

St Michael's Church of England Aided Infant School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	125170
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	381057
Inspection dates	26–27 January 2012
Lead inspector	Natalia Power

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	63
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ben Tatham
Headteacher	Anne Hossack
Date of previous school inspection	13 May 2009
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Age group	4–7
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Introduction

Inspection team

Natalia Power

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed four teachers and visited each of the three classes three times over two days. The inspector spoke to parents and carers, listened to pupils read, and held meetings with staff and members of the governing body. She took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at its self-evaluation documents and plans for improvement, the data collected on pupils' progress, safeguarding information and the governing body minutes. She considered the responses in 50 questionnaires that had been returned by parents and carers, and nine from staff.

Information about the school

This school consists of three classes for Reception, Year 1 and Year 2, and is smaller than the average infant school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is much lower than usual. Almost nine out of ten pupils come from White British backgrounds, and currently very few of those who come from minority ethnic backgrounds speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs is lower than usual, and there are currently no pupils with disabilities. Children enter the Reception class from a wide range of nurseries, including the nearby St Michael's Community Nursery, which is independently managed and is subject to separate inspection.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school, strongly supported by parents and carers. One accurately described the school's strengths as, 'Looking after the individual child and making them feel part of a friendly community.' The impressive development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural qualities ensures that they respect one another's values and are polite and helpful to visitors.
- Pupils attain above-average results in the national tests at the end of Year 2 and make good progress. The strong focus on developing their reading skills ensures that the pupils do particularly well in reading, and enjoy a wide range of fiction and non-fiction books. They do not always have enough opportunities to develop their writing skills fully, for example by writing accounts or stories.
- Teaching is consistently good. Effective use of questioning, based on a thorough understanding of the capabilities of each pupil, is a particular strength. In a few cases, however, teachers do too much for the pupils, and the pace of learning slows.
- Pupils are keen to learn, and their behaviour is excellent in lessons and around the school. Pupils feel completely safe in school and know how to keep themselves safe. Their attendance is considerably above average and they are very punctual.
- The headteacher, ably assisted by all the staff and the capable governing body, maintains robust procedures which meet national requirements to keep pupils safe. Their plans to improve the school demonstrate their accurate understanding of its strengths and areas for development, and are focused on the right priorities. The school has successfully met the recommendations of the previous inspection, indicating its good capacity to improve. Leaders and managers ensure that pupils have a broad and balanced curriculum, and that they enjoy a rich programme of trips and visits.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the pace of learning is consistently brisk in every lesson, with more opportunities for pupils to be fully engaged in their own learning.
- Encourage all the pupils to develop fluency in writing by providing as many opportunities as possible for them to write at length.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics throughout the school and their overall attainment is consistently above average at the end of Year 2. They learn well in all three classes and, as a result, make good overall progress in their time at the school. Inspection evidence, obtained from looking at pupils' current and past work, talking to them and observing their lessons, confirms this pattern. The youngest children in the Reception class make good progress in learning their phonics (sounds and letters) because the teacher skilfully uses play as a learning tool. For example, the children enjoyed a game of identifying pets from their sounds and then drawing or writing the name of the animal and placing it in the vet's 'van'. The focus on reading accurately and fluently continues in the rest of the school. Pupils in Year 2 read aloud confidently to the inspector, and spoke knowledgeably about the range of books they enjoy. Pupils make strongest progress where teaching is fast paced and where they play an active part in their own learning. For example, Year 1 pupils were fully engaged and excited by a mathematics lesson in which they weighed a variety of objects on balance scales to see which were heavier. The pupils enjoyed the task because they were asked to come up with ideas on how best to approach it. They also enjoyed weighing and counting, and reporting their findings to one another.

The few pupils who have special educational needs have their needs quickly identified and are supported well in class by the teachers and their assistants, who all know the pupils well as individuals. Girls and boys perform equally well. The youngest pupils in the Reception class make good progress and enter Year 1 with language, number and social skills that exceed national expectations. All the parents and carers who spoke to inspectors or returned questionnaires were rightly pleased with how well their children were doing.

Quality of teaching

Teachers use questioning skilfully to challenge pupils to think for themselves. They plan the curriculum carefully to match the difficulty of work well to the individual needs of the pupils. For example, in a well-planned Year 2 mathematics lesson, the interest of the class was quickly established through an enjoyable computer game which engaged the whole class as it was projected on the interactive whiteboard. Pupils then tackled addition and subtraction in groups, each group receiving a good level of challenge for their capabilities and each receiving helpful support from an adult. Children in the Reception class are offered a variety of stimulating activities.

For example, the topic of the Chinese New Year provided exciting learning opportunities. Some children busied themselves with cutting up vegetables to fill pancakes, while others painted Chinese dragons or made Chinese music outdoors. All the while, the adults were careful to provide them with opportunities to read and write and count, and to ask them questions that showed a thorough understanding of their abilities and needs. Occasionally, however, the teachers take too long to explain tasks to the pupils and in these cases the pace drops and pupils do not have enough opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning.

