



# Michaelchurch Escley Primary School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 116714  
**Local Authority** Herefordshire  
**Inspection number** 290609  
**Inspection date** 6 November 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Hazel Callaghan

This inspection of the school 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>	Michaelchurch Escley
<b>School category</b>	Community		Hereford
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4-11		HR2 0PT
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01981 510208
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	59	<b>Fax number</b>	01981 510396
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Chris Saville
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Deborah Barker
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	28 January 2003		

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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## **Description of the school**

This very small school attracts pupils from a very wide area. Nearly all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is broadly average. Children join the school with a range of abilities but their experiences and skills are generally below those expected for children of their age. The headteacher took up post in February 2006 and a number of staff have recently changed their roles and responsibilities. The school has extensive links with other local schools as part of the Extended Schools venture.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 2**

This is an effective school and provides a good education for its pupils. The new headteacher has established a fresh team ethos with staff so that all are working towards further improvement. The school has been through a challenging few years. Although progress has been made since the previous inspection, it has not been as much as is expected in some areas. During this time of change, however, the good levels of care and high expectations for pupils' progress have been effectively maintained. The shared vision and commitment to pupils' good achievement in all areas of their development is evidence of the school's capacity to improve further.

Pupils of all abilities achieve well throughout the school because of good teaching, and standards have been significantly above average for the last four years. In 2005, pupils made outstanding progress in mathematics and science. Standards and progress in English tend to be lower than in either mathematics or science. Children's good progress starts in the Reception class so they attain above average standards, but progress in the development of early reading and writing skills is below that of other areas of learning. English continues to be a relative weakness throughout the school, particularly in writing, which has not been successfully addressed since the previous inspection.

Pupils' personal development is good. Relationships throughout the school are strong and pupils behave well. They have a clear understanding of what is needed to lead healthy and safe lives and welcome opportunities to take responsibility. They enjoy their work and want to do well but they are often too relaxed about the quality of presentation of their work, especially in writing. Pupils are prepared well for the future. They have a good range of basic skills; they work cooperatively and show independence and initiative. An effective curriculum is enriched by numerous additional activities that extend pupils' experiences and skills. The further development of information and communication technology (ICT) has been identified as an area for curricular improvement. This is because teachers lack confidence in the use of new technology and ICT is not sufficiently employed to support pupils' learning in other subjects.

Although the senior team is new, leadership and management continue to be good and the school's evaluation of its strengths and weakness are accurate. Pupils are known well both personally and academically and this supports their good development. The school is now focusing on improving its systems for monitoring and evaluating its provision. The school is supported very well by the governing body, which has given a strong lead to the appointment of the new headteacher, but governors tend to rely on the staff to identify areas for school improvement.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve standards in English, especially in pupils' writing, and raise pupils' expectations about the quality of presentation of their work.

- Make better use of ICT to support pupils' learning in all subjects, to extend their knowledge and to provide them with more opportunities to develop their independent learning skills.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils achieve well throughout the school. Standards fluctuate from year to year because of the cohorts being very small and the proportions of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities and those of higher ability vary. Nevertheless, standards have been significantly above average for the last four years.

Children start in the Reception class with good personal and social skills but in all other areas, their knowledge, experiences and skills are below those expected. During the Reception Year, they make good progress to attain standards that are often above average although their language skills lag behind. Pupils of all abilities continue to make good progress through Years 1 to 6 because of the very good levels of support they receive. By Year 6, standards in mathematics and science are usually well above average. Standards in English are not as high because progress in writing is not as good as in other subjects. Pupils with learning difficulties make the same good progress as their peers because their needs are accurately identified and appropriate strategies for support are employed.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' good personal development has a significant impact on how they achieve because they have good attitudes to their work and want to do well. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils show good understanding of the needs of others and the need to be fair and caring. Pupils behave well and expect others to do so as well. Pupils enjoy school and usually attend very regularly. Absence increased last year due to several long bouts of sickness and some holidays that were taken in term time, but this is not usually of concern.

