

St Michael's CofE (A) First School

Address: Market Place, Penkridge, Stafford, Staffordshire, ST19 5DJ

Unique reference number (URN): 124343

Inspection report: 3 February 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, usually progress securely through the curriculum. Overall, pupils gain the knowledge and skills they need by the end of Year 4 and in readiness for middle school. From one year to the next, they make steady gains in reading and mathematics where learning builds in clear steps. In contrast, there is some variability in the standard and quality of pupils' writing. This is because some younger pupils have not secured key skills, such as sentence construction and handwriting.

The results of the Year 4 multiplication check are in line with the national average. Year 1 phonics outcomes have dipped to below the national average. Targeted support is helping most pupils who did not pass the phonics check to catch up. Leaders have recently introduced an additional strategy to help those who continue to struggle. Early signs are encouraging, with pupils showing clear gains with their phonics knowledge.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

All groups of pupils attend regularly. Leaders set clear expectations for attendance that families understand and value. They monitor pupils' attendance closely. For example, staff use weekly checks to spot concerns early. Leaders respond swiftly when pupils are at risk of becoming persistently absent. They meet with families to understand potential barriers and offer tailored support. The school's work with other professionals is timely and effective.

Leaders and staff have created a calm and friendly environment. In lessons, pupils generally show positive attitudes to learning. Leaders have established clear expectations, but these are not applied in the same way by everyone. For instance, in lessons, some pupils become distracted. This is not always picked up by staff and leads to a loss of learning time.

During playtimes, pupils play collaboratively. Pupils look out for each other. They play group games and share equipment. Staff know the pupils well and use reflective conversations to help pupils resolve and move on quickly from any disagreements. Bullying is rare. Leaders act quickly and take any incidents of unkind behaviour seriously. Pupils who sometimes find it difficult to manage their emotions benefit from time with an adult and the chance to practise calming strategies.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders and staff have designed a broad and balanced curriculum that clearly sets out what pupils should learn in each subject. Leaders know where further improvements are required. For instance, they have introduced a new approach to help pupils understand how to construct sentences. This is helping pupils, especially older pupils, write with accuracy. However, some younger pupils still need more support to write well.

Teaching typically helps pupils extend their vocabulary and secure the basic skills in reading and mathematics. Pupils have regular opportunities to practise and use new language

across different subjects. By the end of Year 4, pupils become fluent speakers, readers, writers and mathematicians. In some wider curriculum subjects, teachers do not consistently help pupils deepen their understanding of key concepts.

Staff benefit from regular training that strengthens their subject knowledge and helps them refine their practice. They usually present new ideas clearly and break tasks into smaller steps. This supports pupils to work independently and experience success.

Teachers generally make helpful adjustments for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who need extra support. This enables them to take part fully in the curriculum.

Early years

Expected standard 

Staff work closely with parents and carers from the start of Nursery. This partnership helps children settle in quickly, get used to new routines and to feel safe. Positive relationships between staff and pupils help create a generally settled atmosphere.

Adults typically use stories, rhymes and role-play activities well to develop children's language skills. Children enjoy these moments and are eager to talk with adults and each other. At times though, some staff miss opportunities to introduce new vocabulary or encourage children to use the words they are learning in their play and conversations. Early reading is a clear priority. Children benefit from regular phonics sessions and extra support from adults. This support helps to close any gaps in children's phonics knowledge.

Across the curriculum, staff usually plan activities that help children learn important ideas and skills. For instance, in the outdoor area, children develop their creativity and physical skills. At times, some planned activities do not support learning as effectively as they could because they are not always closely matched to children's starting points. There are also occasional moments when activities do not fully sustain a few pupils' attention. This results in brief lapses in focus. Despite this, most children are well prepared and ready for their learning in Year 1.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders have created a culture where pupils feel noticed and supported. Leaders and staff work with families to identify the precise needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), disadvantaged pupils and those known to social care. The process of identification begins as soon as children join the Nursery. Leaders promptly seek advice from specialist agencies when required. This ensures that pupils get the right help. Leaders keep a close eye on the support provided and adjust this when needed.

Training in areas such as autism and wellbeing helps staff to adapt the way in which they interact with pupils. They make effective use of calming routines and emotional regulation strategies to help pupils settle and get ready to learn. Some pupils benefit from personalised resources, such as fidget tools, which help reduce anxiety.

Staff usually adapt learning activities well and provide pupils with practical resources that help pupils access their tasks. Leaders have rightly prioritised further training so that staff

get even better at tailoring resources for pupils, and especially the pupils with SEND.

Additional funding is used well to help disadvantaged pupils overcome any barriers. Disadvantaged pupils achieve well overall, attend school regularly and take part in a range of enrichment activities.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Governors meet statutory duties well. They maintain a clear oversight through visits and regular dialogue with leaders. Governors have managed the interim leadership arrangements with care, ensuring continuity and wellbeing for both the acting leaders and the substantive headteacher. Governors provide effective support and typically provide an appropriate level of challenge through the questions they ask.

