

# Michaelchurch Escley Primary School

Michaelchurch Escley, Hereford, HR2 0PT

## Inspection dates

27–28 September 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Pupils' progress varies and has not been good enough in some year groups.
- Some pupils do not have a sufficiently mature attitude to learning. They find it hard to concentrate and take too long to get down to their work.
- Pupils' spelling and writing skills are weaker than other aspects of their work.
- Expectations of what pupils can achieve have not been sufficiently high in some classes.
- The marking of pupils' work has not been effective enough to help pupils to improve more rapidly.
- Leaders and governors in the past have not checked closely enough how well pupils are doing or how effective initiatives have been in securing rapid improvement in teaching.

### The school has the following strengths

- Pupils make rapid progress in Year 6.
- Older pupils enjoy reading and reach above average standards by the end of Year 6.
- The quality of teaching has improved this term and pupils' progress is improving.
- Teachers are now providing pupils with a greater level of challenge and are working hard to develop a better learning ethos.
- Some of the teaching is imaginative and provides excellent opportunities for learning.
- Provision for the youngest children, in Reception, has improved recently.
- Pupils enjoy school, and their conduct around the school is good.
- Relationships among pupils and between pupils and adults are good.
- Pupils feel safe in school and say there is no bullying.
- The governing body has managed the process of federation extremely well.
- New leadership arrangements and federation with Longtown have brought fresh impetus to the school and provided staff with good opportunities for professional development.
- The school's current leaders have a good understanding of what needs to improve.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed nine lessons, three in each class.
- Discussions were held with two members of the governing body, a representative from the local authority, the headteacher, all of the full-time teaching staff, the special educational needs coordinator and various groups of pupils.
- The inspector looked at a range of documentary evidence, including the school's tracking of pupils' progress, documents relating to safeguarding and special educational needs, the school improvement plan and the school's self-evaluation.
- Pupils' written work in a range of subjects from the previous school year was scrutinised, as well as work from the current year.
- The views of 25 parents, as recorded on Ofsted's Parent View online survey, were taken into account.

## Inspection team

Graham Sims, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than average.
- At around 2%, the proportion of pupils supported through school action is below average.
- The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, 15%, is above the national average.
- Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds and all speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national average and so the school receives very little additional funding (pupil premium) for such pupils.
- Pupils are taught in three mixed-age classes. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught alongside pupils in Years 1 and 2.
- The school entered into federation with Longtown Primary School on 1 September 2012, when a new governing body was constituted and a new Chair was appointed. The two schools now share the same governing body and the same headteacher.
- There have been significant changes in staffing and governance since the previous inspection. The school's previous headteacher left the school at the end of the summer term 2012. The new headteacher took up post in September 2012.
- Two of the school's three full-time teachers had been in post for just over three weeks at the time of the inspection.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress for pupils at the end of Year 6.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and pupils' learning by:
  - helping pupils to develop a more mature approach to learning which enables them to get down to work quickly and to become more independent and self-motivated learners
  - ensuring that teachers always have high expectations of what pupils can achieve
  - ensuring that pupils' work is marked regularly and rigorously, and that pupils are given a clear idea of what they need to do to improve their work.
- Improve the quality of pupils' writing and spelling by:
  - ensuring that the teaching of phonics is given much greater prominence and that pupils learn the correspondence between letters and the sounds they make and apply this knowledge to their writing
  - providing creative ways for pupils to develop their literacy skills through other subjects.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management and governance by:
  - ensuring that staff assess pupils' work accurately and track pupils' progress on a termly basis
  - identifying any pupils who are falling behind and taking decisive action to improve their progress
  - ensuring governors are rigorous in holding the school to account for pupils' progress.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Children join the school with skills, knowledge and abilities which are typical of those expected for their age. Their attainment at the end of the Reception Year has been broadly average for the last few years. They develop good social skills as they integrate well with older pupils, but their knowledge of letters and sounds has been weaker.
- Standards at the end of Year 6 fluctuate, as does the number of pupils in each cohort. Over the last three years, standards have been broadly average in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- Pupils' progress varies as they move through the school. Progress in Years 1 to 3 has been comparatively slow. Many younger pupils find it hard to concentrate on their work in class and do not display a sufficiently mature attitude to learn more quickly. Progress is quicker in Years 4 and 5 and accelerates rapidly in Year 6, where pupils learn to apply themselves more diligently to their work.
- Pupils have not all developed a secure understanding of the correspondence between letters and sounds (phonics). This has adversely affected the progress of the less able younger pupils in reading and the ability of some pupils to spell words accurately. Pupils were observed during the inspection participating enthusiastically in the recently introduced daily phonics lessons. These are beginning to address the issue but have not yet had time to make a significant impact in accelerating progress.
- Standards in reading are above average by the end of Year 6. Although many pupils make a slower start in learning to read fluently, older pupils develop an enthusiasm for reading because of good teaching in Years 5 and 6. During the inspection, for example, pupils were eager to contribute to a discussion about their preferences for, and the characteristics of, different genres of writing.
- Although most pupils reach the nationally expected level in writing by the end of Year 6, spelling is the weakest area for many of them. When motivated, pupils are keen to write at length, but many younger pupils and some older ones take a long time to settle down to their writing activities. Pupils do not apply writing skills well in subjects such as history, geography and science.
- Pupils' progress is improving in all classes. One pupil commented that the atmosphere in the school had improved since the arrival of the new headteacher. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 listen attentively and respond well to their teacher. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 enjoy interesting activities which keep them engaged, but do not always show sufficient maturity in their approach to work. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are keen to answer the teacher's questions, but some have yet to adapt to the expectation not to call out and are slow to start working on their own. Children in Reception demonstrate great adaptability, participating in whole-class sessions with older pupils and discovering new things as they work outside with their assistant.
- The progress of disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and others who receive additional funding varies like that of their peers. Although they are often provided with additional support in the classroom, expectations of what these pupils, and others, can achieve have not always been sufficiently high.

