

St Michael's Church of England Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103418
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	319401
Inspection dates	24–25 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Usha Devi HMI

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	335
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	69
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	P Bowden
Headteacher	Patricia Bowden
Date of previous school inspection	19 June 2007
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Nantmel Grove Bartley Green Birmingham B32 3JS
Telephone number	0121 4644345

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	24–25 September 2008
Inspection number	319401

Fax number

0121 4643343

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Michael's Church of England Aided Primary School is situated in a residential area in south west Birmingham. It is larger than most other primary schools. Three quarters of pupils are of White British origin and the remainder are from other groups, these include White and Black Caribbean, Caribbean and African. The percentage of pupils whose first language is believed not to be English is below the national average. The proportion of pupils identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those eligible for free school meals is above the national average. Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision is provided for children in the Nursery and Reception classes. There is a privately run before school and after school club on the school site.

Since the previous inspection, governors have appointed seven new class teachers. Staffing has now stabilised. The school was inspected in June 2007 and was given a notice to improve because it was performing less well than could reasonably be expected.

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 Church of England Aided Primary School is a satisfactory school. Since the previous inspection, the headteacher and staff have worked effectively with a range of external consultants to raise standards and accelerate progress. Pupils' achievement between Years 1 to 6 is now satisfactory and the decline in standards by the end of Year 2 has been halted. In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Parents appreciate the good level of care the school provides and the importance staff place on ensuring pupils' personal development and well-being are good. One parent wrote, 'The emphasis on the child being of paramount importance is something you pick up on immediately when talking to staff.' A good range of educational visits enriches the satisfactory curriculum. These visits enable pupils to learn through direct experience. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. It is strongly developed in the context of a church school.

The skills of children on entry into the Nursery are lower than expected for their age in language and communication and mathematical skills. Children make good progress overall in the EYFS and when they enter Year 1, many are working in line with levels of attainment that are normally expected. In Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils make satisfactory progress. There are some variations in rates of progress between classes and subjects. Pupils in Year 6, for example, make good and sometimes better progress. By the time pupils leave Year 6, they reach broadly average standards in mathematics and science. Standards in writing are below average. In both key stages, performance in reading is better than writing and mathematics. This is because teachers and support staff make effective use of catch up reading programmes to improve pupils' reading skills.

While there is some good teaching in the school, the overall quality is satisfactory. Pupils achieve particularly well when they have the opportunity to complete tasks that offer a suitable level of challenge and effectively build on their previous learning. However, this good practice is not consistent. When work is not well matched to the different learning needs of all pupils, the pace of learning slows. Consequently, pupils make satisfactory rather than good progress during their time in school. Academic guidance is satisfactory. Although pupils have individual learning targets, teachers do not make sufficient reference to them when marking work or during lessons. As a result, pupils are not fully aware how their targets will help them to make better progress and what they need to do to achieve them.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. With effective support from the deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher, the headteacher has maintained a caring and supportive learning environment during a period of high staff turnover. The senior staff regularly discuss the progress of pupils with staff to identify those at risk of underachieving and use this information effectively to ensure that pupils receive the support they need to make up for lost ground. Consequently, gains have been made in the rate of progress and standards reached by learners. Although senior staff and middle managers monitor the work of the school, inconsistencies remain in the quality of teaching and learning. This is because information from the monitoring of teaching and learning is not always used effectively to identify clear areas for improvement. For instance, areas for improvement do not always place sufficient emphasis on what teachers need to do to ensure pupils make better progress. Sound self-evaluation,

together with recent improvements, indicates that the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Most children, including those with additional learning needs, make good progress from their lower than expected starting points in language and communication and mathematical skills. Pupils make good gains in personal development because adults place a strong emphasis on this area of learning and work effectively with parents and external agencies to ensure children settle quickly. Consequently, children learn to get on well with each other and act responsibly. Nevertheless, some children lack confidence when explaining what they are doing. Children enjoy taking part in a suitable range of purposeful activities, including those that they can choose for themselves. However, when children are working independently, staff do not maintain occasional contact and miss opportunities to extend children's language and learning. Staff are skilled in assessing children at work and systematically record progress in all areas of learning. They use this information well to provide targeted support. Leadership and management of the EYFS are shared between a member of the senior management team and one of the two full time teachers. Together they provide good leadership. Along with other staff in the EYFS, they demonstrate a good team spirit, have a clear understanding of how children of this age learn, and provide a safe and secure learning environment. Staff have an accurate understanding of strengths and areas in need of development. For instance, developing language and mathematical skills are priorities for improvement because children's performance in these areas is less secure. The outdoor area is well used but underdeveloped. Staff have good plans in place for improving it.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to raise standards and ensure a consistently good rate of progress throughout Key Stage 1 and 2 in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Strengthen and improve the quality of teaching by ensuring teachers provide activities in lessons that meet the learning needs of all pupils.
- Make sure that pupils understand how their individual learning targets will help them to improve and what they need to do to achieve them.
- Ensure leadership and management at all levels iron out inconsistencies in teaching and learning by using the findings from monitoring effectively to identify more clearly areas for improvement.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory, but which have areas of underperformance, will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The school's efforts to improve standards and accelerate progress have had a positive impact on current achievement and standards reached by learners. All pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the more able, make satisfactory progress overall in Years 1 to 6. There is some variation in rates of progress. In Year 6, progress accelerates and many pupils make good or better progress. The school's assessment information and inspection evidence show that standards are rising. The percentage of pupils who have reached the levels

