



# St Michael's Church of England Combined School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 110414  
**LEA** Buckinghamshire LEA  
**Inspection number** 278427  
**Inspection dates** 13 October 2005 to 14 October 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Charalambos Loizou AI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Chapel Square
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled		Stewkley
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11		Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire LU7 0HA
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01525240248
<b>Number on roll</b>	225	<b>Fax number</b>	01525240248
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr Frank Gesoff
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	19 June 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs D O McClellan

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

St. Michael's is an average size primary school situated in the village of Stewkley near Leighton Buzzard. The pupils are mainly from white British backgrounds. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is very low compared with most schools as is the proportion of pupils with special educational needs. Attainment on entry to the reception year is above average. The proportion of pupils joining the school at other than the usual times is high because the school also admits pupils in Year 3 from a local infant school. This is a popular school with strong church and community links.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

The school is confident in its own evaluation that it is a good school. Inspectors agree that the school provides a good education and there are some outstanding features. Parents think highly of the school because the pupils enjoy and benefit from the many opportunities it provides. Pupils achieve well because the teaching is effective and sets high expectations. The overall leadership and management of the school are good. Robust self-evaluation together with the exceptional leadership of the headteacher, have brought about very good improvements since the last inspection. The school provides good value for money and is well placed to improve further. The children in the reception year achieve well because of good teaching. Most children exceed the goals expected by the end of the reception year. In the rest of the school the pupils achieve well in relation to their starting points so standards are high in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. The pupils enjoy their education because their personal development and the provision made for their care, guidance, and support are outstanding. The curriculum offers a very good range of activities, including extra-curricular activities that include sport, music, and art. Teachers and support staff assess and monitor the pupils well in the subjects of English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT). In other subjects, assessments do not provide enough detail about the pupils' skill levels.

### What the school should do to improve further

\* Continue to improve assessment in the non-core subjects to help monitor the progress of the pupils' acquisition of knowledge and skills.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

The children enter the reception year with standards that are above those expected for their age. They make good progress and achieve standards that exceed those expected for their age. The pupils achieve high standards in reading and mathematics by Year 2 and well above average standards in writing and science. By the end of Year 6, standards are high in English, mathematics and science. Pupils who join the school at other than the usual times also make good progress and achieve well. The pupils meet the challenging targets set by teachers. These have ensured that a good proportion of pupils reach the higher levels by Year 2 and Year 6 in English, mathematics and science. The school's strong commitment to improvement has resulted in extending assessment to other subjects. All groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties, do well. Their individual learning needs are identified and addressed because there are detailed analyses and assessments of their progress. The pupils achieve well in ICT and standards are well above those expected for their age as a result. They also achieve well in sport because of the very good range of extra-curricular opportunities provided by the school.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Standards of pupils' personal development are outstanding. Pupils' excellent attitudes towards school, their good behaviour and real enthusiasm for learning are important reasons as to why they do well. They are keen to succeed, confident, polite, and courteous, and work extremely hard. Pupils' relationships with each other and staff are extremely good. Pupils play happily together and say that instances of bullying or aggressive behaviour are very rare. Consequently, the pupils feel safe and well cared for. They use their initiative well when carrying out responsible jobs, such as librarians or house group and school council representatives. Pupils make good use of their social and academic skills which provide a good platform for continued progress when they move to their secondary schools. Overall, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school's spiritual and church links, and strong ethos of respect for others, permeates the school and pupils show a very clear sense of right and wrong. Pupils have a good understanding of British cultural traditions and are increasingly developing a greater understanding of the wide range of different cultures outside their immediate community. This is an area that the school has identified for further development. Attendance is very good and most pupils arrive punctually. Many pupils choose to use scooters or bicycles to come to school with their friends and family so enabling them to adopt healthy lifestyles.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good. Very good relationships contribute strongly to pupils' excellent behaviour and positive attitudes to learning. The pupils work hard and cooperate very well together in lessons. Teachers are skilled in using questions to find out how well pupils are learning. They use this knowledge and the results of other more formal assessments well to ensure that tasks are set for pupils at different levels of difficulty according to their needs. For example, in a Year 3 mathematics lesson, all pupils found their work on subtraction to be challenging, enjoyable and achievable. At the start of each lesson, teachers tell their pupils what they intend them to learn and teachers are skilled in reviewing what everyone has done at the end. This helps pupils to reflect on how well they are getting on and what they need to do to improve. The school provides highly effective help for those with special educational needs and is able to stretch those who are talented. However, while the school is good at checking on the rate of pupils' progress in English, mathematics, science, and ICT, this is not as consistent or effective in other subjects. Assessments of children's progress in the reception class are accurate. They cover all areas of learning and enable the staff to provide well for children's individual needs.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good. The school provides a wide range of interesting activities which the pupils enjoy doing. The school is very successful in developing the pupils' understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles and economic well-being. The weekly 'hot dog day', for example, helps pupils to appreciate that healthy food can also taste good. The school organises a good range of out-of-class activities, many of which are of a sporting nature. These attract many pupils and make a strong contribution to pupils' learning. A rich and well planned programme of visits and visitors adds extra enjoyment to learning. Residential visits make a significant contribution to their social development. The teaching of French in Years 4, 5 and 6 helps broaden the pupils' cultural awareness. Teachers' plans make good links between subjects to make learning more relevant and purposeful. The curriculum for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Very clear personal education plans are carefully used to make sure these pupils achieve well. The school's planning for the youngest children is good and ensures that they start with a secure platform for future learning.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

