

St Michael's C of E Aided Primary

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126392
Local Authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	315528
Inspection date	10 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Alison Grainger

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	134
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Marianne Adey
Headteacher	Susan Smith
Date of previous school inspection	11 November 2002
School address	Back Lane Aldbourn Marlborough SN8 2BP
Telephone number	01672 540434
Fax number	01672 541536

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school draws most of its pupils from the village of Aldbourne and the immediate area, and a few travel from further afield. Pupils are from a variety of backgrounds, many of which are relatively advantaged. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage, and a small number are from other ethnic backgrounds. No pupil is at an early stage of learning English. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties is below average, although it varies in different year groups. Children's attainment on entry is broadly average

The headteacher took over responsibility for the school in September 2006. The deputy headteacher has held her senior role since March 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005 HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

The school's overall effectiveness is inadequate. Standards are below average and pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory. Pupils make too little progress generally as they move up from the start of Year 1 to the end of Year 6. In particular, they move on too slowly in mathematics and in science in Years 3 to 6. The extent to which pupils underachieve is clearly apparent when considered in relation to their starting points. Children build effectively on their broadly average skills on entry to Reception, so that by the time they start in Year 1, their attainment is above the level expected at this age.

Children do well in Reception because the provision for them is good. They do not do well enough in Years 1 to 6 because teaching and the curriculum are inadequate. This said, there are some positive features, particularly in the relationships between most adults and pupils and in the management of activities in lessons. Teaching assistants are satisfactorily deployed to support pupils with learning difficulties and these pupils make steady progress as a result. The main weakness is that teaching is not closely enough matched to all pupils' needs, in particular to challenge the 'average' and more capable pupils. Overall, expectations of the standards pupils are capable of attaining are not high enough.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. A strength in the satisfactory care, guidance and support is the pastoral care that results in pupils feeling safe and secure. Pupils are given good guidance on how to stay fit and healthy. The advice they receive on what they are doing well in their school work and on what they most need to work on next to improve their performance is weak. The school lacks adequate established systems for making regular and frequent checks on pupils' progress.

Leadership and management are inadequate. The governors have a realistic view of the school's effectiveness and the headteacher recognises that the school is not doing well enough. Some of the right changes are being made, for example to ensure that pupils' progress is more carefully checked. However, much is only just beginning. Action so far is not sufficient to show real success in tackling underachievement. The senior management team is not well enough established. The involvement of all teachers in being accountable for pupils' performance is embryonic. Whilst monitoring of teaching and the curriculum takes place, it is not rigorous enough to identify the full extent of the improvements now required. The headteacher knows that if improvements are to be made quickly, there needs to be more analysis of the impact of teaching and the curriculum on pupils' progress. The school has declined since its last inspection.

What the school should do to improve further

- improve pupils' progress and raise standards in all subjects, particularly in mathematics and science
- make sure that teaching is closely matched to all pupils' needs and that all teachers have high enough expectations of the standards pupils are capable of attaining
- ensure that regular and frequent checks are made on pupils' attainment and progress

- provide pupils with clear guidance on what they are doing well and on how they can improve their performance
- rigorously monitor and evaluate the impact of teaching and the curriculum on pupils' progress and take swift action for improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Standards are below average and achievement is inadequate. Children make good progress in the Reception Year and enter Year 1 with standards above the level expected. Standards in Year 2 are below average in reading and mathematics, and are slightly below average in writing. In Year 6, standards are broadly average in English, but below average in mathematics. Across Years 1 to 6, the standards of pupils' school work in science is below average. Much of pupils' work is also of a lower standard than expected in subjects such as geography and history. Standards are not good enough, given pupils' starting points and capabilities.

Pupils' are now moving on at an acceptable pace in their daily work in mathematics in Years 1 and 2 but standards show that Year 2 pupils have fallen behind at some point since leaving Reception. Progress through Years 3 to 6 is too patchy and is inadequate in mathematics. Throughout Years 1 to 6, progress in science is poor. Whilst progress is steadier in English than in mathematics and science, pupils are not challenged consistently. As a result, too many pupils stand still for too long and some individuals fall behind.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. The school has rightly identified that pupils' cultural development requires improvement, particularly their understanding of modern multi-ethnic society. Behaviour is satisfactory in lessons and around the school. Relationships among pupils and between pupils and adults are usually positive. In most lessons, pupils settle well to activities. Many pupils enjoy school, particularly practical activities. Attendance is above average and the vast majority of pupils arrive punctually in the mornings.

