

Inspection of St Michael Catholic Primary School & Nursery

Feltham Hill Road, Ashford, Surrey TW15 2DG

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 May 2024

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Early years provision

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under
section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is John Lane. This school is part of the Ascension Catholic Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Richard Burke, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Michael Metcalf.

Ofsted has not previously inspected St Michael Catholic Primary School & Nursery under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. However, Ofsted previously judged St Michael Catholic Primary School to be outstanding, before it opened as St Michael Catholic Primary School & Nursery as a result of conversion to academy status.

What is it like to attend this school?

Expectations of what pupils can achieve are high here. Pupils know this. They listen to their teachers and their peers with respect. Pupils relish the challenges that staff set and work hard to be better in all they do. They love the opportunities they are given to go beyond the expected.

Pupils' academic achievements are impressive. Their performances, on and off stage, are enthusiastic and often polished. Older pupils enjoy whole-class tuition on a range of instruments. Trumpets, guitars, clarinets (with an occasional squeak), all feature in day-to-day life here. Younger pupils revel in opportunities such as producing their own opera based on Mozart's 'The Magic Flute'.

Playtimes are purposeful. Pupils' choices are manyfold. Maybe they will choose the treetops climbing frame. Maybe they will opt to listen to an older pupil developing their public speaking skills by extolling the virtues of women in politics at speakers' corner.

Poor behaviour or meanness is not a problem. Teachers teach. Pupils learn. The small numbers of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds do very well. The inclusive environment means that pupils thrive, no matter what their barriers or backgrounds are. One telling aspect of this magical school is that absence is minimal. Pupils want to be here because it is a great place to be.

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

This is a school with clear direction, centred on an inclusive and caring community which offers equality of opportunity for all. The school's Catholic ethos shines through. Those in positions of governance know the school well and provide strong support and guidance for leaders at all levels. The school's mission statement, focusing on excellence, enrichment, and enjoyment, provides a firm foundation for everything the family of St Michael strives for.

The curriculum is rich in opportunities for pupils to develop both academically and as caring citizens. This starts in the school's Nursery and Reception Years where children get off to a flying start. Key to this is a very clear expectation that every child will succeed in the calm, well-structured and enabling environment the early years provides.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported well. They access the same curriculum as their peers, skilfully adapted and tailored by teaching and support staff. The school is well resourced. The 'Lab' and the 'Imaginarium' provide pupils with noteworthy immersive experiences and exciting opportunities to develop scientific and technical knowledge. These opportunities motivate pupils and stir their sense of wonder.

Pupils' achievements compare favourably to similar schools by the time they move on to secondary education. They make strong progress from early years through to Year 6 because the curriculum builds pupils' knowledge securely over time. This is as true in mathematics or reading as it is in other subjects such as Spanish, where pupils relish the opportunity to converse and write at length in another language.

The school's work to ensure that pupils become confident and fluent readers is successful. It provides equally well for pupils with SEND or the growing number of pupils with English as an additional language. Those who struggle are identified quickly with timely support put in place when needed.

One of the clear strengths of the school is the quality of curriculum leadership. While some subjects are led and taught entirely by subject specialists, others are not. However, classroom visits showed a consistently high quality in the way the curriculum is delivered across a range of subjects. Consequently, the quality of pupils' work across the whole curriculum stands out as exceptional.

Pupils' personal development is supported equally as well. Pupils benefit from age-appropriate relationships, sex and health education. Older pupils understand about consent and friendships. Cultural diversity is celebrated.

The school's values are understood and enacted by pupils and staff alike. Pupils understand that they are expected to contribute to school life themselves. As a result, the many opportunities to develop leadership skills are keenly embraced by pupils. Openings to serve as curriculum ambassadors, an initiative for pupils with particular interests and talents in different areas of the curriculum, are similarly valued.

In a school with many strengths, the opportunities it provides to enrich pupils' learning stand out. Inspectors were serenaded with a fanfare provided by the whole of Year 6 on the first afternoon of the inspection. Parents enjoyed a mass performance by clarinettists in the hall on day two. Pupils' artwork is of high quality and adorns the school. Trips out of school bring life to their learning in science, history and music. Residential trips are keenly anticipated. Importantly, the girls' football team is admired and celebrated by boys, not least for the success they have brought to the school recently.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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	149289
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10288107
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	462
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Michael Metcalf
CEO of trust	Richard Burke
Headteacher	John Lane
Website	www.st-michaels.surrey.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is a member of the Ascension Catholic Academy Trust, a Catholic multi-academy trust in the Diocese of Westminster.
- The trust is registered at Companies House with a trust board who are registered as directors.
- The school joined the trust as an academy convertor in December 2022.
- Governance is also provided by a local governing body with delegated powers.
- As a new academy convertor, the school has not yet had an inspection under section 48.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

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 had 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 held a wide range of meetings with leaders at all levels, as well as teaching and support staff. The lead inspector met with the chair of the local governing body accompanied by two other governors. He also held a separate meeting with the chair of the board of trustees accompanied by another director and the trust's CEO.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, computing and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector heard some pupils read to a known adult. Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects with leaders.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of parents, 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.
- Pupils were talked to throughout the inspection to gain their views about the school. Inspectors also talked formally to two representative groups of pupils.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents submitted through Ofsted Parent View. The views of staff and pupils were also considered through Ofsted's surveys.

Inspection team

Clive Close, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Justin Bartlett	Ofsted Inspector
Linda Appleby	Ofsted Inspector

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