

St Michael's Church of England Primary Academy

South Lawn Terrace, Heavitree, Exeter, EX1 2SN

Inspection dates 09 – 10 July 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Outstanding 1
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils	Outstanding	1
Early years provision	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Since the school became an academy in September 2013, pupils' standards have risen rapidly and consistently. The achievements of all pupils are outstanding, including those who are disadvantaged, as well as disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.
- Children in the early years begin to make very good progress from the moment they start school. Staff skilfully provide children with a vibrant and interesting environment for learning, both indoors and outdoors.
- The headteacher and senior leadership team provide very determined and focused direction. All staff work extremely well together as a team to maintain high standards in all aspects of the school's work.
- The governing body is ambitious for everyone in the school. It regularly checks how well everyone is working. Governors make sure that all resources are used to great effect to help pupils achieve as much as possible. They support school leaders well in ensuring that the quality of teaching is outstanding.
- Behaviour is exemplary in lessons and around school. Pupils are very proud to be at St Michael's and are excellent ambassadors for their academy.
- Teachers plan lessons which capture the interest of their pupils. The teachers' high levels of professionalism, enthusiasm and subject knowledge mean that lessons inspire and challenge all the pupils to learn.
- The curriculum provides a wide variety of learning experiences and opportunities for all age groups. It contributes extremely successfully to the spiritual, moral, cultural and social development of the pupils.
- Pupils say that they feel extremely safe at school. Much is done to promote a family atmosphere and pupils appreciate that they are known very well by all the staff.
- The vast majority of parents and carers who spoke to the inspection team or responded to the online survey expressed a very high degree of confidence and trust in the academy and in the teachers.
- Teachers carefully check their pupils work. However, the most-able in Key Stage 1 do not always act upon suggestions made by their teacher.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons and part lessons in every class (with the exception of Year 4 who were on a residential visit) and saw the work of all teachers.
- In addition, inspectors listened to pupils read, talked to them about their learning and reviewed their written work.
- Meetings were held with different groups of people involved with the academy. These included pupils, members of the governing body, the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, other members of the teaching staff and a representative of the academy sponsor.
- The 117 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), as well as the results of the school's own surveys for parents and carers, were examined.
- Inspectors also considered responses to the Ofsted questionnaire completed by 48 members of staff.
- A range of documents was reviewed. These included: information on pupils' achievements; the academy's data on pupils' current progress; documents relating to planning for improvement; procedures for checking the quality of teaching; documents relating to safeguarding; and records relating to behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors considered the school's use of the additional primary physical education and sport funding, and the pupil premium.

Inspection team

Stephen Bywater, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Elizabeth Cooper

