

# St Michael's Roman Catholic Primary School, Whitefield

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	105348
<b>Local Authority</b>	Bury
<b>Inspection number</b>	308839
<b>Inspection date</b>	17 October 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Jim Kidd

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 category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3-11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	230
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr G Higgins
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr N Duffin
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	3 November 2003
<b>School address</b>	Ribble Drive Whitefield Manchester M45 8NJ
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 766 6628
<b>Fax number</b>	0161 796 3462

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards, personal development and well-being, teaching and learning, the curriculum, care, guidance and support and leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from the school's evaluation of its performance, relevant policies and parents' questionnaires. In addition, there were interviews with members of staff, parents, governors and a representative of the local authority. The inspector also held discussions with a cross-section of pupils and his observation of the school at work included visits to lessons and a tour of playgrounds at break time.

## Description of the school

This average sized primary school serves both private housing and an area of significant social disadvantage. Most pupils are of White British heritage and there are few at an early stage of learning English. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below that usually found and there are two pupils with a statement of special educational need. St Michael's received the Quality Mark of Basic Skills in 2003 and 2006, holds the Activemark Award and also has Healthy School status.

## 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 a good school, in which outstanding leadership and management have ensured marked improvement since the previous inspection, particularly in pupils' personal development and in the curriculum which is offered to them. It provides good value for money. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of what the school does for their offspring and recognise that it places equal emphasis on improving standards academically, personally and socially. As they say, 'St Michael's is child focused and encourages participation and achievement in all areas of school life.' As a result, pupils make good progress in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, behave impeccably and are always keen to look after each other. In a Year 2 literacy lesson, for example, pupils were delighted when their classmates received praise for their poems and encouraged visitors to look at not just their own work but also that of their peers. Older pupils in particular, and from both genders, take great pride in supporting their younger counterparts.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and their attendance is consistently well above the national average. From breakfast club in the morning to after-school club in the afternoon, pupils thrive on the wide range of interesting activities open to them. They greet visitors with warmth and courtesy and are delighted to show them their work on the vibrant and colourful displays which adorn the corridors and classrooms. They talk confidently about the wide variety of responsibilities they take on to assist in the smooth running of the school. Prefects, playground friends, equipment monitors and dinner helpers are just four examples of the outstanding contribution they make to their community. They are fully aware, too, of the importance of healthy eating and fitness and have a keen understanding of faiths and cultures different from their own.

From skill levels on entry which are those broadly expected for their age, pupils make good progress across the school and reach above average standards by the end of Year 6. They respond positively to the good teaching they receive and the percentage reaching National Curriculum Level 4 and above in English in 2007 was the highest ever. Writing was somewhat of a disappointment and fewer pupils than expected reached the highest level. Teachers have warm relationships with their pupils and in most lessons the level of challenge is high and pupils are fully engaged in the activities. In an impressive Year 5 numeracy session, for example, pupils were quite desperate to work out the answer to a difficult problem and, in response to the teacher's question, 'Shall I tell you?' shouted 'No! We want to work it out for ourselves!' In a minority of lessons, teachers direct learning activities too much and pupils are therefore not required to think fully for themselves.

The curriculum is outstanding, makes a profound contribution to personal development and is ever developing to meet the needs, interests and aspirations of pupils more closely. There are three 'fun days' each year which are based on a subject theme. Visiting artists, scientists and representatives from a variety of faith and cultural heritages share their experiences with staff and pupils alike. Not satisfied with just one modern foreign language, teachers have introduced Spanish into Year 6 to complement French, tuition in which is received by all years. Art is an important part of school life and pupils from all classes produce pictures modelled on the work of Aboriginal artists, Monet and Andy Warhol, to name just three examples. Extra-curricular activities, including educational visits, are many and varied and there is high take up, particularly in sport and games. Both boys and girls, and from all years, take delight in the dance lessons they have as part of the partnership with a local high school.

