

St Michael's Church of England Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103418
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	376900
Inspection dates	6–7 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Terry Elston

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	328
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kevin Ellis
Headteacher	Samantha Cosgrove
Date of previous school inspection	24 September 2008
School address	Nantmel Grove Bartley Green Birmingham B32 3JS
Telephone number	0121 4644345
Fax number	0121 4643343
Email address	enquiry@stmicb32.bham.sch.uk

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 21 lessons taught by all 11 teachers. They held meetings with the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. The team observed the school's work and looked at the tracking of pupils' progress, curricular planning documents, examples of the ways the school promotes community cohesion, evidence of lesson observations and information from questionnaires completed by pupils, staff and 113 parents and carers.

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

- How effectively do leaders at all levels evaluate the quality of teaching and learning to ensure consistently good practice throughout the school?
- How well does the school ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make sufficient progress?
- Are measures taken by the school to improve attendance working.
- Why is it that boys do not do as well as girls in writing?

Information about the school

This is larger than the average-sized primary school. The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage, with a small minority from different ethnic minority backgrounds. Only a few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is above average. The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. The school has recently gained the Activemark award and achieved Healthy Schools status. A private organisation manages care facilities on the site for children before and after school, which is subject to a separate 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

This is a good school valued highly by parents and carers. They rightly feel that this is an improving school, where their children feel exceptionally safe and leave as mature, well-rounded individuals. The school cares for pupils extremely well and they say how much this helps them grow in confidence. One parent, typical of many, commented, 'This is a very happy school where children do well in all aspects of their development.'

Pupils enjoy school but, while the leaders have done much to reduce unnecessary absences, a very small minority of pupils have too much time off. Pupils behave well and work hard. As a result, they make good progress. By the end of Key Stage 1 their attainment in English and mathematics is average, and by the end of Key Stage 2 it is above average. Throughout the school, reading and mathematics are particular strengths because teachers are very good at teaching basic word-building and number skills. At Key Stage 2, while the quality of pupils' writing is improving, attainment is not as high as in other subjects. This is because the provision enables most girls to make faster progress and reach higher standards in writing than some boys, who are not always so engaged by the subject matter.

Pupils speak highly of their teachers and the way they help them enjoy learning. As one pupil commented, 'Teachers make it fun so we love coming to school.' Leaders have worked successfully with teachers to improve the consistency of good teaching and learning and the vast majority of lessons benefit from a fast pace and work matched well to the needs of different ability groups. In the few cases learning is slower, because teachers talk too much and boys in particular start to lose interest. This is particularly the case in writing. Teachers and teaching assistants provide good support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities who make good progress in their academic and personal development.

The teachers have developed an interesting curriculum with a good balance of academic and creative activities. The planning links subjects together well, so in topics such as 'Light and Sound' pupils develop skills in reading, writing, mathematics, art and design and science. The recent focus on enhancing provision for literacy and numeracy in the curriculum is paying dividends as can be seen in pupils' improving attainment in all subjects. Pupils embrace the many opportunities to learn about healthy living and speak with authority on the value of exercise and eating nutritious food.

