

St Michael's C of E (C) Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124258
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	340525
Inspection dates	23–24 September 2009
Reporting inspector	Lois Furness

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	449
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Piggott
Headteacher	Helen McKay
Date of previous school inspection	16 May 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 30 lessons or parts of lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, pupils and parents. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including teachers' planning, pupils' books, the school improvement plan, monitoring and evaluation records, assessment records, individual education plans, minutes of meetings, safeguarding information and the termly reports of the school improvement partner. The responses from the pupil and staff questionnaires were analysed, as were the responses in the 140 parents' and carers' questionnaires received during the inspection.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- The learning and progress of pupils in Years 1 to 4, especially more able pupils, to check if teaching is sufficiently challenging
- The support provided for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and for those few pupils who are at an early stage of learning English
- How well the newly introduced creative curriculum ensures pupils' progress
- The effectiveness of governors in providing challenge and in ensuring statutory responsibilities are met, especially with regard to safeguarding and community cohesion.

Information about the school

In this large school the vast majority of pupils are White British. There are 14 other ethnic backgrounds represented. Few pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well below average. Early Years Foundation Stage provision consists of a Nursery class and two Reception classes. The school is housed on two sites with Years 5 and 6 taught in the old school building, known as 'the Annexe'. Seven new staff have joined the school over the past year, and a new leadership team was established at the start of the summer term. On the main site there is before- and after-school care, which is managed by a private provider.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

In accordance with Section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to pupils' learning and progress, the curriculum, pupils' understanding of community cohesion and communication with parents and carers.

Pupils' achievement is inadequate because pupils in Years 1- 4 do not make enough progress especially in writing and mathematics. By the end of Year 6, attainment is above average in English, mathematics and science because the progress pupils make in Years 5 and 6 is good. Weaknesses in the curriculum mean that pupils in some year groups do not acquire knowledge and skills in a systematic way. The information about pupils' prior learning is not used consistently well by all teachers to ensure that, year by year, pupils make the progress of which they are capable. As yet not all teachers consistently plan work that meets the range of pupils' needs, especially those of the more able, in writing and mathematics. Parents and carers rightly express their concerns about how well their children are progressing. The progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is also uneven, as work is not consistently tailored to meet their needs. Additionally, those pupils at an early stage of learning English do not always make the progress of which they are capable.

The new leadership team has successfully implemented actions to improve achievement, starting initially with reading. Progress in this subject is now at least satisfactory in all year groups, and for all groups of pupils. The leadership team has taken action which has successfully improved the quality of teaching. The vast majority of teaching is now satisfactory, with some good teaching seen in Years 5 and 6 during the inspection. However, the improved quality of teaching has not yet had time fully to influence pupils' achievement. Where teaching is weaker, there is not a close enough focus in teachers' planning on what pupils are to learn in the lesson as opposed to what they are to do. Monitoring and evaluation of pupils' progress have not always been frequent or demanding enough. However, procedures are becoming more rigorous and weaknesses in teaching have been identified. The improvements made in recent months, the accuracy of self-evaluation in highlighting strengths and improvement points, and the success in accelerating reading progress show that the school has satisfactory capacity to improve further.

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Although achievement is not good enough, pupils are attentive, enjoy their work and try hard to do their best. Behaviour is good. Their contribution to the school, local and global communities is satisfactory but pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to work with others of different faiths, ethnicities and cultures, particularly within the United Kingdom. The school's leaders do not have a clear strategy for securing this aspect of pupils' development. Governors are supportive and regularly visit the school. However, their monitoring role is underdeveloped. As yet governors do not hold the school to account sufficiently for tackling weaknesses. The school has lost the support of a small minority of parents, who do not think that it communicates well enough with them.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress in writing and mathematics in Years 1 to 4 by:
 - Setting challenging termly progress targets for all pupils so that the curriculum better matches pupils' needs
 - Enabling teachers to use assessment information competently to plan next steps in learning for the range of ability within their class
 - Making sure all teachers are clear about the difference between the activities pupils do, and the learning expected of them
 - Providing all pupils with clear guidance about how they can make their work better.

- Sharpen up monitoring and evaluation procedures by:
 - Ensuring that the senior leadership team check pupils' progress on a termly basis, taking action if there is evidence of underachievement
 - Ensuring staff are held accountable for their pupils' progress through performance management and termly pupil progress meetings
 - Ensuring that governors have an accurate knowledge of the school, and rigorously hold the headteacher and senior leaders to account for any weaknesses.