The care, guidance and support provided for the pupils are outstanding. Child protection procedures are regularly reviewed by governors to ensure the pupils' safety and welfare. Pupils' views and ideas are valued and acted on through the school council, for example, suggestions raised by pupils to eat healthily and to engage in exercise. Older pupils supervise younger ones in the dining room and the friendship stop in the playground help to ensure that all pupils, including new arrivals, are safe and support each other. In addition, the circle of friends ensures that pupils look out for those who may feel vulnerable or upset so the pupils are very well supported and cared for. The school has a supportive ethos which promotes enjoyment in learning and the achievement of high standards. 'I like my teachers because they help you and do not criticise you if you get things wrong,' says one pupil. Very good quality information is provided for parents and pupils in the form of regular newsletters and the school's excellent web site. The small number of complaints and concerns raised by parents are dealt with effectively. Partnerships with other schools, pre-school providers and the church are strong. Consequently, the community is involved in the work of the school and share in its success which is having a positive impact on the pupils' confidence and achievements. There are excellent opportunities for the pupils to represent the school competitively in a range of sports and to take part in fund raising. These enable the pupils to contribute to their community and influence the lives of others.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good overall. The headteacher knows the school extremely well and this is reflected in the high quality of the school's self-evaluation. Comprehensive analyses of the pupils' performance by subject leaders and the robust evaluation of teaching have combined very well to ensure that standards improve well. Very good team work and the involvement of parents and the community means that everyone pulls together to provide a good quality education. Governors do well to hold the school to account and support the school well. There are good systems in place to ensure they monitor the school's performance with the headteacher and staff. Consequently, governors and staff know the strengths weaknesses of the school very well. School improvement is at the heart of management and which is reflected in the priority to extend and refine assessment to all subjects. Resources are of very good quality, including outdoor areas and equipment which create a positive learning environment. Resources for ICT are used well. They enable the pupils to make good progress acquiring technical skills using computers, cameras and recording devices. This is preparing them well for future life and work skills.

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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1	NA

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

I am writing this letter to tell you about the findings of the inspection and to thank you for making the inspectors feel so welcome. You are clearly very proud of your school and were happy to talk to inspectors. We agree with you, your parents and teachers that St. Michael's is a good school. You are doing well and enjoy your lessons very much because we believe the teaching is good.

The inspectors were pleased to see how well you are doing in English, mathematics, science and ICT. We also know that you do well in sport and enjoy special weekly events and activities such as the 'hot dog day' and the gardening club. Your headteacher is excellent! She has a clear understanding of what the school is doing well. Many of you said that the teachers and staff are always there to help you.

Inspectors like the way you care for each other and come up with very good ideas through the school council. The school council is very organised and helps to make your school better. We think that the circle of friends is a wonderful way of looking out for children who may be upset or need support. You are also very clear about who to go to if you have a problem. There is one thing we would like your teachers to do to help you learn better. Teachers are good at measuring how well you do in some subjects, but they need to do this in all subjects. Keep up the good work and well done to all of you.