



St Michael's CofE Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 102140
Local Authority Haringey
Inspection number 286286
Inspection date 13 December 2006
Reporting inspector Graham Lee

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Bounds Green Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Wood Green
Age range of pupils	4-11		London N22 8HE
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	020 8888 7125
Number on roll (school)	188	Fax number	020 8889 9016
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Father Colin Coppen
		Headteacher	Mr Richard Metcalf
Date of previous school inspection	19 March 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average denominational primary school. It operates in area of high social and economic deprivation; the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is higher than average. Most pupils are of minority ethnic origin and one in three is from Black Caribbean backgrounds. Nearly half the pupils speak English as an additional language and a few of these are at the early stages of learning English. Whilst the school population is generally stable a significant proportion of pupils leave in Years 5 and 6.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Michael's provides its pupils with a satisfactory quality of education. At the heart of its work is a strong Christian ethos, which contributes to pupils' good social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. Pupils are well cared for and those who are vulnerable are supported effectively through good links with a range of outside agencies. As a result, most pupils feel safe and secure in this 'close knit community,' as one parent described the school. However, the school has not been sufficiently focussed on raising achievement in recent years. Consequently, pupils' achievement, whilst satisfactory, could be better. They are satisfactorily prepared for secondary school and the world beyond.

From relatively low starting points, pupils make satisfactory progress as they move through the school because the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Standards are below average by the time pupils move on to secondary school. There are examples of good teaching in the juniors which challenges pupils to think for themselves and develop their ideas. This was evident in investigative science work in Year 5. However, in some lessons there is not sufficient challenge for more able pupils in particular. Consequently, some of these pupils do not achieve as well as they might. Despite the school's best efforts, strategies to improve standards in writing have not been fully successful and pupils continue to do better in reading than in writing. This is particularly the case for boys who are not always well motivated to write.

A strength of the school is the range of enrichment activities offered, especially in music and sport. Many pupils have the opportunity to play instruments and perform in the local community and the school has been very successful in a range of sporting competitions. Largely through this work pupils are keenly aware of the need to adopt healthy lifestyles. The curriculum is satisfactory overall because it does not yet give sufficient opportunities for pupils to be creative, enjoy their education fully and make meaningful links between subjects. Pupils are well behaved in lessons but many do not have a buzz of enthusiasm about their learning. The Foundation class provides satisfactorily for children's needs and they quickly settle to school routines.

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of the school but self-evaluation lacks sufficient rigour to demonstrate the impact of their work in addressing the weaknesses. However, since September the school has focussed much more on raising the achievement of pupils. There are now good systems in place for tracking the progress of individuals, providing more support for those at risk of underachieving and setting challenging targets for improvement. Consequently, the school has satisfactory capacity for further improvement even though some issues from the last inspection have not been fully addressed. Whilst the school enjoys the support of most parents, a significant minority do not feel that the school takes sufficient account of their views or those of their children. This was echoed by some of the pupils.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in writing throughout the school, particularly for boys.
- Ensure that teachers consistently challenge more able pupils to think for themselves and achieve as well as they can.
- Review the curriculum to make it more creative and enjoyable for pupils.
- Strengthen the partnership with parents so that they are confident that their views and those of their children are taken into account.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