expected for their age in Year 2 and Year 6 has increased from the previous year. Throughout the school, standards in reading and mathematics are broadly average. Although standards in writing are steadily improving, they range from broadly average to below average because of the previously inadequate provision in this subject. The school is aware of this area of weakness and, consequently, writing continues to be a focus for improvement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good. Pupils feel safe and know where to turn for help when needed. Pupils behave well in lessons and around school. A small number of pupils and parents expressed concerns about bullying at playtime. However, pupils assured inspectors that when incidents did occur they were dealt with promptly. Pupils enjoy school and appreciate the improvements that have taken place. They say 'learning has improved and is fun'. Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils understand the need for a healthy life and they participate well in sporting activities. Through the work of the school council and a wide range of fundraising events, pupils make a good contribution to the school and local community. Nevertheless, pupils told inspectors that they would like to take on even more responsibilities in the school. Pupils make satisfactory progress in their literacy and numeracy skills and this prepares them satisfactorily for the next stage of their education and later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and improving. Relationships between pupils and staff are good. This has a positive impact on pupils' attitudes and contributes towards a calm and purposeful working atmosphere in lessons. Progress accelerates when teachers ask pupils a range of open ended questions to support their learning and clarify their thinking prior to completing a task. Pupils also achieve well when staff use information from assessments to set tasks that meet their different learning needs successfully. However, this effective practice is inconsistent across the school. In some lessons, tasks are too easy for some or too difficult for others and do not always enable all pupils to make the progress of which they are capable. The presentation of pupils' work is improving and, as a result, pupils are increasingly keen to share their work with others. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning and behaviour.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The satisfactory curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. The emphasis on developing pupils' basic literacy and numeracy skills is contributing positively to raising standards and improving rates of progress. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has improved and, as result, they make satisfactory progress. Curriculum provision for more able pupils is in the early stages of development. The school is aware that teachers do not always provide this group of pupils with tasks that provide an appropriate level of challenge. Opportunities to consolidate and extend literacy and numeracy skills through other subjects are satisfactory. A small range of extra-curricular activities adds to pupils' enjoyment and some of them, such as judo and kung fu develop pupils' self confidence and self control.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pastoral care is good. All arrangements for safeguarding pupils are in place and ensure that pupils feel safe at school. Pupils say that when they have any problem, adults in the school listen and help them. Links with parents are sound and the school is aware of the need to extend the ways it could involve parents further. Pupils receive satisfactory academic guidance. Pupils are increasingly aware of the value of learning targets, although not all of them know why they have them. The marking of pupils work is inconsistent and does not always make clear what pupils have to do to improve their work. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive an appropriate level of support from staff and external agencies.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The collective leadership of the school is satisfactory. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher work together well. With middle managers, they regularly monitor the quality of teaching and learning. However, information from monitoring activities is not always used effectively to identify clear areas for improvement. Although the senior staff regularly review the progress of pupils towards their targets, the targets for the more able are not always challenging enough. As a result, these pupils make satisfactory rather than good progress. Governors provide satisfactory support for the school. They have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and they are developing better systems for holding the school to account for the progress made by pupils. The school's contribution to community cohesion is satisfactory. The school is continuing to develop and extend the links with members of the local community.

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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?	3
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?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

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/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

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

26 September 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of St Michael's Church of England Aided Primary School, Birmingham B32 3JS

Thank you for the friendly welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking with you about your work, visiting your lessons, and looking at your work. We would also like to say a special thank you to the children who came to talk us.

St Michael's Church of England Aided Primary is a satisfactory school. It is helping you to make satisfactory progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Many of you told us how much St Michael's has improved. We agree! This is what we liked most about the school.

- You are well behaved, kind to each other and polite.
- Mrs Bowden, the teachers and the other adults who work with you are working hard to help you make better progress. You told us that your lessons are more interesting and they are helping you to learn new skills.
- The youngest children in Nursery and Reception make good progress and learn in lots of different ways.
- Although there are lots of ways in which you help in school and the local area, we know that you are looking forward to taking on even more responsibilities.

We have asked Mrs Bowden, the staff and governors to help you make even faster progress in writing, reading and mathematics. We have also asked all the teachers to give you activities that always help you to do your best and to give you a little more support with meeting your learning targets. You can help your teachers by continuing to work hard. Finally, we have asked the school's leaders to help teachers to ensure all teaching is as good as it can be.

Thank you for making our two days with you so enjoyable and for being so friendly.

We wish you all the very best for the future.

Usha Devi Her Majesty's Inspector