

St Michael's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	104227
Local authority	Walsall
Inspection number	377041
Inspection dates	28–29 February 2012
Lead inspector	Rodney Braithwaite

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	364
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Simon Merckel
Headteacher	Roslynne Hutchinson
Date of previous school inspection	6–7 May 2009
School address	Maple Road Pelsall Walsall WS3 4JJ
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Rodney Braithwaite

Additional inspector

Michelle Pickering

Additional inspector

Chris Ogden

Additional inspector

The inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed 24 lessons or part lessons taught by 16 teachers. Meetings were held with pupils, the headteacher, teachers, and representatives of the governing body. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at safeguarding arrangements as well as other information including policies, procedures, external evaluations, a range of pupils' work and school development planning. A total of 118 questionnaires from parents and carers were scrutinised, together with questionnaires received from staff and pupils.

Information about the school

St Michael's is a larger than average primary school. Most pupils are White British, the remainder representing a range of other ethnicities. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than the national average, as is the proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for academic performance, last year. The school has an Early Years Foundation Stage, and caters for 52 nursery-aged children who attend on a part-time basis. The school provides wraparound care which consists of before- and after-school clubs and day care for the part-time nursery children whose parents and carers want them to stay for the whole day. Pupils in the Reception class, and in Years 5 and 6, are taught permanently in small single-age classes. Pupils in Years 1 to 4 are taught in small single-age classes in the mornings and larger mixed-age classes in the afternoons.

Among its awards the school has Artsmark and the Dyslexia Friendly Quality Award.

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	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. The headteacher leads from the front and successfully encourages staff to improve the school's and their own performance. She is well supported by an experienced senior leadership team, and an enthusiastic team of middle leaders who all share her high aspirations, and monitor teaching rigorously. Although the school has a number of strengths, it is not yet outstanding because the rate of progress made by pupils is not wholly consistent across the school. This reflects the teaching, which is mainly good, occasionally outstanding, but also sometimes satisfactory.
- Almost all pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, make good progress, so that most reach standards above those expected in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6. Most more-able pupils and those who are gifted and talented reach their full potential, but leaders know through their progress data that there are still a minority who could also reach higher levels.
- Pupils behave very well in lessons and around the school, and have a good understanding of how to act safely. They have good attitudes to learning, work diligently and are well-motivated learners. Their good personal development reflects the effective provision for their spiritual, social, moral and cultural education, which also benefits from a vibrant curriculum with outstanding extra-curricular provision. Although developing some good skills for their lives ahead, leaders realise that pupils do not yet possess high-level independent learning skills to better equip them to deal with the challenges they will face in the future.
- The school provides excellent support and care for pupils. This is much appreciated by parents and carers, whose responses were positive and frequently complimentary about the staff and leadership.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Ensure that the rate of progress made by all pupils in their learning is consistent across the school by:
 - modelling and sharing good practice that already exists in the school to make all teaching good or better
 - ensuring that all pupils are fully engaged in their learning through high levels of expectation
 - regularly enabling more-able pupils to work at higher levels.

- Build upon the existing foundation to enable pupils to become highly-skilled independent learners by:
 - raising the skills of independence, cooperation and self-reliance of all pupils.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

From skills slightly below the expected starting points, children make good progress and achieve well in the Nursery and Reception classes. This good progress continues throughout Years 1 and 2 so that pupils overall are attaining above-average standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2. The proportion of pupils reaching higher levels is average. In 2011, girls' attainment in Year 2 was considerably better than that of boys, particularly in writing. Investigation by school leaders concluded that this was specific to that year group, and effective action has been taken to narrow the gap since then. By the end of Year 6, pupils typically reach above-average standards in English and mathematics and most are achieving well. This applies to all groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Progress, although good overall, is a little uneven at times in some younger year groups, which restricts outcomes from being even stronger for some pupils at the end of Year 6. During the inspection the good learning of the great majority of pupils in lessons was evident throughout the school, and pupils rightly show pride in their achievements. Pupils' attainment in reading is above average by the time pupils leave school and nearly all make good progress, especially since the school has targeted greater intervention with small groups of pupils. Reading resources are interesting for all pupils, most of whom show enjoyment and interest in their regular reading opportunities. A high proportion of parents and carers strongly agree with the assertions that their children make good progress and that their particular needs are met, which is also supported by pupils' views.

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Quality of teaching

Almost all parents and carers feel that teaching in the school is good. Inspection findings support this view and it is further endorsed by pupils, although a small number nevertheless feel that their teacher is not interested in their views. Children are given a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage because teaching is good over time, and builds upon the positive attitudes to learning and good behaviour of the children. Children have many opportunities for learning in lively and well-resourced environments inside and outside. However, there is a tendency for adults to be over directive at times and this restricts children's independent learning. In the main school, teachers have excellent relationships with their pupils, and build well upon their enthusiasm and desire to learn. Teachers' planning is consistent and sets clear objectives, and they have good expectations of their pupils' achievements. Most pupils, even the youngest, are aware of their specific learning levels and targets, and are eager to reach them. As a result of variations in teaching, the progress of pupils is not always consistent across the school. Progress observed during the inspection was best when teachers combined excellent subject knowledge with high expectations and flexibility in moving the lesson along at a good pace. This was seen in an outstanding lesson with a set of Year 5 pupils learning how to complete symmetrical patterns with lines of symmetry. These high expectations are especially apparent in the older age groups where some pupils make exceptional progress. The school recognises that for further improvement, the high-quality skills evident in some teaching needs to be modelled and integrated into all classrooms and for opportunities to be provided for pupils to develop as independent learners. Learning is enhanced by the use of ability sets, small classes for lessons in English and mathematics and the effective support and interventions of well-trained classroom assistants.

