

St Michael's CofE (C) Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124258
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	359618
Inspection dates	17–18 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Usha Devi HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	446
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jenny Bryant
Headteacher	Helen McKay
Date of previous school inspection	23 September 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 19 lessons and 16 different teachers. In addition to the observations, inspectors looked at learning and children's work during a visit to the Nursery and Reception classes. Inspectors met with pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2, members of the governing body, staff and a local authority representative. They also met with a small group of parents and representatives from partners who work with the school. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including teachers' planning, governing body minutes and pupils' assessment information. Questionnaires from 202 parents and carers, 18 staff and 101 pupils were also analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- What are the current attainment and rates of learning and progress for all groups of pupils?
- How well does the curriculum meet the needs of all pupils?
- How well do children achieve in the Early Years Foundation Stage?
- How well has the school tackled the issues from the last section 5 inspection?

Information about the school

St Michael's CofE (C) is a larger than average primary school. The majority of children come from White British families with a small number from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average. Early Years Foundation Stage provision is provided for children in a Nursery class and two Reception classes. The school is housed on two sites, with pupils in Years 5 and 6 taught in the old school building, known as 'the Annexe'. The pupils in Years 5 and 6 will be moving to the main school site once the new classrooms have been built. This is expected to be in January 2011. There is privately run before- and after-school care on the main school site. This facility was separately inspected.

At its last inspection in September 2009, the school was given a notice to improve because it was performing less well than could reasonably be expected. Significant improvements were required in relation to pupils' learning and progress, monitoring and evaluation, pupils' understanding of community cohesion and communication with parents and carers. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors monitored the school's progress in May 2010. The school was judged to be making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement. Since the previous inspection there have been a number of staff changes. Three teachers left and two permanent teachers were recruited. The governing body appointed new subject leaders for mathematics and English in April 2010. A new Key Stage 1 phase leader and a physical education leader were appointed in July 2010. In June 2010, the governing body elected a new vice chair and chair.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. St Michael's is a satisfactory school. It is an improving school and some aspects of its work are good. The headteacher has worked effectively with staff and the governing body to improve the quality of learning and establish a shared vision for the school. One parent wrote a comment that was typical of several, 'I believe the school has gone to great lengths to make improvements in many areas.'

The school has a number of strengths, including:

- a team of staff who provide a good level of care, guidance and support and who are determined to continue improving provision so that all pupils reach higher standards
- pupils' positive attitudes to learning and their good behaviour
- the good progress that pupils' make during their time in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- a governing body that successfully holds the school to account by providing an effective level of challenge and support.

At the last inspection, pupils' achievement between Year 1 to 4 was judged to be inadequate. This is no longer the case. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are now making at least satisfactory progress. Improved progress is most evident in mathematics and reading. These subjects have been a focus for the school and, as a result, the curriculum for both these subjects is stronger than in writing. A whole-school approach to writing has been recently introduced. The impact of this has yet to be seen. Attainment in Years 1 to 4 ranges from broadly average to above average. As a result of effective targeted support for individuals and groups of pupils throughout the rest of their time in school, pupils reach above average standards by the end of Year 6.

The school has benefited from intensive support from the local authority. As a consequence, the quality of teaching has strengthened. It is satisfactory and sometimes good. 'Our work is interesting,' and 'we are learning through more practical activities' were just some of the comments made by pupils. Pupils make satisfactory rather than good progress overall because teachers do not always take sufficient account of the assessment information to match work to pupils of different abilities. This is especially the case for pupils of lower ability whose work is either too difficult or too easy. Occasionally, the rate of progress slows because teachers do not clearly explain what pupils are expected to learn.