From often low starting points, pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall reflecting the steady progress most of them make as they move through the school. Children enter the school with skills and understanding which are below average, particularly in communications and literacy. At the end of Year 2 standards remain significantly below average in reading, writing and mathematics. Standard at the end of Year 6 fluctuate from year to year because of the relatively small numbers of pupils involved and the significant level of mobility towards the top end of the school. However, they have declined since the last inspection and are below average in English, mathematics and science. Very few pupils reach the higher levels at the end of both key stages, reflecting a lack of challenge for some of these pupils in lessons. Generally, pupils do better in reading than writing, particularly boys.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development and well being are satisfactory overall. The social, moral, spiritual and cultural dimensions are good, reflecting the school's strong Christian ethos. Pupils are friendly, polite and respectful of one another and of adults. Generally they feel safe in school and conduct themselves sensibly around the school's rather cramped accommodation. Most pupils behave well in lessons and on the playground. They are proud of their contribution to the school community through the peer mediation scheme. They are clear about their roles and say, 'We don't tell children what to do. We just help them to sort out their problems for themselves.' In other respects, however, pupils have limited opportunities to contribute and some feel that their views are not taken into account. They have close connections with the church and raise money for a range of charities. Whilst most pupils enjoy the social aspects of school and the enrichment activities offered, many are less enthusiastic about learning. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles through their energetic participation in sport and are very aware of the importance of a good diet to stay fit and well.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers manage their classes well and have good relationships with pupils. This is reflected in pupils' good behaviour and application. They generally meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties effectively with the support of a competent team of teaching assistants. There are some good examples of challenging activities for more able pupils, for example in a Year 3 mathematics lesson on 'odds and evens' pupils were asked to devise their own problems and solutions which developed their thinking. This is not the case in all lessons however, and sometimes work is pitched at the same level for all pupils and is too easy for the more able. Consequently they do not always achieve as well as they might. Not all lessons are interesting enough to fully engage pupils, with the result that their progress slows. Teachers are making good use of assessment data to set targets for improvement but these are not always understood by pupils or couched in terms that readily help them to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Pupils enjoy the wide range of curriculum enrichment activities offered by the school. Clubs, visits, visitors and a residential trip enhance pupils' independence and social skills. The curriculum makes an effective contribution to pupils' personal development through its Christian ethos and teaching. Provision for pupils' basic skills, and consequently their progress, is satisfactory. The school has recently introduced a new literacy scheme to accelerate initial reading and writing with early evidence of improved progress. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are supported well and there are an increasing number of programmes in place to help those who are in danger of falling behind. Facilities for information and communication technology (ICT) have improved significantly in recent times and are now being used with increasing effectiveness to support pupils' learning in other subjects. The school has introduced initiatives to challenge more able pupils through its work with gifted and talented scientists and writers, for example, but this is not currently involving enough pupils to have a significant impact on standards. Provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory and the outside area is fairly limited to develop the full range of children's learning in all areas. The school is conducting a curriculum review in recognition of the need to make it creative and enjoyable for learners and to provide more motivation and opportunities for pupils to write in different contexts.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The care, guidance and support of pupils are satisfactory overall. Almost all parents think their children are well looked after and one relatively new arrival commented, 'Our children were welcomed into the school fabulously.' However, whilst most parents

are positive about the school, a significant minority do not think that school leaders are sufficiently receptive to their views and concerns, or those of their children. The Christian ethos underpins the school's work and ensures that pupils are safe and secure in its small family atmosphere. Most believe that they can go to an adult if they have a problem but some feel that they are not always listened to. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are monitored carefully by the highly respected special needs coordinator. Effective support is given to enable them to achieve as well as other pupils. Academic guidance is improving and contributes to pupils' satisfactory progress. Their progress is monitored carefully and targets for improvement are set. These are not always sufficiently challenging or expressed in ways that are helpful to pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has led the school over many years and established a strong Christian framework for pupils in which their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is successfully nurtured. The school has not focussed clearly enough on raising pupils' achievements and improving the satisfactory teaching and learning in recent years. The arrival of a new deputy headteacher has given fresh impetus to the leadership team. Systems for tracking pupils' progress are being used to identify pupils who are in danger of falling behind and to hold teachers to account for the progress of learners. Monitoring of teaching is more rigorous and fully involves middle managers. Governors are very supportive and provide good leadership in terms of managing difficult accommodation and budgetary issues. However, they are not sufficiently well informed to be able to hold the school to account for the standards and achievement of pupils.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

I am writing to thank you all for making me so welcome when I came to your school a few days ago. I really enjoyed my time at St Michaels and you all helped by being so friendly and keen to talk to me. I thought you would like to know what I found out.

St Michaels is providing you with a satisfactory education. It has a very strong Christian atmosphere and you look after each other well in its small family atmosphere. I was impressed with your behaviour. Well done! Most of you like your school, especially the many extra things you have to do and playing with your friends. Some of you are not quite so keen on learning. You feel safe and secure at school although some of you and your parents do not think that you are always listened to.

Most of you make steady progress as you move through the school because the teaching is satisfactory. The teachers help you to improve by setting you targets and giving you hard work to do. The headteacher and the other staff are determined to make the school even better and are now doing the right things that should help them to do that.

We have asked them to do a few things to help the school to improve and you can help with all of them by doing your best. We have asked all the teachers to set you challenging work that makes you think. I believe that this will help you to reach even higher standards. I have also asked them to improve writing in the school, particularly for some of you boys who do not like writing. I also want them to provide you with more opportunities to do interesting things in lessons and to link work in different subjects together. Finally, we want the school to work even more closely with you and your parents so that all of you do as well as you can.

Yours truly

Graham LeeLead Inspector