

St Michaels Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111393
Local Authority	Halton
Inspection number	356902
Inspection dates	8–9 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Garry Jones

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	233
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ken Edwards
Headteacher	Mrs Terenia Gosney
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. A total of 15 lessons were observed delivered by nine teachers. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of the governing body and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at the school improvement plan, attainment data, records of monitoring and policies, particularly with regard to safeguarding. In addition, questionnaires from pupils and from 119 parents and carers were analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- The achievement of pupils to determine whether good progress has been maintained.
- The extent to which teaching and the use of assessment challenge all pupils, and particularly those with special educational needs and or disabilities.
- The impact of the strategies for care, guidance and support on pupils and particularly on the most vulnerable.
- Whether the quality of provision and leadership and management within the Early Years Foundation Stage are outstanding.

Information about the school

This is an average size primary school. It serves an urban area and almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is almost three times that found nationally. The number of pupils with identified special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average, but there are no pupils with a statement of special educational needs. The school has gained a number of awards including Healthy School status, Artsmark Gold, Sport England Activemark and the Financial Management in Schools 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: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. It provides a welcoming and caring environment in which all pupils flourish. Pupils are proud of their school and value the outstanding support provided for them by all members of staff. The impact of the high quality care and guidance is reflected in the exemplary behaviour of pupils. Pupils are polite and show high levels of respect to each other, staff and visitors. As a result, they feel exceptionally safe within the school and are confident that any problems that they may face are dealt with promptly. As one pupil said 'If we have an issue we tell them and they sort it out'. The strong focus in the school on all aspects of pupils' well-being is also reflected in their exceptional knowledge of how to stay healthy and their commitment to doing so. When any pupils and or their families are facing difficulties they receive exceptionally high quality support that is coordinated through regular meetings between school staff and external agencies.

Children enter the school with abilities that are below those expected for their age and in many cases well below. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage due to the good provision within the unit. This provides a solid foundation to enable them to continue to achieve well and by the end of Key Stage 2 standards are above average. This good progress reflects teaching that is good overall and in a few lessons outstanding. The progress of each pupil is rigorously monitored and additional support provided when required. As a result, the progress of pupils with special educational needs and/ or disabilities is as good as that of other pupils. This reflects the outstanding commitment to ensuring that all pupils are successfully given equal opportunities to achieve their full development.

The senior leadership team and the governing body are committed to building a strong community within the school and its neighbourhood. They have not extended this to establishing links with other more diverse communities outside the immediate neighbourhood. The senior leadership team has correctly identified that this is an important element in further developing the cultural awareness of pupils.

The strong and effective leadership of the headteacher has gained the support of all staff to drive improvement in the school. There is a process of rigorous self-evaluation that uses information from detailed monitoring of outcomes and provision to identify areas for further improvement. This has resulted in improvements to pupils' progress and to the quality of teaching. A detailed strategy for raising attendance has been implemented and this has led to rapid improvement. Despite this, attendance although close to above average, remains average. This track record of improvement together with the effective strategies for evaluation and planning illustrate that there is good capacity for further improvement.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve attendance by working with some parents and carers to raise their understanding of the importance of their children's regular attendance.
- Increase the effectiveness of promoting community cohesion by establishing links with contrasting communities to allow pupils greater first hand experience of cultural diversity.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils' achievement and their enjoyment of learning are good. In lessons, pupils gain knowledge and skills well by working hard and showing real enthusiasm for learning. Their exemplary behaviour contributes to this positive atmosphere. Pupils engage enthusiastically in solving problems and in a literacy lesson developed real empathy by analysing the feelings of the central character. They show great maturity when working together in small groups or in pairs; listening to each other carefully and rehearsing arguments skilfully.

Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage to reach levels that are in line with national expectations at the start of Key Stage 1. These gains are consolidated through Key Stage 1 and provide the base for even more rapid progress across Key Stage 2. In 2009, the rate of progress of Year 6 pupils was exceptional, and although it was not as rapid for the 2010 cohort, it continued to be good. As a result, pupils attained above average standards at the end of Year 6, in all subjects.

