

St Mary and St Michael Primary School

Sutton Street, Stepney, London E1 0BD

Inspection dates

29–30 March 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher has stood firm to her vision that all pupils deserve the very best. She has worked tirelessly to overcome previous weaknesses in the school's work so that all pupils receive a good education.
- Senior leaders, together with the headteacher, have secured strong improvements to the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school.
- Pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils enjoy their learning and develop the skills necessary for the next stage in their education.
- The effectiveness of governance has improved since the previous inspection. Governors hold senior leaders to account for the progress that pupils make.
- Different groups of pupils achieve well. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make strong, and sometimes rapid, progress from their starting points.
- Leaders ensure that the pupil premium funding is well spent. Disadvantaged pupils make equally good progress as other pupils in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The early years provision is very effective. Children settle quickly, behave well and make good progress from the time they start school.
- The promotion of pupils' personal development and well-being is good. Throughout the school, pupils behave well and show respect and good manners to others.
- The school is a happy and friendly place to be. Pupils are proud of their school and value the range of opportunities they are given to take responsibility.
- Pupils feel safe in school and parents agree. Safeguarding is effective and pupils' safety and welfare are given the highest priority.
- Leaders' efforts to improve attendance have been successful. The overall attendance of pupils has improved significantly.
- Occasionally, work is not sufficiently challenging for pupils. Not all teachers share the same very high expectations of what pupils can achieve, particularly the middle- and high-attaining pupils.
- The teaching of problem-solving and reasoning in mathematics is not consistently of the highest quality. Opportunities for pupils to apply mathematical skills in a range of contexts are inconsistent.
- The work of some middle leaders is underdeveloped. Some are new to their roles and have not had time to lead improvements in the quality of teaching in their subjects.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - all teachers share the same very high expectations of what pupils can achieve, so that all pupils are given work that is sufficiently challenging, particularly the middle- and high-attaining pupils
 - teachers provide consistently strong opportunities for pupils to develop problem-solving and reasoning skills and apply these in a range of contexts and subjects so that more pupils achieve the higher scores in mathematics.
- Improve the effectiveness of middle leaders, especially those who are new to their roles, to further strengthen the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the curriculum.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Despite significant staff turnover since the previous inspection, the headteacher has been resolutely committed to ensuring that all pupils receive good-quality teaching and achieve well. This unswerving determination has led to improved outcomes for all pupils.
- Senior leaders have successfully improved the quality of teaching since the previous inspection. Leaders work closely with teachers to plan learning activities that pupils enjoy. Senior leaders monitor the standards in all year groups carefully and provide constructive and developmental feedback to teachers about how they can improve their practice further.
- Leaders use appropriate school development plans to ensure that the most important areas for improvement are addressed well. Strong self-evaluation and regular reviews ensure that leaders have a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and the aspects that could be even better.
- The headteacher and her senior team ensure that the additional special educational needs funding is used effectively to support the learning of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Pupil premium funding for disadvantaged pupils is also well spent. All staff are committed to making sure that these pupils achieve well. Additional and different interventions are used effectively and adapted to meet the needs of each cohort of pupils. Leaders monitor the achievement of all pupils, especially the disadvantaged pupils, extremely closely so that any gaps in their learning are quickly identified and addressed. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Leaders' work with the most vulnerable pupils is very effective. Some of the additional pupil premium funding is used to fund strategies that enable pupils to talk about, manage and reflect on their emotional well-being. These initiatives have been particularly effective in helping pupils feel safe and to engage in their learning.
- As well as improving standards in reading, writing and mathematics, leaders have focused strongly on providing a broad and vibrant curriculum. The wider curriculum is taught through themes and topics and pupils speak positively about the opportunities to develop their skills in computing, history and science, for example.
- Parents and pupils are complimentary about the activities that take place beyond the classroom. A strength of the school is the variety of extra-curricular enrichment activities provided for pupils. Pupils excitedly talk about the high number of educational visits which they enjoy.
- Sports and physical education are clearly a strength of the school. The school's achievements in sporting competitions are something to be proud of. Extremely effective leadership of physical education and sport has resulted in high take-up rates, a strong awareness of physical and emotional health, and success at local and national tournaments. Pupils are rightly proud of being the 'best school in the borough' for sporting achievements and speak enthusiastically about how exciting it was to

represent Tower Hamlets at the London Youth Games and meet Olympic athletes.