Care and support for each individual, irrespective of their abilities, are intrinsic to everything the school tries to do. Both teachers and teaching assistants do their utmost to ensure that each individual benefits to the full from all aspects of the curriculum. Support for individual needs, planning to ensure appropriate challenge for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for those considered vulnerable, and encouraging pupils to share ideas are important elements in this outstanding aspect of the school's work. Child protection procedures are in place and staff are trained in welfare and safeguarding issues. Pupils themselves recognise that their teachers and teaching assistants are always there when needed and comment, 'We feel safe in our school because the adults look after us and make sure that we come to no harm.' Academic guidance is good and pupils generally receive detailed comments on their work, which advise them how they can improve their standards. They are also encouraged to assess their own performance and take increasing ownership for the progress they make. The tracking of pupils' performance is regular and any underachievement is highlighted. The school is now looking to refine assessment arrangements in order to ensure that pupils' curriculum targets are sharper and lead to higher levels of achievement and improved academic standards.

The dedicated headteacher, ably supported by a talented leadership team, offers clear direction for further development. School self-evaluation is accurate and leaders do not rest on their laurels. For example, boys' standards in 2007 improved quite dramatically as a result of the introduction of effective strategies to raise levels in the core subjects. Leaders are now working on ways to challenge their pupils to reach the highest levels in writing and recognise that target setting is not fully effective in raising standards. Teachers and teaching assistants have the highest regard for the school leadership and speak positively of teamwork, mutual respect and trust among all staff. The recently introduced curriculum teams are a most positive development because they lead to all staff having an overview of subject performance across the curriculum. Impressive leadership, significant improvements in key areas since the previous inspection, outstanding personal development and a comprehensive curriculum which encourages success in all areas demonstrate that the school has very good capacity to improve further.

In the words of parents, 'The school provides our children with a happy and safe environment, in which they are challenged to perform to the best of their ability.' Without doubt, St Michael's is a school in which all pupils and all adults really do matter.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 1**

One parent spoke for many when she said, 'I have nothing but praise for the Foundation Stage. The staff do fantastic work with the boys and girls and they also work closely with parents to encourage and get the best out of our children.' Indeed, the Nursery and the Reception class give children an outstanding start to their school careers. Since the previous inspection, leaders have extended both classroom and outdoor provision and have introduced a comprehensive assessment system which highlights just where children need more help in developing their skills. Children make very good progress in all areas of learning and there are many hands-on activities which encourage them to learn through doing and to cooperate with their classmates. Classrooms and outdoor areas are alive with fun and laughter and children work with their friends with a maturity that belies their years. Teachers, teaching assistants and students from the local college provide excellent targeted support for children of all abilities and joint planning is the norm. Leadership and management are very effective, encourage close links with parents and ensure that resources are carefully chosen and utilised to match the individual needs of the children.

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

- Improve the standards of the most able pupils in writing.
- Refine tracking procedures in order to sharpen target setting and raise standards further.

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## Annex A

## 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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	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

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

### The quality of provision

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

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
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	1
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**

Inspection of St Michael's Roman Catholic Primary School, Whitefield,  
M45 8NJ

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school recently. I enjoyed talking to you and am very grateful for the wonderful contribution you made to the inspection. I would now like to tell you the really good things about your school.

St Michael's is a good school and I know you are very all very proud of it! Your behaviour is excellent and you get on very well with each other. Older pupils look after younger ones and members of the school council do so much to represent your views and they make many suggestions about how to improve the school even more. You play a large part in running the school because you have so many jobs and responsibilities during the day. Your attendance is very good.

Your teachers teach you well and the standards you reach in your work are above those of many other schools. You are very well aware of the importance of eating healthily and of keeping fit and you take part in lots of sport and games. The breakfast and after school clubs are very popular and you also enjoy the many after school activities and educational trips. Your teachers and teaching assistants care for you very well indeed and many of you told me that there is always someone to turn to if you have any problems.

Your headteacher and all the other staff know exactly what is needed to make St Michael's an even happier place to be and they work very hard to make sure that the school goes from strength to strength! I have asked them now to work with you to make your writing in Year 6 a little better and also to check regularly on how well you are doing in all your subjects so that they can help you reach even higher standards. You have your part to play too: please continue to work hard and keep enjoying your lessons!

Thank you once again for being so kind and polite to me. I enjoyed watching you learn.