

St Michael's CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	116866
Local authority	Herefordshire
Inspection number	379316
Inspection dates	2–3 February 2012
Lead inspector	Michael Farrell

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	99
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Simon Nickols
Headteacher	Tim Wilson
Date of previous school inspection	22 January 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

Michael Farrell

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. All groups were observed in their morning reading sessions, and six lessons and an assembly were inspected in all comprising five hours teaching; six teachers were seen; the inspector listened to children reading individually; meetings were held with pupils and staff and two members of the governing body. The inspector noted there were no responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documents including those concerning safeguarding, lesson planning, and data on pupils' progress, and scrutinised 52 parental questionnaires.

Information about the school

St. Michael's is smaller than the average-sized primary school and is located in a rural area. Almost all pupils are White British. The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of a pre-school for children aged three to four and a mixed Reception and Year 1 class. There are three more classes with mixed-age groups. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is average but sometimes the number of pupils identified in a particular year is high. Since the previous inspection the pre-school has been managed by the governing body. In the pre-school, numbers registered each day varies from four to 12 children and individual children attend up to a maximum of two full days per week. Most children transfer from pre-school to the Reception year. In the past three years, following the closure of a local primary school, its former pupils have attended St. Michael's School. An after-school club is organised and staffed by parents and carers several afternoons per week. Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed and there is a new Chair of the Governing Body.

Inspection judgements

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

Key findings

- This is a good school where a caring and inclusive ethos powerfully contributes to pupils achieving well and feeling greatly valued. Pupils and groups of pupils including, boys and girls, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, make good progress and achieve well.
- Teaching is good because the well-planned lessons are motivating and take full account of pupils’ interests. The skilful and confident teaching assistants make a valued and important contribution to pupils’ learning.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage children make good progress and achieve well. There are strong links between staff in the pre-school and Reception and Year 1 class, which ensure children move through this stage smoothly.
- Behaviour is good in lessons and around school because pupils respond to the school’s respectful ethos and staff manage behaviour well. Pupils feel safe knowing they can talk to staff if they have any problems and parents and carers are confident that their children are safe.
- The school is well led and managed by the headteacher and senior staff working closely with the conscientious governing body.
- The well-considered curriculum is enhanced by a range of extra activities including a popular after-school club. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is encouraged well through the curriculum and the school’s values.
- Marking is thorough and there are examples of good questioning in lessons but questioning is not always as searching and challenging as it should be for all pupils.
- Pupils develop skills and knowledge in information and communication technology (ICT) systematically in the computer suite but have fewer opportunities to apply them in regular lessons.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards by ensuring that in all lessons, teachers’ questioning is as searching and challenging as possible for all pupils.
- Ensure pupils improve their ICT skills by providing more opportunities for them to apply these in regular lessons.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children achieve well in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Pre-school children loved negotiating an obstacle course and became increasingly confident as they succeeded. In Reception year progress in creative development, knowledge and understanding of the world and physical development are among stronger areas. Children enjoyed examining pictures and models of dinosaurs and described colours and textures ('bumpy', 'rough') while others used the computer suite to draw and print designs and to practise addition and subtraction. At the end of Key Stage 1, pupils' attainment in reading is at least average. By the time pupils are ready to leave school at the end of Key Stage 2 attainment, including in reading, is above average. Pupils develop the knowledge and skills they need for secondary school so that they look forward to this next phase with confidence. Pupils' good achievement over time is indicated by national data, the school's assessments, the inspector's observations, the school's lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work. Different groups, for example, boys and girls and pupils whose circumstances may make them and their families vulnerable, achieve well. This is because the school's tracking system identifies when progress slows and the school takes effective actions to put matters right.

Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs achieve well because training has kept staff informed of suitable strategies and individual targets are challenging. Reading, writing and mathematics' skills are applied well across the curriculum. Parents and carers are justifiably confident their children are achieving well. In a literacy lesson for younger pupils a group writing about Mexico made good progress because writing strategies were systematically taught and the teacher had excited interest by bringing in ingredients for Mexican food. A group led by the teaching assistant achieved well in writing 'speech bubbles' for a character that captured their interest. In a mathematics lesson for older pupils, work was well pitched for different groups and because the teacher encouraged confidence and interest in mathematics, pupils tried their best and achieved well in using different methods of calculation.