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The headteacher leads well with high expectations of all members of the school community. Her unwavering focus on 'non-negotiable' targets for teachers helps to account for the school's good improvement since the previous inspection in the quality of teaching and pupils' attainment in both English and mathematics. The headteacher works closely with other leaders to evaluate the school's performance and use information from assessments effectively to identify pupils who are underachieving. Excellent partnerships with other schools and businesses in the area provide cost-effective training and opportunities to share expertise. In particular, they have helped improve provision for music, science and information and communication technology, while providing opportunities to make best use of the abilities of gifted and talented pupils. With these many strengths in the leadership and strong track record of tackling weaknesses the school has a good capacity to sustain its improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise boys' attainment in writing at Key Stage 2 by:
 - providing more writing tasks that stimulate their interest and encourage them to write more
 - reducing the amount of time they have to listen before they put pen to paper.
- Improve attendance further by continuing to work closely with those parents and carers whose children have a high rate of absence.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Children enter the school with skills a little below those typical of their ages, particularly in language and personal development. Data from national test results and the evidence of pupils' learning in lessons show that they make good progress from their starting points. In Key Stage 1, pupils enjoy reading because they learn to tackle unfamiliar words with increasing confidence. Their writing is mostly neat and made interesting for the reader by the use of exciting words. They do well in mathematics because teachers focus on teaching basic number skills and then provide many opportunities to use them to solve problems. For example, one class made rapid progress when using number lines to add together large numbers and then working in teams to discover different ways to multiply them. In Key Stage 2, pupils make good progress in reading and are quick at scanning information in books and on computers to research topics. For example, their work on Mexico shows how well they use different sources to gain a thorough knowledge of a topic. Their mathematical skills develop well and the vast majority are confident calculating quickly in their head. Pupils' writing is improving, especially that of girls. Some boys struggle to become motivated to write, especially when the teacher talks for too long.

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Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well in class while enjoying good opportunities to work independently. They improve their reading skills particularly well by learning from an early age how to recognise sounds in words. The few pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress and are often among the highest-attaining pupils by the time they reach Year 6.

Pupils develop their personal skills very well and this makes an important contribution to their academic progress. They reflect deeply on issues such as poverty in developing countries and show a good sense of right and wrong. Their excellent awareness of how to stay safe is evident as they talk very knowledgeably about internet safety and the dangers of busy roads around the school. They enjoy taking responsibility and do it well. For example, the eco-warriors do much to make other pupils aware of the need to recycle waste and conserve natural resources. Pupils are proud of their local community and are often praised for their musical performances to nearby homes for the elderly and enthusiastic support for charities. They take a pride in their local area and help keep it free from litter. Their good literacy and numeracy skills and involvement in activities such as running the school bank help prepare them well for the future.

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	2
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	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

In the vast majority of lessons teachers capture pupils' interest through exciting introductions and effective use of resources. For example, in one lesson, Year 1

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

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pupils made rapid progress in their number skills when the teacher told them how their guinea pig broke into a greengrocer's shop. The teachers showed them on the interactive whiteboard how many carrots, apples and tomatoes it had consumed and they gleefully worked out the grand total. Teachers show a good knowledge of subjects and explain new work clearly. They are good at making clear what learning is expected by the end of the lesson and revisiting these goals as it proceeds. In the few lessons where progress in learning is satisfactory rather than good, teachers talk for too long and leave too little time for pupils to work independently at their own pace. The teachers make detailed assessments of pupils' progress and use these well to plan future work. They mark books with comments that give pupils good targets for improvement.

The curriculum links subjects together well to make learning interesting. The provision for developing reading and numeracy skills is good and helps pupils build well on their previous learning. The provision for writing does not always appeal to some boys. A wide range of visits and visitors and a good number of popular clubs enriches the curriculum after school. The very well planned personal, social and health education provision ensures that pupils gain a thorough awareness of health and safety issues and learn the importance of understanding others' feelings.

Parents and carers are right to feel that the school provides excellent care and support for their children. They appreciate the way staff know their children so well as individuals and are always there if they need support. Pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable benefit from outstanding support, both from the school and from a wide range of outside professionals. Their personal and academic development is checked carefully and the school works closely with parents and carers to ensure these pupils' needs are met fully. The school has extensive systems to help new pupils settle in and they soon feel part of the school community. The school works very closely with parents and carers to improve attendance and discourage them from taking their children on holiday in school time. While there is still some way to go, the latest figures show absences have been greatly reduced.

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's high expectations of all members of the school community are important reasons for the school's success. She sets ambitious targets and drives improvement rigorously. The headteacher works closely with other leaders to ensure

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that pupils feel safe and free from any bullying or harassment. The good focus on providing equal opportunities for all pupils ensures that the leaders have a very good awareness of progress made by different groups and are able to implement effective strategies to support those at risk of falling behind. In this way, attainment in both English and mathematics has been lifted from below average to above in little over two years.