**The quality of teaching** **requires improvement**

- Scrutiny of pupils' work from the previous year indicates that some of the tasks given to pupils have lacked interest and challenge. The range of work has not always been sufficiently broad, particularly in subjects like history, geography and science. Some pieces of work have been left unfinished or completed without sufficient care.
- Scrutiny of pupils' work from the current year indicates that the quality of teaching has improved, but new approaches have not been in place long enough to break some poor learning habits. In all three classes, teachers were observed setting pupils an appropriate level of challenge. Some pupils relish the challenge and make good progress as a result; others still rely too much on the help of adults.
- The marking of work in pupils' books has been poor. Too many pieces of work have not been looked at by the teacher, too many mistakes have been left uncorrected and pupils have not been given clear guidance on what they need to do to improve. The marking of pupils' work has improved significantly this term, but pupils have yet to develop good habits of going back over their work to learn from their mistakes.
- The teaching observed during the inspection was good. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 engaged in lively discussion, responding well to probing questions from the teacher. In Years 3 and 4, the teacher provided an imaginative range of activities to help pupils to investigate and learn about the properties of two-dimensional shapes. Good teaching of phonics in Years 1 and 2 helped pupils to develop their understanding of how words are spelt, while children in the Reception Year enjoyed learning to recognise individual letters by sending them down a water chute.
- Some of the teaching is imaginative and provides excellent potential for pupils to develop a wide range of skills. In Years 3 and 4, for example, the teacher gave a vivid account of the Greek victory over the Persians at the battle of Marathon. Pupils were then divided into groups to produce a television broadcast, each group reporting from a different point of view; one group, for example, reported from a Persian perspective, another from the Athenian point of view. Some pupils rose well to the challenge provided, others found the task hard as they are not used to working on open-ended tasks independently.
- Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved recently. Children are now given more opportunities to learn through play, both within a separate area in the classroom and outdoors. Warm relationships, the welcoming attitude of other pupils and the support of additional adults have helped the current small cohort of three pupils to make good progress in their personal and social development.
- Favourable staffing ratios ensure that there is plenty of support available for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. At times, however, these pupils are still too dependent on the help of adults, and not enough is done to help them to become independent learners or to develop a good work ethic. Sometimes, support staff do not do enough to challenge pupils or intervene quickly enough to refocus pupils' attention.

**The behaviour and safety of pupils** **requires improvement**

- Pupils' conduct around the school is good. Pupils are polite and courteous to adults and visitors, and they show consideration to each other. Older pupils are particularly good at making younger pupils feel welcome, and the family atmosphere is a strength which is appreciated by parents, carers and pupils.