Quality of teaching

The school's observations over time show that the proportion of satisfactory teaching has reduced because of the support provided so that good teaching is the norm. Teachers ensure the morning reading sessions are purposeful because time is well used and books chosen reflect pupils' enthusiasms, so pupils are keen to explain what they are reading and why they enjoy it. A joint observation by the headteacher and the inspector showed very close agreement about the qualities of the lessons and the grading. In this well-paced lesson the teacher and teaching assistant worked closely together using carefully planned and structured activities to develop understanding of negative and positive numbers in context by helping pupils examine various examples such as temperature. All lessons observed during the inspection

were good and contributed to pupils' good achievement. Parents and carers too consider teaching to be good and pupils can readily give a list of lessons they enjoy. One pupil asked about favourite lessons stated, 'I like everything'.

Relationships between pupils and staff are trusting and warm, strongly encouraging social and moral development. Considerable and successful efforts are made to make the lessons interesting and capture pupils' interest. Teaching assistants are well informed and know pupils very well as individuals. Drawing on the well-balanced curriculum, teachers ensure lessons are carefully planned so that expected learning outcomes are clear to all. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is good because it is well managed by staff and because pupils are engaged in learning. Marking is thorough and up-to-date and suitable homework is set. There are examples of good questioning to check what pupils know but sometimes questioning is too closed to be as searching and challenging as it could be to extend the learning of pupils further.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

A significant minority of parents, carers and pupils say behaviour is not always good. However, when the inspector spoke to pupils in meetings, including older pupils who had been at the school for some years, the consensus was that behaviour is generally good. During the inspection, behaviour in lessons and in assembly, at breaks and at lunchtimes was good. Good behaviour over time is indicated, for example, by the school's records showing that there have been no exclusions in recent years and that poor behaviour is infrequent. In lessons, pupils encourage each other to do their best because staff convey how important this is. Pupils are courteous and respectful because of the ethos the school sets and because staff manage behaviour well. Attendance is above average and pupils are punctual to lessons. In their questionnaire, a minority of parents and carers and pupils stated there was bullying. However, from discussion with groups of pupils, there was little evidence of bullying of any type. Pupils' views and other inspection evidence indicated that over time bullying, including cyber-bullying and prejudice-based bullying, was rare and when it did occur it was dealt with appropriately. In the past two years, the school has improved the security of its site. Pupils, both in questionnaire responses and in person state they feel safe. Parents and carers, too, are confident about their children's safety. In the Early Years Foundation Stage children behave well because staff expectations are high and behaviour is well managed and children increasingly recognise safety is very important.

Leadership and management

The governing body has a valuable range of skills and expertise which is used to challenge and support the school well. The headteacher and other leaders and managers provide a clear sense of direction so staff form a cohesive and committed team, keen to do their best for the pupils. Morale is high but with no sense of complacency. The broad and well-balanced curriculum is very responsive to the needs and interests of the pupils and the school is prompt to introduce new content and approaches as appropriate. For example, more consistent approaches to mathematics and literacy have been successfully developed in the past two years supported by well-focused staff training. Good equality of opportunity is aided by the improved monitoring of pupils' progress followed by any necessary interventions. Any

discrimination is addressed robustly and the school's approach is underpinned by relevant policies. Lesson observations are rigorous leading to improvements in the quality of teaching. Safeguarding meets current government requirements well.

The school places great store in forging strong links with parents and carers. The headteacher and staff members make informal contact in the community so that parents and carers who might not otherwise get in touch with the school can speak to senior staff. In the Early Years Foundation Stage staff liaise conscientiously and information and assessments are usefully shared and newsletters, open mornings, informal contacts and home-school books help maintain strong links with parents and carers. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is encouraged well through the curriculum, extra-curricular activities and school assemblies and by the school's positive climate for learning. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and the school has sustained the good aspects evident at the previous inspection. A wide range of improvements has been made including enhancements to the physical environment and the system for tracking pupils' progress. Consequently, the school has a strong capacity for further improvement.

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.



6 February 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Michael's CofE Primary School, Hereford, HR1 3JU

It was a great pleasure to meet you when I inspected your school recently. You made me feel very welcome so thank you for that. I enjoyed talking to you in lessons and looking at your work when the lesson allowed this. Thank you too to those of you who read to me and the group that spoke to me about the school and your work. St Michaels' is a good school. It is well led and managed. Teaching is good. You behave well and you feel safe. The curriculum is interesting and you try your best. You make good progress in your work and you achieve well. Children in the pre-school and in Reception do well because what is provided is good. There are some things that could be better so I have asked the school to:

- make sure teachers ask you a range of questions that really challenge you in lessons
- give you more opportunities in regular lessons to apply your technology skills.

How can you help with this? You could try your best when the teacher asks you searching questions. I know you will be eager to grasp the extra opportunities to use computers because you told me so. All good wishes for your future.

Yours sincerely

Michael Farrell
Lead inspector

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