Teachers have improved their use of questioning and good examples were observed of teachers encouraging pupils to give thoughtful and articulate answers, such as pupils in Year 6 giving their views on the purpose and usefulness of reading. These opportunities enhance the quality of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. Teachers have a good understanding of assessment data and use it effectively to plan for the needs of both groups and individual pupils. This has resulted in teachers making more effective use of the planned curriculum. The school's evaluation and monitoring of teaching, by the headteacher and all senior leaders, are related closely to the needs of the school and professional development, and are rigorous and accurate.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

All responses from parents and carers, staff and pupils indicated that pupils feel safe in the school. Almost all parents and carers also indicated that the behaviour of pupils in the school is good, a typical comment being: 'Behaviour is excellent, and an effective code of conduct is in place for them to follow'. Pupils agree with these views mostly, although a small proportion of pupils think that 'sometimes' some

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pupils are not well-behaved. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage settle quickly into school, and rapidly learn what is expected of them. As a result, their behaviour is good and sometimes excellent. In the remainder of the school, behaviour during the inspection was good and sometimes outstanding, for example when the youngest pupils have lunch together in the school hall. Pupils understand clearly the school's strategies for managing behaviour. Very occasionally pupils lose concentration in lessons, but any disruption is at a very low level. In discussion pupils mention very few examples of bullying, either physical or through name-calling or cyber-bullying. The very rare incidents are dealt with quickly and fairly by staff, which is mentioned positively by several parents and carers. Harmonious relationships are very apparent throughout the school, with staff acting as good role models. Particular attention is paid by staff to ensuring that pupils understand how to keep themselves safe. There are good links with external agencies in order to meet the needs of those pupils whose circumstances make them the most vulnerable or potentially disruptive.

Attendance is consistently above the national average. Very few pupils have extended absenteeism other than for sickness, and procedures for dealing with absence, and the very few instances of lateness, are applied robustly.

Leadership and management

The headteacher leads the school as one parent commented, 'with passion and vision'. In addition to her ambitions for the school and care for the education and welfare of all pupils, the headteacher has skilfully developed a very strong team of senior leaders. She has built a staff with high morale, all of whom in their responses expressed their pride in being a member of the school community. The impact of school action, for example, in raising the profiles and contributions of middle managers has led to improved performance by pupils and effective cross-school communication about the day-to-day management of the school. Leaders have also widened the opportunities for pupils to enjoy a creative and exciting curriculum which has enhanced their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. The school has accurately recognised a need to develop pupils' greater awareness of the world facing them in the future. In order to take this forward successfully the school is starting to build on pupils' existing skills of resilience and self-reliance. Pupils have not yet developed higher skills of independence and preparedness for challenges as they get older.

A wide range of extra-curricular activities are offered, including being a 'hub school' for the Royal Shakespeare Company. Music is a strength of the curriculum, and the school choir has won a number of competitions and performed solo in Birmingham Symphony Hall, and in Lichfield Cathedral. Many pupils talk enthusiastically about their work in art, and are proud of the Artsmark award to the school. The governing body, senior leaders and staff promote equal opportunities well, and the school is fully inclusive, with no evidence of discrimination.

The governing body is strongly led by an experienced Chair, and shares leaders'

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determination for continuous improvement. Members of the governing body have an excellent knowledge of the school, with a majority visiting classes and reporting on this. They are therefore confident in both supporting and challenging school leaders. They meet their safeguarding duties effectively, and oversee the school budget robustly.

There is outstanding engagement with parents and carers who are active partners in the life of the school, and have raised considerable sums of money for extra resources like the infants' play area and memorial bus. Parents and carers report positively that they are listened to, and feel well informed about the progress of their children. They are particularly appreciative of the PACT (parents and children working together) afternoons and many have taken the opportunity to work with their children. They also praise the good daily provision for pupils both before and after school. Pupils are well cared for and the clubs are managed effectively.

Strong and imaginative leadership and a good track record of improvement confirm the school's good capacity to improve further.

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.



1 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Michael's Church of England Primary School, Pelsall, Walsall, WS3 4JJ

We all really enjoyed visiting you recently, and seeing how much you enjoyed school. You were always very polite and cheerful when talking to us, especially about your learning. It was good to hear how much you enjoy everything you do in school. It was most interesting to hear about your wonderful choir, and also about the Shakespeare club and 'The Merchant of Venice'.

We are pleased to say that you go to a good school where you achieve well and reach standards above average for your age in English and mathematics by the time you leave. You are very well looked after and cared for, and the school keeps you very safe. You also know how to keep yourselves safe and behave well in school and outside. You are punctual and your attendance is above average. Your parents and carers are very pleased with the school, and they, like you, think that your teachers, classroom assistants, leaders and especially your headteacher are doing a good job. You are right to be proud of your school.

There is always more to do though. We have made some suggestions to the headteacher and staff to help you improve even more. We would like them to make all teaching throughout the whole school as good as possible, so that you all make good progress all of the time. We also think it is important that you are prepared as well as possible for your future lives. We have asked that you be given opportunities to work with your teachers in taking more initiative, responsibility and independence for your own learning. We wish you all well in the future and hope that you continue to enjoy learning.

Yours sincerely

Rodney Braithwaite
Lead inspector

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