The school's active promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development permeates all aspects of its work. For example, pupils in a Year 2 history lesson were enthralled when the teacher asked them to close their eyes and imagine what life was like for wounded soldiers in the hospital at Scutari, waiting for a visit from Florence Nightingale. The picture she painted in words engaged the pupils fully, so that they had a real understanding of conditions in the hospital and could then discuss their ideas and feelings with one another. Parents and carers who spoke to inspectors or who commented on questionnaires liked the teaching in the school, and one remarked that, 'The teachers know my children's individual needs and are happy to discuss any of my concerns.' These positive responses were also reflected in the views expressed by the pupils themselves.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils, and parents agree, told the inspector that the excellent behaviour seen in and around the school during the inspection was typical of behaviour generally. This is confirmed by the school's records. They are polite and considerate to one another, and the Year 2 'official helpers' are proud of their responsibilities towards the younger pupils. They told the inspector that they feel safe in school and report that pupils are kind to one another and that there is no bullying of any sort. If they have any worries or concerns, they know which adults to turn to for support.

Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe, and are taught, for example, the dangers of cyberbullying and how to protect themselves. Pupils feel safe and confident from the earliest age, and a number of parents and carers told the inspector how much they value the safe and secure ethos of this small village school. The pupils show their enjoyment of school through their consistently above-average attendance and good punctuality. A parent of a child in the Reception year commented, 'My child has responded well to school and I do believe it is because of how welcome the staff made her feel,' and this remark was typical of many. The proportion of parents and carers who completed the questionnaire was much higher than usual. Without exception, all agreed that their children feel safe and are looked after outstandingly well.

Leadership and management

The capable headteacher, well supported by her staff and by the governing body, has created a happy school in which each individual feels valued. There is a good focus on improvement over time, and each member of the team is ambitious to make the school outstanding. The school has met its recommendations for improvement from the previous inspection, so that, for example, pupils' progress is

tracked accurately and activities provided that match the needs of all the pupils. As a result of this forward movement, together with the school's accurate understanding of its strengths and what remains to be done, it is well placed to continue to improve. The governing body is actively involved in the life of the school and readily holds it to account. The headteacher regularly visits classes to ensure that standards of teaching are maintained, and the contribution this makes towards teachers' professional development is effective in ensuring consistency of quality.

The school ensures that pupils have a good understanding of what it means to be a citizen of Britain and the wider world. For example, one pupil's description in assembly of the contribution made by his mother, a serving officer in Afghanistan, made the conflict personal to all the pupils and helped them understand the issues. The headteacher and the governing body are effective in ensuring that the arrangements to keep pupils safe are rigorous. Staff are regularly trained in child protection procedures and all adults are thoroughly checked and vetted before working in the school. Pupils from all backgrounds are given equal opportunity to make good progress and achieve well, and discrimination is not tolerated.

The curriculum is good. Pupils are generally well prepared for the next stage of schooling. A number of pupils told the inspector that their favourite activity was writing stories. However, they do not have the opportunity to write stories often enough, or to practise writing fluently on a range of topics to hone their skills. Pupils report that they enjoy the many clubs, trips and visits designed to give them a wide range of experiences. Topics are often presented to the pupils in imaginative ways. For example, in a physical education lesson, pupils were given the chance to learn the science of how their bodies work by observing the impact on one another's heart rate and breathing of one minute's intense physical activity. The school is careful to provide pupils with a range of artistic and musical experiences. For example, Year 1 pupils enjoyed looking at famous paintings and studying the artists' use of colour before going on to experiment with colour themselves.

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



30 January 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Michael's Church of England Aided Infant School, Dorking RH5 6EW

I very much enjoyed my two-day visit to your school, and it was lovely to see how well you learn and how nicely you play together. Thank you for making me so welcome and telling me your views, both in person and through your questionnaires.

- You go to a good school. You told me that your school keeps you extremely safe. I saw how exceptionally well you behave in lessons and around the school, and you told me this is how your school usually is, and that the children are kind to one another. You are polite and respectful to visitors. All these really good ways of behaving reflect the excellent contribution all the adults make to your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- You do very well at school, especially in your reading. All of you make good progress throughout your time at school, and this is because the adults know you well and give you the right sort of help.
- Your teachers teach you well, asking you questions that really make you think. I saw how you learn quickly and enthusiastically when you play an active part in your own learning. I have, therefore, asked the adults to get you directly involved quickly whenever they can.
- You told me how much you enjoy writing stories, and I have asked the adults to make sure you have many chances to write your ideas down and to write even more poems, stories and descriptions than you already do.

Of course, you too have a part to play in improving your school. Work hard, and always ask your teacher if there is anything you do not understand.

I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours faithfully

Natalia Power
Lead inspector

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