Additional Inspector

Judith Long

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Michael's Church of England Primary Academy converted to become an academy school on 1 September 2013.
- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils attending the school are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils or those who have special educational needs is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after) is about half of the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Children start the school's early years provision in two Reception classes on a full-time basis. Other pupils in the school are taught in six single-aged classes.
- The school is a member of the St Christopher's Multi-Academy Trust. This academy trust comprises in total five primary schools. A board of trust directors oversees the work of the academy.
- The governance of each school is undertaken by its own local governing board.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensuring that the most-able pupils in Key Stage 1 always act upon and benefit fully from teachers' guidance on how to improve their work.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The academy's senior leadership team and governors are extremely ambitious for the academy's development. They are a closely-knit team who have a united vision for the school and have been relentless in their pursuit of the highest possible standards.
- Governors and senior leaders make regular visits to classrooms and accurately record what they see. This provides them with detailed information about the quality of teaching and pupils' achievements and enables them to target support and challenge for teachers appropriately.
- All staff unanimously support this commitment to excellence, particularly in teaching, and welcome the excellent opportunities they have to develop and share their teaching skills. They are excellent role models for pupils. Pupils, parents and carers greatly appreciate the quality of the teaching, as they emphasised to inspectors during the inspection.
- The leadership team's success is evident in the improvements in pupils' performance since the school became an academy. Leaders have succeeded in ensuring that pupils throughout the school achieve outstandingly well, both in acquiring skills and knowledge and in developing as confident and well-rounded individuals. The school prepares pupils extremely well for the next stage of their education.
- Teaching has improved over the last two years. School leaders enhance the quality of teaching by working alongside teachers in classrooms or teaching small groups to make sure that all pupils make as much progress as possible in English and mathematics.
- Both teachers and support staff have very high expectations of pupils and welcome being held rigorously to account by leaders for pupils' progress. Subject leaders and staff with responsibilities for year groups assist the senior leadership team very well. Like the senior leaders, their work in supporting colleagues is meticulous as they rigorously check the quality of teaching and learning.
- Leaders have put in place highly effective assessment systems. Each pupil's progress is carefully reviewed, and academic or pastoral support is very quickly provided if any individual is not making the progress that is expected. As a result, most pupils, including the most able, disadvantaged pupils and those vulnerable pupils with particular learning needs, make outstanding progress. This demonstrates the school's successful promotion of equality of opportunity.
- All pupils are enabled to do well in a very safe environment in which discrimination is not tolerated. Safeguarding arrangements comply with statutory regulations. The inclusion leader and his team identify and respond very well to any concerns regarding child welfare and take a great deal of care to support pupils and their families.
- Extremely effective use is made of funding provided to support disadvantaged pupils throughout the school. Leaders have employed extra teachers and teaching assistants, with the result that these pupils make as much progress as others. In some cases, their progress is better.
- Excellent systems are in place for monitoring the headteacher's performance, and governors know about the link between highly effective teaching and salary increases for teachers.
- The school's curriculum meets pupils' needs and interests outstandingly well. Pupils enjoy the range of topics which develop their skills and knowledge to a high level as they move up through the school. Pupils appreciate the wide range of activities, such as clubs, especially for sports and music.
- The additional sports funding is used very well to increase teachers' expertise and to provide pupils with opportunities to take part in a wide range of physical activities. As a result, pupils develop their personal interests and potential in a variety of sports. Almost all pupils attend at least one school club or participate in sports activities outside of school hours.
- School leaders provide many opportunities for pupils to learn about different beliefs and lifestyles. There are numerous connections with local churches, but staff are also very keen to introduce pupils to other faiths and traditions through excellent teaching and special visits.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptional as a result of the wide variety of experiences they enjoy. They are very well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The Multi-Academy Trust uses the school as a positive example for other schools of what can be achieved. The leadership employs an organisation which provides carefully planned, rigorously implemented and continuously reviewed support for improvement. Staff from other schools visit St Michael's to develop their own expertise. The school is outward-looking and very welcoming to visitors.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has an appropriate committee structure and individual governors' expertise is used effectively. They are strongly involved in all its activities, including visiting lessons, talking regularly with

staff and pupils, and attending events.

- The governing body rigorously holds leaders to account and challenges the leadership, for example on aspects such as checking the quality of teaching, and ensuring standards continue to improve. Governors also carefully analyse the impact of the spending of pupil premium funding. Governors have undertaken effective training which helps them to interpret data and know how well the pupils in the school do compared to those elsewhere. They know exactly how good teaching is. They use information about pupils' progress exceptionally well when they review staff performance and pay progression.
- Governors make a significant contribution to the way in which the academy evaluates itself and sets areas for development. They have a clear understanding of the school's finances, including the effective use of pupil premium and primary school sport funding.
- Governors ensure that the academy's safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school. As a result, their attendance is above average and they are punctual.
- Pupils appreciate that they are well known to all the staff, including the headteacher. From their earliest days at school, pupils settle quickly in lessons and are engrossed in their learning. Staff and pupils show enormous respect for each other and this ensures a very welcoming, happy and harmonious place.
- Pupils are very thoughtful and polite and supported by the importance which staff place on promoting a strong and consistent set of moral and social values, which are well understood by all pupils.
- Pupils demonstrate a very positive attitude to school, which is a calm and purposeful place. They say almost all pupils behave very well and that when, very occasionally, an incident occurs, the staff deal with it very effectively. This is confirmed by the school's very thorough behaviour logs.
- Pupils like helping each other and want to take on responsibility. They value their role on the 'Children's Learning Team' and know that their views are listened to and respected.
- Behaviour in lessons is typically outstanding. Pupils are totally engrossed in their work and all talk is linked to the learning tasks taking place.
- Parents and carers hold the school in very high regard. This is typified by one parent who stated, 'somehow the staff at school make every child think that they are the only child that matters.' Almost all parents and carers and all staff have a very positive view of behaviour, as expressed by those responding to Parent View and the staff questionnaire.
- Parents and carers and staff praised all aspects of the school's work in glowing terms. Comments such as, 'this is a great school' were common and some very moving stories of the school's support for families clearly showed that the school places a very high priority on the pupils' safety and pastoral care.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- Pupils demonstrate an outstanding awareness of how to stay safe and parents and carers are very clear in stating that their children are very safe in school. Parents and carers greatly appreciate the excellent quality of care and support which it provides.
- Pupils do not regard bullying as an issue in the school, and say that bullying is exceptionally rare. Their understanding extends beyond staying physically safe inside and outside school, and includes the potential dangers of internet misuse. Pupils feel confident that there are adults to whom they can turn and who will deal promptly with any incidents should they occur.
- The school looks after its vulnerable pupils very well. There is excellent support for those who need it. Staff liaise effectively with a wide range of agencies, so as to be sure that they are providing the very best possible support for each individual pupil.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teaching has improved over time, as the school's meticulous records show. Teachers plan lessons which successfully challenge each pupil to do their very best. The key feature of the outstanding teaching is the speed at which pupils are moved on to the next stage of learning. This is because teachers are continuously assessing what pupils know and can do. They quickly adapt work for pupils in order to

