

St Michael's CofE (A) First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124343
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	359641
Inspection dates	12–13 July 2011
Reporting inspector	Mary Davis

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	114
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Esther Burd
Headteacher	Jayne Grundy
Date of previous school inspection	7 May 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed 11 lessons and all five teachers. Inspectors held meetings with groups of pupils, members of the governing body, staff, and groups of parents and carers. They observed the school's work and looked at: policies, development planning, data related to the tracking of pupils' progress, senior leaders' monitoring of teaching and learning, safeguarding documents, minutes of governing body meetings, pupils' work and 44 questionnaires from parents and carers, together with those from pupils and staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How effectively have leaders addressed inconsistency in attainment at Key Stage 2, particularly that of more-able pupils?
- How safe do pupils feel and how effective is the school's response to their concerns about bullying?
- How well do teachers plan to meet pupils' individual learning needs, especially those of the more able?
- Do pupils understand their targets and how to improve their work?

Information about the school

St Michael's C of E First School is a smaller-than-average school of its type. Most pupils are White British and there are very few who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The school has National Healthy School status and the Activemark. It has been designated a Dyslexia Friendly School.

A privately run nursery on the site, and before-and-after school clubs which use the same buildings, were not part of this inspection.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

St Michael's C of E First school is a good school. It has made considerable improvements since its previous inspection and some aspects of its work are now outstanding. This is the result of the unstinting and highly effective work of the headteacher, supported by a strong leadership team. Together they have inspired the school community to develop provision and to raise pupils' outcomes. As a result the school has demonstrated a good capacity to sustain improvements and to develop further. Pupils enjoy school and their outstanding behaviour and considerable enthusiasm for lessons results in them making good progress. Most parents and carers are very positive about the school's work. A typical comment was, 'My child has thoroughly enjoyed being at St Michael's... a great school with a friendly atmosphere.'

Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage as a result of the consistently good teaching they receive. Pupils continue to make good progress in Key Stages 1 and 2. As a result, attainment across the school has risen over the past three years. Attainment is in line with the levels expected by the end of Year 4. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels is also rising; although not as rapidly in mathematics in Key Stage 2, as it is in reading and writing. The newly introduced creative curriculum is exciting pupils' interest and curiosity. The memorable experiences planned to start each new theme provide inspiration for writing, much improving its quality throughout the school. The pupils have an outstanding understanding of the importance of adopting a healthy lifestyle. The school council makes a significant contribution to the development of the school, having chosen the new uniform and provided their ideas for the new extensions to the buildings. Pupils express their pride that their sponsorship is supporting the education of a child from Brazil.

There is a persistent drive to improve the quality of teaching with the result that teaching is now good across the school. Lessons provide the pupils with a good variety of interesting, active and exciting tasks. Assessment information is used well to plan very effectively to meet the individual needs of pupils. In most lessons the teachers explain tasks well so that pupils make a quick start to their work although the purpose of lessons is not always made clear enough. In most lessons pupils are well challenged, but occasionally more-able pupils are given too long to complete tasks and opportunities are missed to advance their learning once they show they understand. The marking of the pupils' work is of high quality and helps them to improve and make faster progress.

Outstanding care, guidance and support are evident in all aspects of the school's work and in the way each pupil is cared for as an individual. Pupils whose circumstances may make them potentially vulnerable and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are particularly well supported, and this is greatly valued by their parents and carers. All aspects of safeguarding and child protection procedures are exemplary.

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Self-evaluation is robust. Progress tracking enables leaders to quickly identify and address any emerging areas of underachievement. The school's engagement with parents and carers is outstanding as it is highly effective in involving them closely in its work.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in Key Stage 2, particularly in mathematics, by:
 - ensuring more-able pupils are consistently challenged by the tasks they are set.
- Accelerate the pace of learning so that it is consistently rapid in all lessons, by:
 - making sure that tasks are always explained fully to pupils
 - setting challenging time targets for pupils to complete their work
 - moving pupils to the next task as soon as it clear their understanding is secure.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Children enter the Reception class with skills that are below those usually found at this age, in most areas of learning. The drive for improvement has brought faster progress throughout the school with the result that there is a wave of rising attainment. This has had greatest impact on attainment at the end of Year 2, which is now above average. Attainment at the end of Year 4 is not as high because of the slower progress the pupils made earlier in their school lives. This is most evident in mathematics where not as many pupils are reaching the higher levels as there are in reading and writing.

