

# St Michael's C of E Junior school

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	118625
<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	379651
<b>Inspection dates</b>	29 February–1 March 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Wendy Simmons

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary Controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	143
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Jeanette Ardley
<b>Headteacher</b>	Lorna Priddle (Executive Headteacher)
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	29–30 November 2010
<b>School address</b>	Douglas Road Maidstone Kent ME16 8ER
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<b>Age group</b>	7–11
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	29 February–1 March 2012
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## Introduction

Inspection team

Wendy Simmons

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector visited 14 lessons. Some observations lasted more than 25 minutes and others included shorter visits to classes, including group activities. Nine teachers were observed and discussions were held with teachers and assistants. The inspector held meetings with different groups of pupils and scrutinised samples of their work. Meetings were held with the senior management team and other members of staff. The inspector met with two representatives of the federated governing body.

The inspector took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work and looked at documentation; especially that linked to assessment data, governors' minutes and evidence concerning the quality of teaching. The inspector evaluated the responses to the questionnaires from pupils, staff and 81 parents and carers.

## Information about the school

This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is above average, as is that of those who are known to be eligible for free school meals. Most pupils come from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average. Some pupils come from a local women's refuge and it is not unusual for pupils to join and leave the school throughout the school year.

At the time of the last inspection, the school was given a notice to improve. Following this, the headteacher of St Michael's Infant School (graded outstanding in the past two inspections) took over as the executive headteacher. The school has recently been federated with the infant school and has a federated governing body. Within the last year, there have been many staff changes. The governing body manages a breakfast club on the site for junior-aged pupils. The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

**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

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Key findings

- 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. It has emerged from a period of considerable difficulty to be a satisfactory and rapidly improving school, which is very well led. It is not a good school, because the achievement of the pupils is no more than satisfactory. The outstanding vision and drive of the executive headteacher are well supported by the heads of school, staff and the governing body. The rigorous management of teachers' performance has eradicated inadequate teaching and raised pupils' achievement from inadequate to satisfactory.
- Pupils behave well, are very proud of their achievements and are a credit to the school and themselves. They say that they feel very safe and that they are keen to learn. This represents an immense turnaround from the findings of the last inspection when behaviour was inadequate. Parents and carers are unanimous in their appreciation of the improvements made. Pupils thoroughly enjoy the many activities that enrich their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The music provision is outstanding.
- Pupils' attainment by the time they leave is satisfactory. Evidence in all year groups confirms that standards will reach national averages in 2012 and possibly exceed them in the future. This is because of the impact of good teaching on pupils' rapidly improving attainment in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching is now good overall and sometimes outstanding, but not enough is outstanding to ensure that pupils' achievement is at least good. Leaders are fully aware of the need to maintain the focus on the development of pupils' speaking, writing and mathematical skills.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' achievement in English and mathematics to at least good overall,

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and make more teaching outstanding, by:

- providing pupils with more opportunities to talk about their ideas before they write, using descriptive vocabulary and complex sentences
- making greater use of practical activities such as drama in lessons
- helping pupils, especially boys, to write more speedily and to undertake more extended pieces of writing which include complex sentences
- making further links between literacy and mathematics in other subjects
- providing more opportunities for pupils to explain their mathematical thinking when working on problem-solving activities.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

The inspection endorses parents' and carers' views that pupils are doing better than in the recent past. Until the early part of 2011, many pupils were more than two years behind the level expected for their age. This underachievement was most marked for boys, pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who speak English as an additional language. It was not uncommon for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs to have made no progress in their learning for more than two years. The lessons and work seen during this inspection confirmed that all groups are now catching up quickly and that pupils' reading, writing and mathematics are improving so that pupils are more suitably prepared for life in secondary school. Pupils are often extremely proud of how well they are doing. As one boy explained, 'I have made more than two years' progress in six months.'

The very strong support for reading, which includes some very effective teaching of phonics (letters and their sounds), enables pupils to read accurately. Pupils know how to blend sounds together to read and to segment them to help them with their spelling. For example, targeted support for boys in Year 6 quickly helped them to read and spell, independently, words that they had been unable to do in the past. Pupils enjoy reading. Year 6 pupils explained that, although a challenge at first, they just wanted to read more and more each day of Michael Morpurgo's book, *Why the Whales Came*. Evidence from lessons and the school's own data indicate that by the time Year 6 pupils leave in July 2012, their reading skills are likely to have reached the national average. Nonetheless, pupils often still find it hard to explain subtle parts of text that rely on inference.

Pupils' handwriting is neatly formed, although some boys are still struggling to write quickly. Pupils enjoy plenty of opportunities to write creatively and some good work is underway to enrich their vocabulary. However, pupils often find it hard to write using complex sentences. Signs of improvement are evident, such as when Year 3 pupils worked hard on finding and using different adjectives to enliven their sentences, and when Year 4 pupils used the thesaurus to find many alternative words to describe the feeling of unhappiness. Opportunities are missed for pupils to do extended pieces of writing in a range of subjects.

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In mathematics, pupils are learning basic skills well and enjoy problem-solving activities. Nonetheless, some opportunities are missed to use mathematics within different subjects. Interventions, such as 'numbers count', ensure that pupils have a strong grasp of basic numeracy. Pupils in Year 3 were totally absorbed when doing interesting mathematical word-based problems and Year 5 pupils worked hard adding mixed numbers and improper fractions. However, pupils are still finding it challenging to explain verbally each step of their workings even when they have made some useful jottings to help them. For example, pupils in Year 6 needed a great deal of help to explain why, based on probability, different football teams were likely to be high up in the league table.

