

St Michael's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	109228
Local authority	South Gloucestershire
Inspection number	377891
Inspection dates	8–9 March 2012
Lead inspector	John Carnaghan

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	597
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Isabel Marsden
Headteacher	Mark Freeman
Date of previous school inspection	2–3 December 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

John Carnaghan

Additional inspector

Jill Arnold

Additional inspector

George Long

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed 21 lessons taught by 18 teachers, totalling 10 hours. They held meetings with staff, pupils and members of the governing body. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. They observed the school's work, and looked at its policies, records and assessments as well as questionnaires returned by staff, pupils and 152 parents and carers.

Information about the school

This is a larger than average-size primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average. Almost all pupils speak English as their first language. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average. The school meets the government's current floor standard, 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

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 consistent quality of its provision has maintained a safe, happy environment and above average attainment. The school is not outstanding because not enough teaching is of outstanding quality.
- Children make a good start to their education in the Early Years Foundation Stage because activities are very well planned to build reading, writing and mathematics skills. Children also develop good independence. Pupils make good progress across Years 1 to 6. Minor differences between subjects in the past have been closed because the school has reacted quickly to any anomalies. Strong support for individuals in danger of falling behind ensures good achievement for all groups of pupils.
- Teaching is good. Teachers plan carefully so that pupils are fully challenged. Lessons are orderly because pupils are both naturally cooperative and well managed. Marking and the use of targets are excellent so pupils fully understand the next steps in their learning. Occasionally, teachers talk for too long, slowing the pace of learning and reducing opportunities for pupils' independence. The curriculum promotes pupils' skills development well but sometimes lacks stimulating opportunities.
- Pupils rightly feel they are safe at school and correctly report that all types of bullying are rare. Behaviour is good and this makes a significant contribution to the calm atmosphere in lessons and around the school. Relationships among pupils and with adults are overwhelmingly positive.
- Strong leadership and management maintain good provision. The headteacher works very well with the leadership and management team and governing body, and there is a widely held commitment to improvement among all staff. Accurate self-evaluation and the rigorous leadership of teaching through management of performance ensure the school understands its strengths and weaknesses and prioritises effectively for the future.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure a higher proportion of teaching is outstanding by promoting best practice widely, ensuring that:

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- all lessons run at a good pace and that pupils are not kept listening to the teacher for too long
- lessons provide more opportunities for pupils to work independently.
- Develop the curriculum further so that it offers more memorable and rich opportunities for learning.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils make good progress because they are keen to learn and are well taught. This happy combination is consistent to most lessons and is the foundation of the school's success in promoting good achievement. The vast majority of parents and carers are rightly confident that their children are making good progress.

Children develop skills well in the Early Years Foundation Stage. An imaginatively planned and well-taught range of activities promotes good progress across all areas of learning. Children are particularly well prepared in developing both literacy and numeracy skills and an independent approach to their education. Good progress continues across both key stages. A typical example of good learning was seen in a Year 2 lesson where pupils were creating an alliterative poem. Thorough planning meant that all groups were kept working at full stretch to meet the teacher's high expectations. They worked very well in groups and enjoyed the interesting activities because good support enabled all of them to succeed. In reading their poems aloud, pupils showed good phonic understanding (the reading method involving letter and sound recognition). The numerous opportunities given to pupils to read at home and school ensure that attainment in reading at the end of both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 is above average.

The school uses assessment information with great care to identify any variations in pupils' progress, either at an individual level or between subjects. It then acts quickly to close any potential gaps. For example, mathematics attainment had been a slight concern in previous years but a focus on developing the teaching of the subject has led to higher attainment so that it is now consistent with that in English. Interventions that are closely focused on individual pupils' needs mean that progress made by all groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, is similar. This good provision means that attainment at the end of Year 6 is above average and that the achievement of all groups of pupils is good.

Quality of teaching

Teachers are confident practitioners who use their good subject knowledge to plan interesting, well-resourced sessions that build well on previous learning. Teachers have high expectations of pupils in their care and set challenging targets. Pupils are well aware of these and work enthusiastically to meet them. Parents and carers are rightly confident that their children are well taught. One typically favourable comment from a parent mentioned strategies the school had put in place to help her

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daughter, writing, 'I am pleased to say she is catching up through the dedication and support of the staff.'

Typically, lessons are characterised by a range of focused activities that are planned to offer the correct challenge to all groups of pupils. Teachers question pupils skilfully; this contributes to their ability to adapt tasks and their explanations to improve learning. In an outstanding mathematics lesson on angles to Year 6, the lesson had an energy and purpose driven by the teacher's confidence and high expectations. The pupils' reaction was exemplary as they strove to complete tasks quickly and accurately. Lessons in the Early Years Foundation Stage are often highly creative, such as when a Reception class were considering the life-cycle of the frog. Remarkably, the physical simulation of frogspawn and tadpoles was continued at break time as the teacher enthusiastically led children's wriggling and miming in the outdoor play area.