Pupils are excited by the active tasks they are set. For example, Year 2 pupils successfully carried out experiments to discover the best material for making a switch for an electrical circuit during a science lesson. Pupils are developing good levels of independence. They are confident to identify what they need to improve and in setting their own personal targets. The one-to-one tuition provided for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities builds their confidence, particularly in mathematics. They make equally good progress to that of their peers. The linguistic skills of the very few pupils who speak English as an additional language are celebrated and the specialist language support they receive, for example to support them with sentence construction, has enabled them to speak and write English with increasing fluency.

Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet and, as a result of road safety training. They are quick to encourage others to play safely. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary. Large numbers of pupils take up the wide range of opportunities for sport, both during and after school. Attendance is consistently above average. Pupils have a keen sense of right and wrong. They get on well with each other and have a good understanding and respect for those with different beliefs and backgrounds. They enjoy communicating with pupils from their partner school in Kenya and learning about their lives. They are also developing an understanding of their own culture and an empathy with people in the past. For example, Year 4 pupils dressed up in 1930's costume, complete with gas masks, and went on a steam train to experience what it was like to be an evacuee at the start of the Second World War.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
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?

Lessons are lively and interesting because teachers plan tasks that, in most lessons, build on what the pupils already know and address any gaps in their learning. However, this is not consistently the case, so that occasionally more-able pupils are not sufficiently challenged, particularly in mathematics. The teachers use a broad range of resources, including information and communication technology, to enrich learning. Teaching assistants question, support and challenge effectively. Many lessons seize opportunities that engage the pupils. For example, in a mathematics lesson, the pupils worked out how many bottles of shampoo the headteacher would need to take with her when visiting their African partners. In most lessons teachers are quick to spot and address any misunderstanding and use questioning well to challenge pupils to justify their answers.

The curriculum is carefully modified to meet pupils' needs. Curriculum themes are planned to ensure lessons are active, exciting, respond to pupils' own ideas and engage boys' in reading and writing. For example 'The Golden Ticket' involved literacy, numeracy, art and geography, as pupils took an imaginary journey to Mexico. The curriculum is enriched by special events such as the recent enterprise week when each class was given a budget and developed their business skills, making such items as lavender bags and 'dream-catchers' to sell at the summer fair. A wide variety of extra-curricular activities are enjoyed by the pupils, such as dance, judo, and eco and newspaper clubs.

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The school works extremely effectively with parents to foster excellent care, guidance and support for pupils. When they first start school pupils attend induction sessions with their parents and carers. Parents and carers are also closely involved in the individual programmes for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, contributing to their good progress. The school can point to the helpful impact its actions have in promoting the learning of these pupils. A common stance on the importance of regular attendance has been established across all local schools. This is a consistent focus with pupils and their parents and carers resulting in good levels of attendance. Specialist support has prepared teachers to support pupils with dyslexia. One example is a 'dyslexia friendly' handwriting scheme adopted across the whole school that has had a significant impact on improving the quality of pupils' handwriting. Pupils are encouraged to care for and support each other, for example, as 'buddies' and sports leaders resulting in excellent behaviour and high levels of involvement in healthy sporting activities.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and the leadership team are continuing to build on their many successes to date and are relentlessly pursuing further improvements in the quality of teaching. They have eradicated inadequate teaching and ensured most lessons are now good but have yet to establish consistently high quality teaching throughout the school. Middle leaders ably monitor the effectiveness of their areas of responsibility and can point to key successes in improving the provision, as a result of focused action planning and rigorous monitoring procedures. Leaders have robust strategies to monitor pupils' progress and rapidly address any underachievement immediately it becomes evident.

Leaders are well supported by the governing body, whose members have an in-depth understanding of areas of strength and weakness. The governors have been trained to hold leaders to account and do so to good effect. They regularly review safeguarding policies and procedures. As a result, child protection practice is faultless. Record keeping, site security, communication with relevant agencies and staff training are of high quality. Parents and carers strongly endorse the school as a safe place for their children to be.

The school has responded very positively to requests from parents and now provides information for parents and carers using a wide variety of media. The parents' forum provides the opportunity for them to express their views and contribute ideas. Regular workshops are provided, for example on e-safety and also frequent opportunities for parents and carers to join lessons and support their child's learning including 'dads and lads' sessions.