**Quality of teaching**

Parents and carers feel that teaching is good; inspectors fully endorse this view. Discussions with pupils in Years 5 and 6 revealed that lessons, in the past, had often been boring. Now, pupils said that learning is often fun. Teachers have very good relationships with pupils. Lessons are planned exceptionally well to take account of pupils' different needs and abilities. As a consequence, work is neither too easy nor too difficult for pupils and this is helping to accelerate their progress. The pace of teaching is brisk.

The impressive use of information and communication technology is having a very positive impact on pupils' progress. For example, boys were observed concentrating very hard when typing because the technology enabled them to hear their writing being read back to them. This helped them to rethink ideas and correct their punctuation. Strong one-to-one support and catch-up groups mean that pupils understand what they are doing and have the skills to work independently.

Teachers understand that pupils still need more time and opportunity to talk using descriptive vocabulary. Year 6 pupils enjoyed watching a DVD clip about a fantasy dinosaur world and the teacher talked vividly about 'Soaring through the sky, then sweeping through the forest through the cascading waterfall.' However, chances are missed to use practical activities, such as drama, to reinforce and extend pupils' use of this kind of high-quality vocabulary to help them with their own writing.

Teachers have strong knowledge of the subjects being taught. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is often very evident in lessons so that pupils develop a sense of joy and pride when mastering a new skill or overcoming past difficulties. The teaching of music is exceptionally good because singing skills are skilfully taught and pupils can learn to play many instruments.

**Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Discussions with pupils confirmed that they feel very safe at school now that behaviour has improved; parents and carers agree. Pupils commented that there had been 'loads of punch ups and fights' and now, they say, these never happen and 'everyone is friendly'. There has not been a recent exclusion and rates of attendance

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are above average. The learning mentor, and the family liaison officer appointed by the executive headteacher, have had a significant impact on pupils' attitudes. Behaviour management is very positive and pupils thoroughly enjoy working towards the special, individual behaviour prizes. In lessons, there are plenty of examples of pupils showing sustained concentration and curiosity. The help for pupils with behavioural difficulties has been especially successful. The breakfast club provides a welcoming start to the day and enriches pupils' sense of well-being.

Pupils know much about cyber-bullying as a result of the recent work of a police visitor. When reading the children's newspaper, *First News*, in Year 5, the teacher highlighted for pupils an article about internet bullying. Pupils confirmed that there are few incidences of bullying and action to reduce it has been concerted and effective. Pupils show respect for different cultures, religions and family circumstances. They know that it is unacceptable to use name-calling words that may offend gay or lesbian people. Behaviour is not outstanding because occasionally there are incidences of name calling which upset disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Leaders are focused on eliminating this.

### **Leadership and management**

There has been a concerted effort to appoint highly-skilled staff and raise expectations about what pupils can achieve. Notably, everyone is focused on ensuring equal opportunities for all pupils, and discrimination is not tolerated. The professional development of staff is very regular and focused on improving specific skills. For example, staff training has had a notable impact on the support given to pupils who speak English as an additional language and on the teaching of phonics and basic mathematical skills for all pupils. The positive impact of leaders' work, at all levels, confirms that the school has a strong capacity to continue improving.

The school's leaders rigorously check lessons and link the findings with evidence from pupils' books and data about their progress. Leaders have plenty of high-quality, carefully-assessed data to aid their analysis of the work of the school. The executive headteacher shows immense determination to drive school improvement forwards. Her vision is underpinned by high-quality self-evaluation and effective, phased development planning.

The governing body is going through a period of transition due to federation. Governors are fully involved in the daily life of the school and have taken decisive action to improve it. They know about the progress of learners and monitor it closely, and they ensure that safeguarding procedures are rigorous so that requirements are fully met. Leaders know that in the drive to make leadership outstanding in the future, the newly federated governing body needs to be more established. Added to this, the school needs to be able to demonstrate a sustained trend for at least good achievement. Leaders are ambitious to do as well as possible for pupils so that they have the best possible life chances. They have worked effectively to enrich and extend the curriculum, so that it is good for basic skills, the arts and sports; the school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.

## 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](http://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.**



4 March 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of St Michael's C of E Primary School, Maidstone ME16 8ER**

I am writing to thank you for helping me to find out all about your school. It was a pleasure to read your questionnaires and talk to so many of you. I am extremely impressed by the way in which you have all improved your behaviour so much; many congratulations and please keep it up! Your parents and carers are pleased with your school and everyone agrees that it has improved immensely. Those of you who had made slow progress in the past are being helped to catch up very well. You told me how proud you are of your progress in reading, writing and mathematics. You are achieving satisfactorily now because teaching is good. Your musical work is outstanding. I really enjoyed your singing and the talent show.

The executive headteacher is doing an amazing job at inspiring everyone to do the best that they can for you. We all agree that the following things still need to be done to help you to do even better in English and mathematics.

- All lessons need to be as exciting and outstanding as possible. This will mean more opportunities for you to talk about your ideas, do practical activities like drama before you write, and do more extended pieces of writing. There will be even more help (especially for the boys) to help you to write more quickly. Please try to use more descriptive words when explaining your ideas for writing.
- We know that you will enjoy making even more links with different subjects when doing English and mathematics. Please try to keep using your targets whatever subject you are working on. Your teachers will be helping you to explain how you solve mathematical problems as carefully as possible.

I wish you all much further success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Wendy Simmons  
Lead inspector

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