- Implement a strategy for community cohesion by:
 - Immediately auditing the school's religious, ethnic and socio-economic context
 - Devising a strategy based on the outcomes of this audit to develop opportunities for pupils to work with different communities, especially within the United Kingdom
 - Providing evidence of the impact of the school's work on pupils' development.

- Improve communications with parents by:
 - Reviewing existing consultation arrangements and identifying aspects that need to be improved, for example updating the school website
 - Immediately setting up systems for seeking and responding to parents'

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- views about children's progress
- Ensuring the school's behaviour policy is shared and explained to parents and pupils
- Ensuring that governors take a lead on exploring ways to involve parents more in decision-making about whole-school issues.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

4

The work of the current Year 6 pupils shows the majority of them are working at levels above those expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. However, this picture is not reflected throughout the school and in Years 1 to 4, the majority of pupils are working at the level expected for their age. This is not good enough, considering pupils' above average attainment on entry into Year 1. Lesson observations and work scrutinies indicate that work is mainly pitched at the 'average' pupil, and consequently more able pupils are insufficiently challenged, whilst pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities do not consistently receive work that takes them forward in their learning. Although progress has improved in reading and is now satisfactory there is still much work to be done to ensure that the good progress in Years 5 and 6 is seen in all classes, especially in writing and mathematics.

Above average attendance indicates how much pupils enjoy school. Pupils are generally eager to learn and respond best when lessons are engaging and challenging. They enjoy working collaboratively, as was seen when Year 6 pupils worked together to produce an exciting 'cliffhanger' to their story. They treat each other, staff and visitors with courtesy and respect as they move around the school. Although the majority of pupils say they feel safe, not all of them are confident about adult support if they are worried or have a problem. Pupils make wise choices at lunchtime and are aware that a balanced diet as well as exercise is vital for their health. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall, with particular strengths in their moral and social development. However, their cultural development is not as strong as the pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to engage with others from communities different from their own. By the time pupils leave in Year 6, their good literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills, alongside their good personal skills, mean that they are prepared well for the future.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	4

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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and their progress	4
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is mainly satisfactory with good teaching evident in Years 5 and 6. During the inspection a small amount of inadequate teaching was observed. A strength in most lessons is the effective use of 'talk partners' where pupils discuss with each other their ideas or solutions to problems, and develop their speaking, listening and social skills well. Good use of praise builds up pupils' confidence and self-esteem resulting in pupils willingly answering questions. However, at times teachers are not specific enough in their planning about the learning expected for the range of abilities within the class, especially the more able. Work is not then sufficiently challenging. There are some good examples of informative marking and feedback to pupils about the quality of their work, with comments clearly linked to the learning intended and steps for improvement, but this is not fully consistent and poorly presented work is sometimes accepted too readily by teachers.

The curriculum is not sufficiently well planned to ensure that pupils in all years are presented with work that moves them on in their learning. It does not make enough allowance for pupils who are ahead of others in their understanding or those who have fallen behind. The reading curriculum is better matched to pupils' needs, as shown by improved learning and progress, but provision in mathematics and writing is not as effective. There are strengths in other subjects, especially in music. Theme events such as pirate days, and the 'ugly bug ball' add interest and innovation to the curriculum. Extra-curricular activities are varied, and pupils enjoy the opportunities to work with local sports coaches.

The systems and procedures to support pupils' pastoral care are satisfactory. All relevant documentation is in place for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Although the school works satisfactorily with a range of outside agencies to support those pupils with additional needs including those who are at an early stage of learning English, the impact of this work is not yet evident in pupils' achievement.

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These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	4
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

The new leadership team is accurate in its evaluation of what it needs to do to improve provision and the school improvement plan identifies the right priorities. The team knows the progress of all pupils has not been good enough and Year 6 pupils' above-average performance in the National Curriculum tests has been a result of accelerated progress in Years 5 and 6. This weakness was identified at the time of the previous inspection but some staff found it difficult to accept that change was necessary. However, now all staff are committed to school improvement and are working together, trying hard to ensure pupils' progress is more consistent. The lessons learnt from successes in reading are being transferred to writing and mathematics. Monitoring is more rigorous than in the past and the senior management team regularly looks at teachers' planning and pupils' work. Even so, the follow-up action is not yet sharp enough and holding staff accountable for pupils' progress is not firmly established. The school satisfactorily promotes equality and tackles discrimination. Leaders are developing their use of information about pupils' performance and using this to tackle any weaknesses in provision. Governors provide satisfactory support, visiting the school regularly, but their role of challenge is under-developed. Safeguarding procedures are satisfactory and at the time of the inspection all safeguarding documents met government requirements. As yet, there is no clear policy, plan or evaluation strategy for ensuring community cohesion within or beyond the school.