accelerate their learning or provide further reinforcement.

- Leaders have high expectations of teaching, but also provide teachers with a lot of support and opportunities to develop their skills still further.
- The consistently high-quality teaching, allied to pupils' very positive attitudes towards learning, is a key reason for the outstanding progress which all groups of pupils make. Pupils are successfully encouraged to be independent learners. Teachers check carefully on pupils' progress during and at the end of lessons, praising pupils well for their efforts and sensitively correcting any errors and misunderstandings.
- Teachers' high expectations are shown in the sharply focused questions they ask to check how deeply pupils understand their work. Teachers make sure that the most-able pupils benefit from appropriately challenging work and the vast majority make outstanding progress.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work exceptionally well together. This ensures that all pupils have the appropriate challenge and support both inside and outside the classroom. This support particularly helps disabled pupils and those with special educational needs to make strong progress in English and mathematics.
- Other groups, such as those disadvantaged pupils who are supported by additional funding, are extremely well taught. Work is tailored exceptionally well to their particular needs.
- Teachers mark pupils' work thoroughly and give them a lot of information on what they have done well and how they can improve their work. Pupils are given time to respond to the comments and are expected to apply their improvements in their next pieces of work. However, there are a small number of occasions where teachers do not routinely check that the most-able pupils in Key Stage 1 have acted upon their guidance to improve their work.
- Teachers teach reading very effectively. The teaching of phonics (linking letters and sounds) is highly organised across the school and pupils enjoy their daily challenges. Pupils love to read and effectively glean information from books.
- Standards in writing have risen significantly in Key Stage 2 as a result of the very effective teaching. Teachers successfully encourage pupils to write skilfully in a variety of styles, often at length. Mathematics is taught very well. Teachers give pupils challenging tasks, particularly in solving problems which interest them. For example, teachers asked Year 6 pupils who had just returned from their residential visit to London to find the costs of a tourist trip to London. Their problem-solving experiences and practical activities empowered them to apply the skills in their classroom learning.
- Teachers' excellent subject knowledge contributes to very high levels of achievement. The exceptional work of specialist teachers, for example in physical education, enables pupils to develop strongly their knowledge and skills.
- The teaching of music is also a strength of the school. All Key Stage 2 pupils are taught to play a range of instruments during their school career and their singing is enthusiastic and of high quality.
- Pupils, parents and carers and inspectors all agree that pupils are taught very well.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Achievement is outstanding because teachers cater exceedingly well for each individual child. They ensure that the vast majority of pupils make outstanding progress from their individual starting points. The academy has a very clear focus on pupils' personal, physical and creative development. This contributes strongly to pupils' happiness and motivation to learn. As a consequence, it also helps their academic achievements.
- Pupils settle rapidly into school and make good progress in their first year, achieving the expected levels nationally when they go up to Year 1. In Year 1, reading standards are high. Many pupils read accurately, fluently, expressively and with confidence.
- Pupils make excellent progress in all year groups. Their attainment by the end of Key Stage 1 is above average in all subjects, as seen in the end of year assessments in 2014 and 2015. Pupils quickly develop their self-confidence and a genuine appetite for learning.
- The strong foundations that have been put in place as pupils move into Key Stage 2 result in outstanding progress during Years 3 to 6. Since the school became an academy, pupils' standards have risen significantly and they now leave Year 6 having achieved results significantly above national standards.
- Standards in speaking and listening are high. Pupils enjoy discussing their ideas in class, and listen well to each other. This was seen to great effect in a Year 6 lesson when pupils presented their own research work about countries around the world. They enjoyed responding with skill to high-quality questioning from their teacher and fellow pupils.