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Procedures for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school have improved and are satisfactory. Senior and middle leaders have a broadly accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. As a consequence, self-evaluation is sound. Capacity to improve is satisfactory rather than good because leaders and managers do not always check that the required actions, which have been identified following monitoring, are consistently implemented by all staff. This leads to inconsistencies in provision. Although improved systems for tracking progress have contributed to the eradication of underachievement in Years 1 to 4, lower ability pupils do not perform as well as other pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further raise achievement in Key Stages 1 and 2 by:
 - ensuring that all teachers use assessment information to match work closely to pupils of different abilities, especially the lower ability
 - creating greater opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their reading, mathematics and especially their writing skills across the curriculum.
- Build on the improvements that have been made in teaching so that it is consistently good or better by:
 - ensuring that teachers explain clearly to pupils what they are expected to learn
 - making sure all pupils are actively involved in lessons
 - ensuring that marking gives pupils the precise guidance they need to improve their work
 - sharing existing good practice.
- Increase the impact leaders and managers have on pupils' outcomes by:
 - establishing more rigorous arrangements for checking the quality of teaching so that the required changes are consistently implemented by teachers
 - regularly analysing the performance of different pupils in each year group so that intervention strategies are tailored to meet better the specific needs of pupils
 - ensuring monitoring and evaluation focus on how successfully different groups of pupils are learning.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

The school has successfully tackled the underachievement that was identified at the last inspection. Observations of pupils in lessons and pupils' work show that in Years 1 to 6, progress is satisfactory and sometimes good. In the best lessons, pupils take responsibility for their own learning. An effective example of this was seen in Year 1, where pupils had to make a pirate ship that would float. Pupils of all abilities worked effectively in groups to investigate different materials and discuss their choices. Pupils made good progress as the teacher helped them to apply their skills and knowledge in an interesting context. Those

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with special educational needs and/or disabilities also make at least satisfactory progress but, sometimes, lower ability pupils make slower progress than they should because work is not matched closely enough to their needs.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around school. They are friendly and polite. A very small number of pupils find it difficult to behave appropriately at all times. The school is working effectively with a range of external agencies to manage their behaviour and it is improving as a result. Pupils have well developed basic skills and good attendance. However, they have too few opportunities to develop workplace skills, such as working in teams and problem-solving to prepare them for their next stage of their education. Pupils have a strong understanding of how to stay safe, a view supported by most parents in their response to the inspection questionnaire. They have a growing understanding of healthy lifestyles. They are increasingly taking greater responsibility in the school and the wider community. The school council is particularly proud of the role they played in acquiring compost bins and improving the school gardens. Pupils' understanding of cultures other than their own is good because of the strong emphasis placed on this aspect in the curriculum.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is satisfactory and improving. Strengths of teaching include:

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- good relationships between teachers, support staff and pupils
- teachers asking open ended questions which encourage pupils to give extended responses
- regular opportunities for pupils to discuss their work with each other.

In many lessons, there is too much adult direction and insufficient time for pupils to be actively involved in their learning. When this happens, pupils sit passively and the rate of progress slows. Teachers' marking is variable. It is most effective when it gives pupils the precise guidance they need to improve their work.

The school has recently introduced a more creative approach to the curriculum. Days that focus on a specific theme are proving to be particularly popular with pupils. Pupils throughout the school spoke enthusiastically about the pirate, Viking and Greek days. They told inspectors how these days were 'making learning fun.' Pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop and apply their reading, mathematics and especially their writing skills across the curriculum.

'I feel comfortable leaving my children in the care of St Michael's knowing they will be safe, secure and supported,' commented one parent. The school successfully provides all pupils, including those whose circumstances make them most vulnerable, with a good level of care and support. A good range of partnerships support pupils' learning and well-being. The impact of partnerships can be seen in pupils' improving rates of progress, positive attitudes to learning and confidence.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders and managers, teachers and support staff have worked together well to accelerate pupils' progress, particularly in Years 1 to 4. Morale in the school is high. Staff have embraced changes with enthusiasm. Since the last inspection, the headteacher, with good support from the local authority, has helped senior leaders and middle managers to play a greater role in monitoring and evaluation. Their roles are developing satisfactorily. The school's ability to promote equality is sound. When checking the quality of learning, leaders and managers do not always focus on how different groups of pupils in each year group are learning. As a consequence, inconsistencies in pupils' performance are not always quickly identified.

Leaders have taken decisive action to improve communication with parents and carers. 'Communication has improved considerably, I particularly find the website and text messaging service helpful,' is one parent's view, shared by many. Despite these

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advancements, school leaders and the Governing Body are aware that a small minority of parents remain concerned about this aspect.