- Pupils feel safe in school and free from any fear of bullying. Pupils could not recall any instances of bullying or discriminatory behaviour occurring in school, and the school's behaviour logs record no recent incidents. Pupils remember training that they have received about different types of bullying and on how to keep themselves safe when using the internet.
- Pupils say that they enjoy school. They like the friendly atmosphere and get on well with each other and with their teachers and other adults. Parents and carers who responded to the Parent View survey are also pleased with the standards of behaviour and are reassured that their children feel safe in school.
- The level of attendance is close to the national average for primary schools, but lower than attendance in schools of similar type and size. The school has not been particularly rigorous in promoting the importance of good attendance.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning require improvement. Although they improve as they move through the school, solid foundations for learning have not been laid at an early enough stage. Most pupils participate enthusiastically in class discussions, but they are often slow to get down to their individual or group tasks, and their responses to challenging activities indicate lack of maturity and a reluctance to use initiative and exercise independence.
- Teachers are working hard to develop a better learning ethos. For example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 were reminded very clearly that they should not interrupt; a few pupils still found it hard not to follow this request. Occasionally, teachers praise pupils for work which is not particularly praiseworthy and this confuses pupils' sense of values.

### **The leadership and management requires improvement**

- Arrangements for checking how effectively the school has dealt with issues identified at the previous inspection have not been rigorous enough in the past to ensure rapid improvement. Not enough has been done to improve pupils' spelling, handwriting and use of vocabulary or the quality of teachers' marking. However, these areas are now being tackled with vigour. Learning is now good in phonics lessons and marking much more effective.
- Major changes to the leadership and governance of the school have brought fresh impetus, but have not yet had sufficient time to have a major impact on pupils' achievement. Staff are enthusiastic about and feel energised by the new federation arrangements with Longtown Primary School. By sharing out responsibilities between the two schools, they feel they now have a much better opportunity to carry out their roles more effectively than before.
- Arrangements within the federation for the professional development of staff and the improvement of teaching and learning have focused teachers' attention on important issues. Initiatives to improve handwriting and the teaching of phonics have been implemented this term. Staff have valued having new colleagues with whom they can share ideas, discuss their planning and moderate their assessments.
- The school's recently produced self-evaluation is accurate and the new development plan identifies relevant priorities for improvement. The headteacher's evaluation of teaching within the classroom shows insight into the strengths and areas for development of the school's current teachers. Sensible arrangements have been made to manage the

performance of teachers, but the efficacy of these arrangements has yet to be tested as two of the three full-time teachers have only just taken up their posts.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- has not been rigorous enough in the past in identifying and holding the school to account for pupils' differing rates of progress
  - has been highly successful in leading the school through the process of federating with another small primary school and in helping parents, carers and staff to understand and support the new federation
  - has taken decisive steps through federating to make the most efficient use of the school's financial resources and to secure the school's future
  - has ensured the newly constituted governing body has a good range of educational, financial and managerial expertise to support the school; it has not yet had time to prove how effective this expertise is in practice.
- The local authority has increased the level of support it provides for the school and has been instrumental in introducing a new system for tracking pupils' progress. This new system has helped to highlight where pupils' progress has not been good enough. It has yet to ensure the accuracy of teachers' assessments, although new procedures have been introduced for the moderation of assessments across the federation.
- The safeguarding of pupils meets requirements. The school has a detailed record of the checks on staff to ensure that they are suitable to work with children. Staff provide good care for the pupils throughout the school, and parents and carers feel their children are looked after well.
- The school provides sufficient resources to cater for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. The school ensures effective liaison with external agencies, parents and carers by sharing a full-time special educational needs coordinator with other schools. Although procedures are followed correctly, there has been limited focus on the progress made by individual pupils as a result of specific support provided for them. This means the school has not rigorously evaluated how well it ensures equal opportunities.
- The school provides some good enrichment of the curriculum through visits and additional activities. Teachers are starting to be more creative in their planning of subjects like history, geography and science, but have not used these subjects sufficiently well in the past as a vehicle to develop pupils' literacy skills.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	116714
<b>Local authority</b>	Herefordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	401617

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	46
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Kym Wilcocks
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sian McGrath
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	24 May 2010
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