- Standards are high in writing, especially in pupils' English books. In Year 5, pupils' reflective poetry based on 'The Listener' by Walter De La Mer was exceptionally good, and was typified by one pupil's phrase 'She moved across the gravel path under a starred and silky sky.' Pupils' fiction and non-fiction writing develops very well with increasing creativity and sophistication as they move up through the school.
- Pupils' productivity and presentation of work is very good, because pupils take considerable pride in it.
- Standards are high in mathematics. Pupils make rapid progress, particularly in using mathematical skills to solve practical problems. All groups of pupils make outstanding progress to a much greater extent than is usual nationally.
- The impact of the extra help they receive has resulted in a significant improvement in the achievement of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. This has successfully narrowed the gap between their attainment and that of other pupils.
- The most-able pupils achieve exceptionally well, and increasingly so year on year. The great majority of these pupils reach well-above-average levels of attainment because they are given work which is very well suited to their abilities.
- In 2014, the performance of disadvantaged pupils in national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 showed that they were approximately one term behind other pupils nationally in reading and writing. In mathematics, they were two terms behind. Their progress in each subject was below that of other pupils nationally. Very effective use of additional funding, however, has resulted not only in the gap between current disadvantaged pupils and other pupils being closed, but disadvantaged pupils outperform other pupils within the school. Their progress now compares very favourably with that of other pupils nationally.
- Standards in music are high, because pupils receive excellent specialist teaching from staff in this subject and because of the school's investment in high-quality resources.
- Parents and carers correctly believe that their children make strong progress while they are at the school and that they are very well prepared for the next stage of their education. One parent, whose views were typical, said, 'I know exactly what my child is learning at school, where he is in each subject and where his learning journey is going.'

The early years provision

is outstanding

- Thorough planning for the children's induction begins before a child enters the school. The impact of this is that children settle in quickly and begin to make very rapid progress from the earliest days. Leaders make parents and carers very welcome in the school and ensure that they play a full part in helping children to settle quickly into the Reception classes.
- Most children join Reception with levels of skill, knowledge and understanding at or above those typical for their age. They quickly build on these so that they are very well prepared for their move into Year 1.
- Leadership and management of the early years provision are outstanding. The early years leader receives very effective support from the experienced staff who help her to monitor the quality of teaching and children's progress. The recording systems for children's abilities are so effective that teachers can immediately build upon what the children already know.
- The behaviour of children is outstanding. This is because teachers and their assistants plan activities in the classroom and outside which capture their imagination and stretch them as much as possible. Excellent use is made of the outdoor space for helping children to learn to share and to discuss each other's ideas.
- Children cooperate very well and learn classroom routines very quickly. They concentrate well, are enthusiastic and often help each other. Children are kept very safe.
- In recent years, the rates of progress which children make have improved greatly. The numbers of children who exceed expectations and make outstanding progress in reading and number have also risen over time as a result of very effective teaching.
- Children in the Reception classes make an excellent start learning to speak, listen, read, write, understand numbers and cooperate with one another. Many children speak confidently and at some length. Children develop early writing skills rapidly in lessons and read their work accurately to adults.
- As well as learning key skills and developing a very good understanding of the world around them. They love activities such as painting and role play in the café or garage.
- Skilled staff know how to keep stimulating children's interest, encouraging them to think about why they are doing particular activities and what else they could do to extend their learning. The classrooms and outdoor area provide an extremely stimulating environment for children, with a good range of resources and displays to maintain their curiosity and enthusiasm.
- Parents and carers are rightly very appreciative of the excellent provision for their children.

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

Unique reference number	139818
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	450077
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	403
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Malcolm Hunt
Headteacher	Gill Kendrick
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01392 256669
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