothly and they achieve as well as other pupils.
- Test results at the end of Year 6 fell to below average in reading, writing and mathematics in 2014 but still represented good progress for pupils, from their lower starting points. Teachers' assessments of Year 6 pupils indicate that attainment is higher than in 2014. This improved attainment ensures that most pupils are prepared well for secondary school.
- Results of the phonics screening check for pupils at the end of Year 1 were low in 2014, prompting an urgent review of how phonics skills were being taught. Progress is now good and the proportion of pupils currently in Year 1 reaching at least the expected level has risen considerably. Furthermore, virtually all pupils in Year 2 who did not reach the required level caught up quickly.
- The school uses the pupil premium effectively to support the achievement of eligible pupils. This is leading to them making good progress. The number of disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 last year was too small to comment on their attainment without risk of identifying individual pupils.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make equally as good progress as others. The support they receive is effective, helping these pupils to increase their reading ages in Key Stages 1 and 2, and supporting the speech and language development of children in the early years.
- The progress of the most-able pupils is generally good. Those who reach Level 3 at Key Stage 1 go on to reach Level 5 at Key Stage 2, although few do better.

### **The early years provision** is good

- The effectiveness of early years provision has greatly improved under new and effective leadership and through guidance from the local authority. Teaching is now consistently good, and the outside area is a much more inviting and well-planned area for the children's learning.
- Children now make good progress from their points of entry so their attainment has risen and is broadly average by the time they leave the Reception Year. They are prepared well for Year 1.
- The children's progress in reading and mathematics has increased this year, having been weaker elements in the learning of the previous Reception cohort. Their writing has also improved, but not as strongly. This is because there are not enough opportunities for the children to develop basic skills and extend their writing routinely as they work on other activities.
- The children's behaviour is good in both the Nursery and Reception Years. Many show initiative in following their own lines of enquiry, organising equipment and working collaboratively. They listen carefully to the adults in the setting and respond to their suggestions and questions by trying out different ideas. Children are kept safe, and they feel safe and able to confide in the adults because of the strong and trusting relationships established.

- Teachers and support staff make clear their high expectations of the children. They question carefully and guide them sensitively when children are working on tasks of their own choosing to move their learning forward such as when developing counting skills in the Nursery. They teach key skills such as phonics expertly. The information from on-going assessment is used well to plan activities that reflect each child's interests and to plug any gaps in their learning.

## 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>	114817
<b>Local authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	462102

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>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	214
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Linda Robinson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Gail Burns
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11 July 2013
<b>Telephone number</b>	01206 546412
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