Pupils are aware of how to keep safe and have a good understanding about the need for healthy eating. Pupils are given a range of responsibilities which they carry out sensibly. They make a good contribution to the life of the school. The Eco Club, for example, persuaded the Community Hall Committee to put recycling bins in the car park next to the school. Pupils support local community groups and raise money for worldwide charities.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Teaching is good throughout the school and promotes effective learning. Parents' appreciation is shown when they say, 'There is a very strong teaching team at the school that complements and supports one another'. Pupils agree and say that teachers help them to understand what they have to do and how to get better at their work. Success also comes from small classes, with a good number of teachers and teaching assistants that provide very good levels of support. Activities are well matched to the range of ages and abilities in each class, and tasks are often interesting and challenging. This engages pupils' interest and encourages the desire to do well. Staff know that the teaching of writing is not as effective as that in mathematics and science but they have yet to develop effective strategies to ensure better progress. Pupils' work is monitored well and teachers find time to talk to pupils about their work so they know how to improve. Marking of pupils' work, however, does not provide a supportive record of these discussions.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

An effective curriculum is enriched by numerous additional activities, such as visits, that extend all pupils' experiences and skills. Many are provided through strong links with other local schools. Michaelchurch has successfully achieved the 'Active Mark' in recognition of the range of sports that it has to offer through these links. It has also achieved most aspects of the 'Healthy Schools Award' because of its positive focus on developing pupils' awareness of how to develop healthy lifestyles. The staff are now looking to develop the curriculum further by extending links between subjects so that pupils' learning is more meaningful and exciting. The further development of ICT has also been identified as an area for improvement because it is not used sufficiently to support pupils' learning in other subjects. The curriculum for writing is also recognised as in need of review. This is planned as part of the introduction of the new national literacy strategy.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 2

The care, support and guidance provided by the school are good. Parents describe the school as having 'always provided a stimulating, safe and caring environment in which to learn'. Good procedures ensure that the school is a safe and secure environment and pupils say they feel confident to talk to any of the staff if they have a worry or concern. Pupils with learning difficulties are identified early and effective targets for their progress are made. Outside agencies are used well when required. Partnership with parents to support pupils' learning and welfare is good.

Academic support and guidance for pupils is good because pupils and their abilities are very well known to staff. Through discussion about their achievement, teachers recognise those who are not progressing as well as expected and provide additional support. More formal systems to record pupils' progress are in the process of development. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' achievement. However, this is not yet consistently reflected through setting challenging targets for pupils to ensure that they make steady progress, especially in writing.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good. There is a clear focus on maintaining high standards and on the pastoral care of all pupils. The new headteacher has set out a clear vision for the school to which the united staff team all aspire. There is a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school is correctly focusing on developing systems for tracking pupils' attainment and improving procedures for monitoring so that there is a clearer view of what needs to be done to raise standards in English. The school is supported very well by the governing body. Financial management is effective and governors keep a close eye on the budget, which changes from year-to-year. There is a shared commitment to improving the environment and providing the best education possible. Maintaining high levels of staff has a priority and this plays a significant part in the progress made by pupils. Governors ask challenging questions of the staff but rely too much on the headteacher to keep them informed about school development. Parents are very supportive of the school but governors and staff have not recently sought parents' views about school as part of their plans to improve further.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
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	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
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	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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 say thank you for making me feel welcome in your school and for helping me with my questions. I really enjoyed chatting with you and found what you said very interesting. I thought you would like to know what I found out about your school.

What the school does well:

- Michaelchurch is a good school where you are happy and enjoy your lessons
- you get on well with each other and with the adults in the school
- most of you behave sensibly and are kind to each other
- the standards you reach are good because you try hard with your work and achieve well
- you understand the importance of keeping healthy and safe
- you are given opportunities to take responsibility and you do it well
- you try hard to help other people at school, in the local community and around the world
- you are well taught and the teachers do all they can to help you to get better at your work
- your headteacher leads the school effectively
- all the adults in school look after you well
- there are lots of visits and additional activities for you to enjoy
- All the local schools work well together to give you lots of new experiences.

What I have asked the school to do now:

- to raise standards in your writing and to help you learn how to present your work well. You can help by being especially careful to always do neat work
- for teachers to give you more chances to use the computers and other technology to help you do your work in lots of different subjects and enable you learn by yourselves.

Thank you again for being so polite and helpful to me.