Teachers give many opportunities for pupils to work together harmoniously. This and their consistently good behaviour make a strong contribution to the development of their moral and social skills. The curriculum is planned so there are strong links across subjects giving pupils good opportunities to develop skills, such as using computers, as they tackle topics that incorporate a variety of subjects. Assessment, target setting and marking of pupils' work is consistently excellent and enables pupils to have a clear grasp of their next steps in their learning. The teaching of phonics and development of reading generally is systematic, contributing to pupils' confidence and good progress in this area.

Some lessons lack the pace and drive of the best. Sometimes, teachers talk for too long and pupils have too few opportunities for independence, become fidgety and find concentration difficult. Tasks are not always given tight deadlines so the pace of learning occasionally flags.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Parents, carers and pupils are rightly complimentary about behaviour and safety at the school. Positive attitudes to school life generally and to learning in particular contribute strongly to progress made in class and to pupils' overall achievement. The school's supportive approach to managing behaviour is consistently applied and includes a clear system of rewards and sanctions. A very small number of pupils require and receive firm guidance to conform to the school's high expectations; however, instances of poor behaviour are declining. The school is a very harmonious community where, typically, pupils are courteous, respectful and considerate.

Most pupils are aware of the different types of bullying. They report that on the rare occasions when bullying occurs it is fully investigated and followed up with appropriate action. Pupils report that St Michael's is a happy school; their punctuality is good and attendance is above average.

Pupils are well briefed in assemblies and throughout the curriculum about safe and unsafe situations. They report that they feel safe at school and have a good

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understanding of how to avoid risks both on the internet and the busy local roads.

Leadership and management

Leaders, managers and the governing body share and communicate a strong ambition for the school and work together well to maximise opportunities for pupils. Relatively recent appointments to the senior team have strengthened the school's capabilities. The rigorous leadership of teaching, including using assessment data to manage staff performance, has eliminated many weaknesses so that lessons have a number of strengths in common and consistently promote good progress. The capable governing body has an excellent understanding of the school developed through systematic monitoring; it offers support and challenge in equal measure. Governors have been instrumental in assuring that all safeguarding policies and procedures are appropriately rigorous and that safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.

Many staff at the school use the plentiful assessment information perceptively. It is utilised to identify pupils whose progress is in danger of stalling; the school calls up appropriate actions from a menu of available interventions so that all groups are able to make similar progress to their peers. This ensures equality of opportunity for all and that there is no discrimination.

The school has consolidated previous good achievement, noted in the last inspection. The new staffing structure and more distributive leadership and management have brought a wider range of capabilities to running the school. Issues from the previous inspection have been thoroughly addressed and above-average attainment has been maintained. The school's well-focused plans for the future are regularly reviewed by staff and members of the governing body. The school's capacity for continuing improvement is good.

The school provides a well-balanced, relevant curriculum. It is planned to progressively develop pupils' skills. For example, cross-curricular activities linked to popular history topics, such as the Victorians, comprehensively promote extended writing. There are opportunities to enjoy music, and the school uses information and communication technology well to enliven learning. Despite these strengths, the curriculum does not provide many distinctly memorable experiences for pupils. Elements of the curriculum contribute effectively to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Active groups like the school council and the eco group encourage responsibility and a consideration of moral issues. Partnerships with outside groups, like theatres, do much to enhance pupils' good cultural awareness.

The school has been very proactive in reaching out to families. Information flows freely from school to homes and vice versa. Forums, briefing sessions, parents' and carers' evenings, an active parent/teacher association and the effective school website all contribute well to excellent links with parents and carers.

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.



12 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Michael's Church of England Primary School, Stoke Gifford, BS34 8SG

Many thanks for the warm welcome that you gave to the inspectors when we recently visited St Michael's. We were all pleased to see how happy you are at school and would like to compliment you on your good behaviour and enthusiasm for learning.

St Michaels is a good school. Teaching is good and really helps you learn, so that you make good progress during your time at school. The attainment of pupils by the time they leave Year 6 is better than the average for pupils of this age. You are well looked after and the school keeps you safe. The headteacher, the governing body and the staff team work very well together to keep up high standards and to plan for the future.

I have asked the school to make some improvements.

- improve teaching by making sure that lessons are never too slow, that teachers do not talk for too long and that you are given every chance to work independently
- develop the curriculum so that it is even more exciting and interesting.

All of you can help the school continue to improve by maintaining your very positive attitudes to your education. Once again, many thanks for all your help.

Yours sincerely

John Carnaghan
Lead inspector

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