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Effective partnership with the local cluster of schools provides opportunities for professional development and sharing good practice. Sports leaders from the secondary school provide valuable support for a variety of sporting activities and strong partnerships with external agencies including the police and social services enhance the school's care provision.

The school ensures that its work is at the heart of the community and seeks opportunities to welcome the community into the school. Strong international links have been established and a link with a local school with pupils from a diverse range of ethnic backgrounds is currently being forged. The school promotes equality of opportunity well and closely evaluates the performance and participation of all groups of pupils. This vigilance ensures that all are included and that there is no discrimination. The school has recently sought specialist advice to ensure that it is doing all it can to promote and celebrate diversity.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
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	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage provides an inspiring setting, including a recently improved outdoor area, where children enjoy their learning. They make good and, occasionally, outstanding progress in all areas of learning. They are confident and imaginative in all they do. They are able to work independently and understand classroom routines such as washing their hands and moving around safely. Children enjoy being able to choose from a variety of fruit provided and 'leap for life' exercise sessions encourage the adoption of a healthy lifestyle. Relationships are positive and children understand the importance of sharing and taking turns. Adult support is focused well on individual needs and progress towards learning goals is carefully recorded, informing teachers' planning for the 'next steps' in learning. Tasks are well matched to pupils' varying needs. For example,

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in a phonics session, the teacher challenged children to read words of different lengths according to their ability. Leaders have established a safe environment and excellent partnership with parents and carers. Good teamwork is evident and there is a common sense of purpose. Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is well supported by the school's leaders. Leaders maintain good curriculum links with Key Stage 1 to establish effective learning practice and to ensure that skills, particularly in literacy, can be built upon as children move up through the school.

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

All of the parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire agreed that their child enjoys school. The very large majority of parents and carers responded positively to all of the questions. A few parents and carers felt they were not kept well informed about their child's progress or helped to support their learning. The inspectors spoke to a number of parents and staff and reviewed a range of documents. They found the school provides a wide range of opportunities for parents and carers to talk to teachers, in addition to written reports and consultation evenings. A few parents expressed concerns about the effectiveness of behaviour management. Inspectors looked very closely at behaviour in lessons and on the playground and found it to be outstanding. In addition they found the care and support of those very few pupils with behavioural difficulties to be extremely effective.

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 (A) First 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 44 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 114 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	36	82	8	18	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	32	73	10	23	2	5	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	24	55	13	30	5	11	2	5
My child is making enough progress at this school	21	49	18	42	3	7	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	25	57	18	41	0	0	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	25	57	13	30	5	11	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	28	64	15	34	1	2	0	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)	25	57	17	39	1	2	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	23	52	18	41	2	5	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	19	43	18	41	4	9	3	7
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	18	41	21	48	3	7	2	5
The school is led and managed effectively	20	45	19	43	1	2	4	9
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	28	64	13	30	2	5	1	2

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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



14 July 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Michael's CofE (A) First School, Stafford, ST19 5DJ

Thank you very much for the welcome you gave to me and my colleague when we visited the school for its recent inspection. We enjoyed talking with you and seeing all that you do. We particularly enjoyed seeing your activities on sports activity day.

Our inspection has judged that you go to a good school. The care that the school provides for you is outstanding so that you feel safe and know how to keep yourselves safe. The standards that you reach are rising, and are currently typical of pupils of your age. We have asked your teachers to help you do even better, especially in mathematics. Your behaviour is excellent. You enjoy lessons and all the activities that are provided for you, including the visits and clubs. You have an outstanding understanding of how to stay healthy and really enjoy sporting activities and using the playground equipment.

Your teachers provide lessons that are fun and interesting but some of you told us that you sometimes find the work too easy. So we have asked the teachers to challenge you more and help you to work at a faster pace. You know your targets and enjoy setting your own personal ones and you told us that teachers always tell you how to improve your work. You make an outstanding contribution to your school community, including through the school council. We were impressed with how smart you look in the uniform you have chosen. You are kind and considerate to those around you. You have a good understanding of different religious celebrations and enjoy hearing from your partner school in Kenya.

The leaders of the school are doing all they can to make sure you learn well and develop well as young people. All of you can help them by continuing to work hard on the tasks the teachers set for you.

I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mary Davis

Lead inspector

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