Partnerships with parents are not good enough, as too many parents are unhappy with aspects of the school's work. This comment on the inspection questionnaire sums up the views of many, 'Overall I am happy with my child's experience. However, I feel it could improve with better communication between parents, teachers and the school!' The headteacher agrees with this comment and improving parental partnerships is a key priority on the school improvement plan.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account:	
The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the	4

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school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	4
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	4
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children's skills, knowledge and understanding on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage are above those expected for their age. As a result of effective teaching children leave the Reception classes with skills, knowledge and understanding that are above expectations. The setting is managed satisfactorily, with high expectations of good behaviour and cooperation. Most children settle well into this happy and positive environment. They behave well and establish warm and positive relationships with adults and other children. Children take turns and share resources well. They enjoy the range of activities that are provided, for example playing in the cafe, printing with apples or experimenting with different slopes to see how far cars will roll. Children are aware of keeping healthy and suggest that 'fruit would be better to eat than cakes.' Although there is an appropriate balance between teacher-led and those activities chosen by children themselves, occasionally adults provide too much support, so limiting children's independence. Records of continuous observation are kept, but prior assessment information is not consistently used well enough to ensure that children always progress as quickly as they are able. The indoor classroom is satisfactory, but as the leader of this key stage is aware, the new outdoor environment needs further development.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Although the majority of parents and carers support the school's work, a significant minority are unhappy with their children's progress and the way the school provides for individual needs, the management of unacceptable behaviour, the response to

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suggestions and concerns, and the leadership and management of the school. The inspection team agrees with their concerns about progress and the lack of consistent match of work to all pupils' needs. Also the school does not consult effectively enough with parents as shown by parents' unhappiness with the recently introduced healthy snacks policy. Some aspects of leadership and management, inspectors agree, are inadequate and no policy for community cohesion is in place. With regard to the management of behaviour, inspectors found no evidence to support parents' views, either in the school's records or in discussions with pupils during lessons and break times. However, the headteacher acknowledged the school's behaviour policy had not been shared well enough with parents.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Michael's C of E (C) Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 140 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 449 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	56	40	78	56	6	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	49	35	73	52	12	9	1	1
The school informs me about my child’s progress	22	16	84	60	25	18	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	27	19	71	51	29	21	5	4
The teaching is good at this school	27	21	81	64	18	14	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	22	16	77	55	26	19	6	4
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	34	24	86	61	11	8	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	26	19	80	57	14	10	1	1
The school meets my child’s particular needs	18	13	83	59	26	19	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	17	12	68	49	34	24	9	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	21	14	72	48	33	22	10	7
The school is led and managed effectively	14	10	69	49	30	21	13	9
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	29	21	85	61	21	15	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

25 September 2009

Dear Pupils



Inspection of St Michael's C of E (C) Primary School, Lichfield WS14 9AW

Thank you for making us so welcome when we inspected your school recently. A particular thank you to those of you who took the time to talk with us and tell us about the things you do. Please also thank your parents and carers for returning the questionnaires, they were very helpful. Here are some of the things we found out.

- Your behaviour is good and during our lesson observations you were enthusiastic and tried hard to do your work.
- You have a good understanding of the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle and even the youngest children know that fruit is good for you.
- You are good at helping each other to learn, and we could see how sensible you were when your teachers asked you to discuss ideas.
- By the time you leave in Year 6 you are reaching standards in your work that are higher than those found in most schools.

However, although there are good things, we think your school is not doing as well as it should be in helping you to achieve your very best in all year groups, especially in writing and mathematics. Therefore we have asked your headteacher, staff and governors to do the following things:

- Make sure teachers use the information about what you know already, to plan work that helps all of you learn as well as you can. We also think you would find it useful to have more help in knowing how you could improve your work and so we have asked your teachers to give you clearer guidance when they mark your books.
- We know you enjoy working with each other and we think you need more opportunities to work with communities in the United Kingdom that have pupils from other faiths, cultures and ethnic backgrounds.
- We think the school should find better ways of involving your parents so they know more about what is happening in school.
- We have asked your headteacher and governors to check regularly that our suggestions are being carried out by all staff and that all of you are making good progress in your work.

We are sure you will do all you can to help all the adults that work with you make your school better. You can do this by continuing to work as hard as you can.

Yours sincerely

Lois Furness
Lead inspector

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