

Inspection of St Michael's Community Academy

Holland Street, Crewe, Cheshire CW1 3SL

Inspection dates: 31 October and 1 November 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Early years provision

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

The principal of this school is David Jobling. This school is part of The St Bart's Multi-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), Lisa Sarikaya, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Johnny Anderson.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to this school where support for their well-being is a high priority. They like to be with their friends and to take part in the many activities on offer. Several pupils join the school at different times in the year. For many of these pupils, English is their second language. They quickly feel part of this caring school community.

The school is ambitious for pupils' academic achievement. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Children in the early years achieve exceptionally well. They are very well prepared for Year 1. However, pupils in key stages 1 and 2 do not build on this excellent start as securely as they should. This is because gaps in their learning are not identified or addressed well enough. This hinders their achievement across different subjects.

Most pupils behave well. Children in the early years, including those in the provision for two-year-olds, settle quickly into the routines of school. Staff provide effective support for the small number of pupils who struggle to regulate their emotions. This helps all pupils to learn in calm and purposeful classrooms.

Pupils enjoy taking part in the many clubs on offer, such as football, yoga and singing. Older pupils are proud to be nominated for leadership roles. They take these roles seriously. For example, playleaders ensure that younger pupils are not left out of playtime games.

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

St Michael's Community Academy has been on a positive journey of improvement since the previous inspection. Despite turbulence in staffing, the school, with the support of the trust, has focused on ensuring that there is an ambitious curriculum on offer. The curriculum provides a clear structure for pupils to gain the knowledge that they need to be successful in their learning. However, these changes did not have the time to make a difference to the Year 6 pupils who left in 2023. As a result, some of these pupils were not well prepared for the challenges of the key stage 3 curriculum.

In those curriculum areas that are well established, staff use their secure subject knowledge to deliver the curriculum effectively. They make regular checks to make sure that pupils remember what they have learned. In turn, staff use the information gathered from these checks to guide future teaching. Pupils remember their learning securely over time in these subjects.

The curriculums for other subjects are relatively new. Weaknesses in some of the previous curriculums mean that some pupils have some gaps in important knowledge, which have not been identified. At times, pupils' errors and misunderstandings go unchecked. This means that pupils are sometimes introduced to new learning without their prior knowledge being secure. This hinders them from

learning all that they should know. It also means that their achievement across different subjects is uneven.

The school has ensured that children in the early years, including two-year-olds, get the very best start to their education. The children benefit from an ambitious and exceptionally well-thought-out curriculum. Children are eager to learn and to access the full range of high-quality learning experiences that are available to them. Highly skilled staff ensure that all children, including children with SEND, achieve very well.

The teaching of early reading begins in the provision for two-year-olds. Children enjoy learning rhymes, singing songs and listening to stories. In the Reception Year, children learn to link sounds to letters. Many pupils in key stage 1 build on this secure foundation. The books that they read are typically matched to the sounds that they know. However, gaps in pupils' phonics knowledge are not spotted quickly enough. In addition, some of the pupils who find reading difficult do not get the support that they need to become fluent readers. This hinders their readiness to access the key stage 2 curriculum.

The school identifies the additional needs of pupils with SEND accurately. Staff make appropriate adaptations to their delivery of the curriculum to ensure that pupils with SEND can learn alongside their friends. Pupils with complex needs are well supported.

The school has carefully considered its provision for pupils' personal development. It has introduced a well-designed curriculum for relationships and sex education and health education. Pupils know how to keep themselves healthy and safe. They learn about and appreciate differences between themselves and others. For example, the school celebrates the cultural heritage of the many pupils who were born in other countries as part of its 'world cultural day'. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They are attentive in lessons and work well together. Pupils feel able to be themselves because they are accepted by others. Pupils have strong relationships with staff and with each other.

Parents and carers speak highly of the school and said that they feel welcome and valued, for example through attending book-share events and family outdoor learning.

The school considers the impact of change on staff workload and well-being. For example, it helps staff to understand the reasons for change to the curriculum.

The local governing committee knows the school's strengths and weaknesses well. It offers support and challenge to help bring about improvement. The school benefits from the trust's support. For example, the trust provides training for staff and centralised systems, which allows the school to focus on the curriculum.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils in key stage 1 who find it difficult to read do not receive the support that they need to become fluent readers. This means that these pupils are not prepared well enough for the next stage in their education. The school should ensure that staff are well trained to spot and then address the barriers that are stopping pupils from becoming successful and confident readers.
- Weaknesses in some of the previous subject curriculums mean that some pupils have gaps in their learning. These gaps have not been identified or addressed well enough to ensure that pupils can benefit from the higher aspirations of the new curriculums. The school should make sure that teachers are well equipped to spot and tackle gaps in pupils' knowledge so that pupils progress well through the curriculum.
- In some subjects in key stages 1 and 2, teachers do not check that pupils have understood what has been taught before new learning is introduced. This means that some pupils' misconceptions or gaps in knowledge are not addressed, which in turn hampers their progress through the curriculum. The school should ensure that teachers regularly check how well pupils are learning the intended curriculum.

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	140175
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10290241
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	441
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Johnny Anderson
CEO of the trust	Lisa Sarikaya
Principal	David Jobling
Website	www.smccademy.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	22 and 23 October 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Information about this school

- The school is part of The St Bart's Multi-Academy Trust.
- The school makes use of one registered alternative provider.
- There is provision for two-year-old children in the early years.
- The school offers a breakfast club each morning.

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 received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, art and design, religious education and computing. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also considered the curriculum in some other subjects. This included talking to subject leaders and pupils.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of 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.
- An inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons, around school, and at breaktimes and lunchtime. They discussed behaviour and bullying with pupils and staff.
- Inspectors considered the views of pupils and staff who responded to Ofsted's pupil and staff surveys.
- An inspector visited the breakfast club.
- Inspectors considered the views of the parents who responded to Ofsted Parent View. This included the free-text comments. An inspector also spoke with parents in the morning as they dropped their children off at school.
- An inspector spoke with school leaders and representatives of the trust, including the CEO.
- An inspector spoke to members of the local governing committee, including the chair of the committee.

Inspection team

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His Majesty's Inspector

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