Pupils have a satisfactory awareness of how to stay safe. They know a lot about the importance of exercise and having a healthy diet. Their contribution to the school and wider community is much as expected at this age. They raise funds for charities and the school council has, for example, identified a need for a 'friendship stop' on the playground to help pupils find a friend to play with. Insufficient progress in basic skills, particularly in numeracy, results in pupils being inadequately prepared for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Teaching is good in the Reception and is the main reason for children getting off to a good start. Expectations of children are high. Children are given much praise and encouragement, to which they respond well.

Teaching in Years 1 to 6 is not matched closely enough to all pupils' needs during whole-class sessions or in group activities. In particular, there is inadequate challenge for the 'average' and

more capable pupils. In some of the mixed age classes observed by inspectors, activities were sometimes at the right level for the younger age group but were not matched to the needs of the older age group. In general, expectations of the standards pupils are capable of attaining are too low and this is most evident in mathematics and science.

Even though there is much to be improved, there are some strengths in the teaching in Years 1 to 6. Positive relationships create a pleasant and supportive atmosphere in most classes. Teaching assistants are sensibly deployed, especially to give focussed support to pupils with learning difficulties. Instructions and explanations are clear and pupils know why activities are being undertaken.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 4

In the Reception Year, there is a balanced approach to covering all the recommended areas of learning, with good attention to children's personal and social development. Activities promote good progress in early reading, writing and mathematics, and also help children do well in gaining knowledge and understanding of the world and in their creative development.

The curriculum in Years 1 to 6 does not adequately support pupils in making the expected progress in mathematics, science, geography and history. The school has rightly recognised that topics are covered too superficially. Furthermore, the level at which they are covered is too low.

Reasonable opportunities are provided for pupils to write in subjects other than English. However, too few activities allow them to use and develop their mathematics skills across the curriculum. Opportunities for the development of information and communication technology skills have improved and are satisfactory. Some good enrichment is provided through visits, including residential visits in Years 5 and 6. The range of clubs is satisfactory.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The care and support for pupils ensures that the school is a calm and orderly community. There are strengths in pastoral care. Many parents value the way in which their children are known by staff as individuals. As one parent said, 'The ethos is similar to an extended family'. Pupils say they are well looked after and are sure that they are safe in school. Checks on adults who come into contact with pupils are robust. Much is done to help pupils to stay fit and healthy. However, there are a number of tripping hazards on the site, such as uneven paving stones.

Academic guidance is underdeveloped and inconsistent and is not effective. Much marking is poor and many pupils find their targets confusing. Pupils do not have a clear idea what they are doing well or of how to improve their work. Several parents expressed concern that they do not know how well their children are doing.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

Although the headteacher and governors have a realistic view of the school's effectiveness, leadership and management are underdeveloped. In part, but by no means entirely, this results from staff changes. Most of the major responsibilities are carried by the fairly recently appointed

headteacher with support from the new deputy. Leadership of key subject areas, such as mathematics and science, is not effective. Teachers with subject leadership roles are not adequately involved in driving improvement and are not held accountable for standards.

Some action is being taken by the headteacher to start to tackle the weaknesses. For example, systems are being developed to help with regular checking of pupils' attainment and progress, although these are at an early stage. The support of a local authority numeracy consultant has been welcomed. Deployment of teachers to classes has been reviewed, with changes planned. However, the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and the curriculum are not sufficiently rigorous. As a result, they do not lead to sharply focussed action that shows the start of real and significant improvement. The school has not developed well enough since its last inspection. With so much to be done and actions for improvement just starting, the school is not demonstrating adequate capacity to improve.

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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?	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
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	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
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	4

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	4
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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
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?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for your help when we visited your school and telling us about your work and the other activities in school. We enjoyed talking with you.

We found that you know a lot about how to keep fit and healthy. Your attendance is good and almost all of you arrive punctually in the mornings. You told us that you feel safe in school and that you have an adult to turn to if you have a worry or concern. The adults do the right things to look after you. Children in the Reception class get off to a good start and do well in all areas of their learning. You have some good opportunities for visits. You are lucky to be able to go on two residential visits in Years 5 and 6!

We found that your school has some significant areas that need to be improved. At the moment, it does not make sure that you do well enough with your work. Your headteacher and the school's governors want to make the school better so that you all make as much progress as you should. There are some things that we have asked the adults to work really hard on. These are to:

- help you do as well as you should in all subjects, and particularly in mathematics and science
- make sure that the teaching is at just the right level for each of you
- check up regularly on how well you are making progress
- tell you clearly what you are doing well and how you can improve your work
- carefully check on how well the teaching and curriculum help you to make progress and quickly make changes to them when necessary.

You can help by continuing to have good attendance and by working hard.