Leaders and governors listen carefully to pupils' views about all aspects of school life. This helps them make decisions that reflect pupils' experiences and support their learning and wellbeing. Leaders know where improvements are needed and have a clear understanding of the school's strengths. At times, their evaluations of aspects of the school's work, such as curriculum and teaching, are a little generous. This is because they do not always focus closely enough on how well the provision is improving pupils' learning. The school has rightly made the continued development of leaders' skills and expertise a priority.

Since the previous inspection, leaders' actions have secured further improvements in the curriculum and provision for pupils' personal development. Consequently, pupils leave the school well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Professional learning is closely aligned to the school's priorities. Staff access training and coaching that builds leadership capacity and subject knowledge. They speak positively about the open-door culture, strong teamwork and the pastoral support offered by leaders and governors. This contributes to high morale and a shared sense of purpose.

The parents and carers who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive about the school.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

A weekly focus on the school's values such as kindness, courage and respect sets clear expectations for pupils. This regular focus on the school's values builds positive habits and sets a calm tone across the school. In their day-to-day interactions, pupils are courteous and considerate.

The school's well-sequenced personal development programme includes real-life community activities, such as litter picking and charity events. These help pupils to see how their actions help others. Visitors to school, listening to music from around the world and opportunities for pupils to talk about family heritage are starting to deepen pupils' understanding of different faiths and cultures. While pupils learn about British values such as democracy and individual liberty, some pupils' understanding lacks depth.

Pupils say they feel safe because adults notice them and act on their concerns. They know how to stay safe near roads, around water and online. Pupils know about healthy friendships and relationships and when to talk to a trusted adult about any worries.

Staff provide pupils with effective one-to-one help and personalised pastoral support. They also work well with parents and external services to make sure that pupils get any help they need. As a result, pupils feel well cared for and develop the confidence to take part in all aspects of school life.

Leadership opportunities, such as the pupil innovation group and reading ambassadors, give pupils a chance to shape changes in the school and promote a love of books. Roles such as these successfully develop pupils' confidence and belief in themselves.

Pupils develop their interests and talents through a range of enrichment opportunities. These include a school choir, karate and dance competitions. Participation in these experiences is carefully tracked so that disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities do not miss out.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils enjoy their time at St Michael's First School and feel proud to be part of its community. They speak warmly about their teachers and feel safe and well cared for. Pupils exemplify the school values of service, joyfulness, kindness, respect, courage and perseverance in their daily interactions.

Children in the early years make a secure start and settle into school routines quickly. As they move through Nursery and into Reception, they grow in confidence and independence. Children learn well overall because activities usually support their developmental needs.

Pupils in Years 1 to 4 make steady progress, particularly in reading and mathematics. Their writing is improving, and pupils are beginning to write with greater accuracy. By the time they leave, most pupils are generally well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Leaders and staff know the pupils well. They make sure that disadvantaged pupils, those who may face additional challenges and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities take part in all aspects of school life.

Pupils treat others with kindness and typically concentrate well in lessons. They talk enthusiastically about their learning. Around the site, pupils behave sensibly and enjoy playing cooperatively with their friends. Bullying is rare and staff respond quickly if concerns are raised. Attendance is high.

A varied range of clubs, such as 'Tech Tigers' and multi-skills, help pupils discover new interests and broaden their experiences. Opportunities such as singing at the Victorian markets and taking part in local dance festivals build pupils' confidence and appreciation of the arts. Participation in cultural events helps pupils learn about life in modern Britain.

Parents and carers can nominate their children for 'value awards', celebrating contributions such as organising a litter pick or helping to secure a recycling bin for the local park. These activities help pupils recognise their role as active, positive members of their community.

Next steps

- Leaders should refine their checks on the wider curriculum so they focus more closely on how well pupils are learning key concepts. They should then use this information to help teachers to deepen pupils' understanding.
 - Leaders should continue to develop early years practice so that adults make the most of opportunities to build children's vocabulary and plan activities that more closely match children's starting points, so that all children stay focused and learn as well as they can.
 - Leaders should continue to strengthen the teaching of writing so that younger pupils secure key skills, such as sentence construction and handwriting, earlier in their learning.
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About this inspection

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

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspection activities:

Inspectors spoke with the acting headteacher, acting deputy headteacher, the substantive headteacher, other leaders and a group of staff. The lead inspector met with representatives from the governing body. The lead inspector also held a telephone conversation with a representative from the Diocese of Lichfield.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

In June 2025, governors appointed an acting headteacher and an acting deputy headteacher to cover the leave of absence of the substantive headteacher. The substantive headteacher is currently on planned leave, and interim leadership arrangements are expected to remain in place until the middle of the year.

The school is within the Diocese of Lichfield. Its most recent section 48 inspection took place in December 2024.

The school does not use any alternative provision.

Acting headteacher : Mrs Rebecca Crow

Lead inspector:

Usha Devi, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Donna OToole, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 3 February 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

148

Below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 272

School capacity

150

Below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

13.51%

Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 26.3%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

0.68%

Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

9.46%

Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Above average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	3.1%	5.2%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	3.2%	5.5%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	3.2%	5.9%	Below

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	5.1%	13.3%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	3.4%	14.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	1.7%	16.2%	Below

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

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