- The primary sports premium is very well spent. The specialist physical education leader ensures that staff are well supported to develop their confidence in teaching different aspects of physical education. Pupils benefit from an extremely wide range of activities that are well planned to enable all to take part. The promotion of healthy lifestyles is very well embedded.
- The school's work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effective. Through religious education lessons, assemblies and school-wide activities, pupils learn about other faiths and about world cultures. Leaders ensure that the opportunities for pupils to learn about and demonstrate the values of respect, honesty and democracy are plentiful. Consequently, pupils are well prepared for life beyond their time at this school.
- Although senior leaders have steered the school strongly since the previous inspection, the turnover of staff has resulted in a change in middle leadership. Some leaders are new to their roles and their work is underdeveloped. Governors and the headteacher acknowledge that there is room for improvement in this aspect of the school's work so that all leaders contribute to raising pupils' achievement across the curriculum.
- Parents are supportive of the school's work. They speak positively about how well teachers and leaders respond to their children's needs. Parents value the enrichment opportunities, especially related to sports and physical education, and can see how the school has improved since the previous inspection. Although leaders provide a wide range of opportunities for parents to get involved in school life, leaders are keen to develop and strengthen parent partnerships still further.

Governance of the school

- The dedicated and experienced governing body shares the headteacher's commitment for continuous and sustained improvement. Governors know the school well and have worked effectively as a team to oversee significant improvements since the previous inspection.
- Governors fulfil their statutory duties effectively. They attend meetings regularly and ask questions that challenge leaders to be accountable for the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school.
- Governors make visits to the school to find out for themselves about how well pupils achieve. These visits have a clear purpose and focus on the key aspects in the school's development plans.
- The governing body ensures that safeguarding arrangements meet requirements and that the additional pupil premium funding is spent wisely and has an impact.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Senior leaders have created an ethos where a culture of well-being and safety has high priority. Staff receive training that enables them to know how to identify signs of abuse or neglect in order to protect children's welfare. Leaders ensure that all safeguarding training is up to date and

relevant. Staff understand their responsibilities to keep children safe, including from the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism.

- The school's procedures for reporting any safeguarding concerns are clear and robust. Pupils who are looked after by the local authority and those whose circumstances make them vulnerable are supported very effectively. Leaders' work with other professionals is strong in order to ensure that all pupils are well cared for.
- The chair of the governing body, together with senior leaders, ensures that the checks made on staff before they are appointed are suitable and meet requirements. Documentation related to safeguarding, including case files and records are detailed and of high quality.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They speak knowledgeably about how to keep themselves safe online and older pupils understand the dangers associated with the use of mobile phones and social media and how to deal with inappropriate text messages. Parents agree that their children are safe at school and value the care and attention they receive from school staff.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Senior leaders have worked together well, alongside class teachers, to improve the quality of teaching over time. Pupils throughout the school receive typically good teaching that enables them to make good progress from their starting points.
- Leaders' monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning is accurate. Records show that where leaders have supported teachers, for example through 'team-teaching' or by modelling good practice, standards have improved. The drive and enthusiasm to improve teaching is shared by teachers and support staff who, as a team, want the very best for all pupils.
- The local authority has played its part in developing teaching strategies throughout the school, particularly in writing. Together with leaders, local authority representatives have worked hard to implement approaches that have completely overhauled the way writing is taught. These strategies have been successful. Pupils' enthusiasm for and engagement in writing is now evident in every classroom from a young age. Pupils enjoy plenty of opportunities to write for a purpose, at length and in a range of contexts, for example in their religious education work.
- Reading is taught effectively throughout the school. Pupils read fluently and with good expression. Older pupils understand how reading helps to improve their writing and speak with knowledge and interest about their favourite authors. Pupils develop good stamina in reading and talk articulately about parts of the text that intrigue them. Younger pupils develop a keen interest in a wide range of books. As one pupil remarked, 'I enjoy reading because it feels like you are going through the same adventures as the characters.'
- Pupils use their knowledge of letter sounds to decode difficult and unfamiliar words effectively. The teaching of phonics is consistently strong, particularly in key stage 1, and small-group activities led by additional adults are well-planned so that all groups receive the most appropriate learning activities.
- Overall, pupils' mathematical skills develop well as they move through the school.

Pupils' use of number and their understanding of calculation strategies are strong and develop appropriately through a range of age-appropriate activities. However, the teaching of problem-solving and reasoning in mathematics is not consistently highly effective. In some classes, opportunities for pupils to apply their knowledge and skills in a range of contexts and give reasons for their answers are not fully developed.

- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are taught well. The assistant headteacher ensures that teachers and teaching assistants are clear about individual pupils' targets. These pupils are well supported in small groups and whole-class activities and, as result, achieve well.
- Teachers use questioning and other teaching strategies well to unpick pupils' understanding and to help pupils understand key concepts. Pupils make effective use of 'working walls' during lessons, for example, to help compose pieces of writing. Resources, such as dictionaries and tablets, are used effectively to enthuse pupils and scaffold their learning.
- Teachers know their pupils well and create a positive climate for learning in their classrooms. Relationships are strong and purposeful and pupils are keen to learn. Pupils respond well to teachers' instructions and enjoy the opportunities they are given to work in pairs, small groups and in a variety of ways, such as, 'hot-seating' in drama.
- Although teachers set challenges for pupils in lessons, these are not always fully effective. Sometimes, pupils finish activities quickly because they are not sufficiently challenging. Some teachers do not share the same very high expectations of what pupils can achieve, particularly for middle- and higher-attaining pupils, and the level of challenge for these pupils is not consistently of the highest quality.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils' attendance has improved significantly and now matches the national average. Leaders' efforts to reduce persistent absence have been successful. Current information shows that the number of pupils who are absent too often has reduced significantly this year. Work with parents to help them understand the importance of good attendance has been effective. Leaders make good use of the website, newsletters and assemblies to raise the profile of coming to school regularly and on time.
- Pupils say that bullying is extremely rare at this school. They know that the use of derogatory language is unacceptable and say that teachers would deal with any incidents effectively. Pupils who hold the position of 'anti-bullying ambassador' take this responsibility seriously and are proactive in promoting harmony and friendship throughout the school.
- The school places a strong emphasis on pupils' emotional well-being and mental health. Opportunities for pupils to talk about their problems, reflect on their actions and learn about their feelings and emotions are very strong. Assemblies and activities, such as 'circle time', are well planned to help pupils understand and respect diversity.

Pupils speak articulately about the importance of respecting others.

- Leaders work well with other settings which pupils attend to ensure that pupils are safe, attend well and make good progress.
- Pupils value the many opportunities to take responsibility. For example, pupils look after the garden area, they manage sporting activities, take roles within the school council and the oldest pupils each have a position of responsibility. There is a strong sense of community throughout the school and when asked, many of the pupils say that 'the people' are the best thing about their school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. In lessons, pupils show enthusiasm for learning. They are keen to talk about their work and share their ideas with their friends and adults.
- Behaviour in the playground and corridors is good. Pupils move around the building calmly and readily greet each other and adults with friendly smiles and comments. Pupils say that they value the way in which adults are there to greet them each morning because it makes them feel well cared for.
- Pupils are polite, friendly and courteous. Pupils know the importance of good manners. For example, pupils immediately thank their friends for helping them in lessons and readily share resources without being asked by an adult.
- The work in pupils' books is presented well. Leaders' focus on improving pupils' handwriting skills is effective and pupils apply these skills well into longer pieces of writing. Pupils take care in their work and talk about their learning with pride.
- There are very few incidents of poor behaviour. Records are detailed and robust and show that leaders and teachers manage behaviour well. The school's documentation shows that playground behaviour has improved significantly since the previous inspection. The playground is a happy and fun environment, where pupils benefit from a wide range of activities to develop their physical and social skills.
- Pupils who need additional and different help to manage their behaviour are well supported. Leaders have worked extremely hard to ensure that these pupils receive the guidance and care required to help them achieve success in their learning.
- Occasionally, pupils' good behaviour wanes slightly in lessons where the work that is set is too easy.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The improvements to the quality of teaching have led to improved outcomes for all pupils. Leaders monitor pupils' progress very carefully and analyse assessment information in detail. Leaders make sure that any dips in pupils' achievement are addressed promptly.
- From low starting points, children make strong progress in the early years and achieve well across all areas of learning. In 2016, the proportion of children that achieved a good level of development was in line with the national figure.
- The teaching of phonics is consistently strong and the proportion of pupils achieving

the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check is above average.

- At the end of key stage 1, in 2016, the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standards was in line with the national average in reading and mathematics and above the national average in writing. However, there were some differences between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils, and especially the proportion of those pupils who were assessed to be working at greater depth in mathematics.
- Currently, disadvantaged pupils in key stage 1 are making equally good progress as other pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. Sometimes, these pupils make rapid and accelerated progress as a result of well-planned, tailored interventions to address gaps in pupils' learning.
- In 2016, pupils in Year 6 made good progress in reading and writing to attain standards that were in line with the national average. Pupils' progress and attainment in mathematics was not as strong. Too few pupils reached the higher scores in mathematics last year, particularly pupils who had middle and high prior attainment.
- Current pupils make good progress in mathematics in each year group and the proportion of pupils who reach expected outcomes is high. Although increasing, leaders acknowledge that too few pupils attain the higher scores in mathematics, particularly the middle- and high-attaining pupils, because their problem-solving skills and use of mathematical reasoning are less strong.
- Standards in writing have improved since the previous inspection. Leaders have worked effectively to improve the teaching of writing throughout the school. Assessment information is positive and shows that pupils make good progress. Work in pupils' books shows strong examples of pupils applying their writing skills in a range of genres and contexts effectively. Efforts to improve boys' writing have been particularly successful.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieve well. Assessment information shows that over time, and particularly over the past year, differences between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils are diminishing. Teachers ensure that these pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported to make good and sometimes rapid progress. Teaching for these pupils is strong and additional adults are deployed well to meet pupils' individual needs.