The school has a good partnership with parents and carers who say how much they value the high quality of information about the curriculum and their children's progress. They feel welcome in school and believe their concerns are taken seriously.

The school enhances community cohesion well by creating valuable links with contrasting schools in the United Kingdom, France and Africa. These provide pupils with good first-hand knowledge of different faiths, cultures and social backgrounds.

The good governing body provides effective support and challenge to the school. Its members have a clear awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are keen to hold the leaders to account. The governing body has a good involvement in establishing rigorous safeguarding systems. Training for staff is thorough and the school keeps rigorous records of any incidents. The policies for keeping pupils safe are reviewed regularly and valued highly by pupils as well as by parents and carers.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
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	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
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 provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Parents and carers feel strongly that the comprehensive induction procedures help their children settle quickly into school and thoroughly enjoy their time in the Nursery and

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Reception classes. The good teaching ensures that children make good progress in all areas of learning. They develop their independence well and learn to choose sensibly from the range of activities on offer, enjoying counting games as much as acting as shopkeepers 'selling' apples and broccoli. The adults observe children's learning and development carefully and make detailed written and photographic records of their achievements in their 'learning journals'. The curriculum is planned well so that the children have a good balance of activities they choose for themselves and those directed by adults. They enjoy many opportunities to use the excellent outside area to work and play.

Children make particularly good progress in their personal, social and emotional development. Adults encourage them to take care of themselves and learn the rules for good behaviour. The provision is led and managed well with a good awareness of how it can be improved. For example, the staff are currently working on using the learning journals more effectively to plan the next steps in children's learning.

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

The proportion of parents and carers who completed the questionnaire is above average for a primary school. Their views are extremely positive. The vast majority appreciate the way their children enjoy school, feel safe and learn how to live healthy lives. They feel well informed about their children's progress and always feel welcome in school. Parents and carers believe the school is very well led and that their children are making good progress. They say that the teaching and learning are good. Evidence during the inspection supports these views. A very small minority express concerns about the way the school deals with unacceptable behaviour, but inspectors found that any rare incidents of poor behaviour are managed well.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Michael's Church of England Aided 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 113 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 328 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	76	67	34	30	2	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	79	70	33	29	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	67	59	38	34	2	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	59	52	46	41	3	3	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	63	56	47	42	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	61	54	47	42	2	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	54	48	54	48	1	1	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)	55	49	49	43	1	1	1	1
The school meets my child’s particular needs	59	52	47	42	2	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	59	52	42	37	5	4	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	53	47	52	46	1	1	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	70	62	40	35	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	72	64	38	34	2	2	0	0

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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 08 April 2011 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.



10 October 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of St Michael's Church of England Aided Primary School,
Birmingham, B32 3JS**

Thank you for making the inspectors so welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed seeing you work hard in lessons and play so happily outside in your beautiful grounds. Those who were kind enough to speak with us showed how proud you are of your school. You say yours is a good school and we agree.

You behave well, listen carefully to your teachers and make good progress. Nearly all of you come to school every day but a few have too many absences. You have a good understanding of how to live a healthy life and know all about how to stay safe. We were impressed with the way you take responsibility and do things like keeping the school free from litter. Your teachers provide an interesting range of activities for you and you enjoy the many clubs at lunchtime and after school. You rightly say that teachers make learning fun and are good at helping you when you find things difficult. All staff at the school take excellent care of you. Those in charge of your school do a good job and work very closely with your parents and carers to help you get the best out of your time here.

Your leaders are always looking for ways to improve the school. These are the improvements we want them to make.

- Improve boys' writing so they do as well as girls. You boys can help by telling your teachers the kinds of things that you would enjoy writing about.
- Work more closely with parents and carers to make sure those pupils who miss a lot of school attend every day.

Best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Terry Elston
Lead inspector

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