At the last inspection, the effectiveness of the governing body was judged to be inadequate. Following intensive training, the governing body has transformed the way it works. With strong direction from the chair, individual members are now fully involved in evaluating the work of the school and influencing its strategic direction. The governing body ensures that arrangements for safeguarding are robust, policies are regularly reviewed and staff are suitably trained. They have been instrumental in ensuring the school takes a more active role in promoting community cohesion. The school has strong links with a school in Africa and it is increasing the links it has with schools in contrasting locations in England.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

In this well run provision, good links with parents and carers mean children settle in quickly and feel safe. Children's skills and knowledge on entry to the Nursery are in line with those normally expected. Children begin Year 1 with skills that are above age related expectations. They make good progress in the six areas of learning because:

- the balance between adult led activities and those children can choose for themselves is appropriate
- staff promote children's personal development extremely well and this develops positive attitudes to learning
- teachers and support staff regularly discuss the performance of individual pupils and plan activities that meet their needs.

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Children are enthusiastic and confident learners. They particularly enjoy learning through practical activities. An example of this was observed during an independent role play activity. In the Reception 'shoe shop', children used their mathematical skills while they measured customers' feet and offered them a selection of shoes. On occasions, pupils in the Nursery make satisfactory progress. This is because staff miss opportunities to develop children's language and mathematical skills through activities which capture the children's interests.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

An above average of number of parents and carers responded to the inspection questionnaire. The large majority of parents hold positive views about the school's work. For instance, they are pleased with quality of teaching and the support they receive to support their child's learning. Most say their child enjoys school and is kept safe. A small number of parents raised concerns about the way the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors investigated this concern through observations and discussions with pupils and staff. They found that the school is working well with a range of agencies to encourage the very small number of pupils with challenging behaviour to behave appropriately. Approximately 15% of parents and carers disagree that their child is making enough progress and the school is well led and managed. Not all agree that the school meets their child's particular needs. Although there have been improvements in these areas, inspectors have asked the school to ensure all children make the progress of which they are capable. They have also asked leaders and managers to more carefully check the work of the school and to continue improving communications with parents and carers.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Michael's CofE (C) Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 202 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 446 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	126	63	62	31	11	5	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	111	55	82	41	5	2	2	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	81	40	110	55	8	4	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	79	39	90	45	26	13	5	2
The teaching is good at this school	76	38	113	56	6	3	2	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	82	41	107	53	11	5	1	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	65	32	125	62	7	3	1	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	65	32	111	55	12	6	1	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	70	35	101	50	18	9	3	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	59	29	103	51	19	9	5	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	68	34	106	53	13	6	2	1
The school is led and managed effectively	57	28	101	50	27	13	4	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	78	39	106	53	11	5	2	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



19 November 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Michael's CofE (C) Primary School, Lichfield, WS14 9AW

I would like to thank you for being so helpful when we recently visited your school. We enjoyed talking with you, looking at your work and visiting your lessons. We were pleased to hear how much you enjoyed the pirate, Viking and Greek days.

Here are some of the things we found:

Your school has improved and provides you with a satisfactory education. Some of you are making faster progress in mathematics, reading and writing.

You are polite, friendly and have good attitudes to learning.

The youngest children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress.

The headteacher, teachers and the adults that work with you help you to feel safe. You told us that they take good care of you. We agree.

There are three main things which the school needs to do to improve further:

Plan lessons which help you to make even better progress. We have asked teachers to give you activities that help you to do your best. We have also asked them to think about ways in which they can help you to develop your reading, writing and mathematics across all curriculum subjects.

Make sure all your lessons are as good as the best ones. To do this we have asked teachers to give you more opportunities to work practically and make sure that you understand what you need to do during lessons before they ask you to work independently. We have also asked teachers to let you know how to improve your work more often, when they mark your books.

Ensure that school leaders carefully check how well you are all doing so that they can make sure you do your best.

You can all help by continuing to work hard and letting the teachers know if you do not understand an activity or if it is too easy.

We would like to wish you, the teachers, the adults that work with you, the office staff and the governors the very best for the future. We enjoyed the time we spent with you all.

Yours sincerely

Usha Devi

Her Majesty's Inspector

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