Early years provision

Good

- The leadership of the early years is very effective. Leaders have very high aspirations for all children in the provision. From the time children join, they receive consistently good teaching to help them make strong and sustained progress. By the end of the Reception Year, children are very well prepared for the move to Year 1.
- Parents are fully involved in their children's learning. Right from the start, staff seek the views of parents and make every effort to help parents understand how they can support their children's learning and development at home.
- The quality of teaching is good. Adults meet regularly to discuss children's

achievements and plan activities that follow children's current interests and needs. Leaders monitor children's learning and development closely. Staff regularly review the learning opportunities so that children learn well.

- Children's behaviour is good. They play together well and access toys and equipment easily. They respond well to the caring adults and are comfortable to explore all areas of the learning environment.
- Outdoor learning is well promoted. Those children who learn best outside enjoy a wide range of activities that support their learning and development. Children's physical skills are well supported, for example as they climb and balance on the frames.
- Adults promote children's language and communication skills well. They describe children's actions, help them to speak in sentences and give children time to respond to questions.
- There is a good balance between adult-led activities and child-initiated play sessions. Adults are skilful in their interactions with the children and know when to intervene, ask questions and extend children's learning further. However, not all adult interactions are as strong as the best and occasionally opportunities to challenge and extend children's learning are missed.
- The teaching of phonics is strong in the early years. Children respond very well to the highly focused adult-led sessions and achieve well. Children develop a love of books because adults promote reading very successfully both in the classrooms and in the outdoor area.
- Children make good progress in writing. A strong focus on encouraging boys to write is having an impact. For example, boys enjoyed writing their news in the special 'boys' book' and adults make the most of all opportunities to enable children to write for a purpose, for example in the home corner and on the 'pirate ship'.
- Teachers use a range of interesting and exciting materials that help develop children's speaking and imagination skills. Children thoroughly enjoy using their senses to explore the natural materials and delight in dressing up as superheroes, talking keenly about their superpowers.
- The early years environment is bright and attractive. All areas of learning are well represented and leaders have invested in high-quality teaching resources that inspire and enthuse children to learn. Consequently, all children are happy, safe, settled and have fun.

School details

Unique reference number	131936
Local authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	10023583

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	459
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Killington
Headteacher	Rachel Mahon
Telephone number	020 7790 4986
Website	www.st-marymichael.towerhamlets.sch.uk
Email address	admin@st-marymichael.towerhamlets.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	4–5 February 2015

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Since the time of the previous inspection, there have been several new appointments to the teaching staff.
- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is higher than the national average. Three quarters of pupils are from minority ethnic groups.
- A higher-than-average number of pupils are supported by the pupil premium funding.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average. The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is significantly higher than the national average.
- The early years provision consists of two Reception classes and two Nursery classes.

Children attend on a full-time basis in both the Nursery and Reception Years.

- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 37 lessons or part-lessons across a range of subjects. Inspectors observed learning in all classes, some of which were joint observations with senior leaders.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of the governing body, a representative from the local authority and spoke with a representative of the diocese on the telephone.
- Inspectors spent time in the playground, in the dining room and held informal discussions with pupils and staff.
- A group of pupils accompanied an inspector on a learning walk of the school to talk about the curriculum and to share their views on how the school helps them to learn.
- The lead inspector met formally with a group of pupils to seek their opinions on behaviour, teaching, learning and safety. An inspector listened to pupils reading in Year 2 and Year 6.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of pupils' books, work on display and children's learning journals in the early years.
- The views of parents were gathered at the start of the inspection. Inspectors also considered the 20 responses to Parent View, the online survey, and the free-text comments that were submitted.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, middle leaders and newly qualified teachers. Inspectors reviewed the 38 responses to the online staff survey and the six responses to the pupil survey.
- The inspection team reviewed a wide range of documents related to pupils' achievement, safeguarding and the monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment.

Inspection team

Gary Rawlings, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Denise James-Mason	Ofsted Inspector
Nick Turvey	Ofsted Inspector

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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