All aspects of pupils' personal development are at least good. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and to the wider community. They are keen to take on responsibilities within the school including as members of an active school council. Pupils contribute well to the wider community through charity fund raising, musical performances and by acting as sports ambassadors to other schools. Their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good. It is not outstanding because pupils' cultural awareness is not as fully developed as their exceptional social, moral and spiritual awareness as they have limited first hand experience to enhance their understanding of other cultures.

Pupils develop good skills for the future. They have high levels of basic skills and extremely well-developed interpersonal skills that they apply well in problem solving activities. Attendance is rapidly improving and is now almost above average. There are almost no persistent absentees as a result of the school's strategies.

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good in the large majority of lessons. A small number of lessons seen were satisfactory or outstanding. Teaching successfully engages and motivates pupils in most lessons. The good subject knowledge of teachers is used effectively to plan a wide range of activities that build on the previous learning of the pupils and challenge them to improve. Learning is well managed and proceeds at a brisk pace. Assessment is effective. Teachers use questioning well to assess learning and to challenge pupils further. Marking is regular. It usually provides pupils with clear feedback on what they have done well and sets targets for improvement. Marking of English work in the upper Key Stage 2 classes is particularly effective. Pupils' progress is monitored each term through a formal meeting between the class teacher, teaching assistants and the senior leadership team. This identifies any additional intervention that is required to support individual pupils.

The curriculum is good. It is broad and balanced and meets the needs of pupils well through a range of strategies for grouping and supporting them. The curriculum is under review and an innovative skills based thematic approach is being introduced. This is being developed following consultation with the pupils to ensure that their interests are met. The new curriculum is not fully embedded. There is a good range of enrichment activities and visits to enhance learning, including links with a local high school to enrich sporting opportunities.

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Care, guidance and support are outstanding and a real strength of the school contributing to the good progress that pupils make and the outstanding aspects of their personal development. There is a clear and effective strategy for supporting new arrivals to the school to ensure their rapid integration. Multi-agency pastoral meetings are organised every six weeks to ensure that there is comprehensive and effective support for the most vulnerable pupils. This support includes the contributions of a family liaison officer and a part-time counsellor. Interviews held with pupils, who had faced particular challenges, confirmed that support is very effective and greatly valued by individuals. The comprehensive strategies for improving attendance have been successful. Attendance has risen rapidly and is close to above average.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

There is a strong commitment on the part of the senior leadership team and the governing body to improve the quality of provision and to raise further the achievement of pupils. This is shared with staff through clear plans based on a rigorous process of self-evaluation. There are clear plans and strategies to further improve teaching and the curriculum. The well-established management systems and the improvements already achieved are evidence of good capacity for further improvement. The strong commitment to equality of opportunity shared by all and the implementation of rigorous systems for monitoring progress and providing intervention and support when required ensures that all groups make equivalent progress. The school uses partnerships effectively to support the development of the pupils. The partnerships with agencies and organisations to ensure the well-being of the pupils are extremely well developed. Partnerships with other agencies and organisations to promote learning are less well developed. There are good relationships with parents and carers; with effective communication to keep them well informed about the education of their children. The governing body is effectively contributing to planning and evaluation and is not afraid to challenge the school to improve. It is effective in fulfilling its duties with regard to safeguarding. Procedures are completed thoroughly and meet the current government guidelines. The effectiveness of provision is reflected in the high level of parental satisfaction that pupils are kept safe and the outstanding confidence of the pupils. The commitment to community cohesion is evident in the evaluation of the needs of the community that the school has completed and in its plans for the school, the local community and the international dimension. The formation of links with other contrasting communities is underdeveloped and as a result, the effectiveness of the promotion community cohesion is judged satisfactory. The school provides good value for money.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children settle well into the unit and quickly begin to gain confidence in the calm and supportive atmosphere created. A good range of opportunities are provided for children to work independently and also to be part of teacher-initiated activities. Children make good progress in the stimulating learning environment, including the well planned outdoor area. This is particularly evident in their personal and emotional development and their willingness to express their opinions confidently. Children enter Year 1 with skills that are in line with national expectations for their age. Children are keen to share their interests and any concerns with the staff. The unit is well staffed and a team-based approach to planning and assessment is effective. The unit is effectively led and managed. There are clear plans for improvement based on thorough evaluation.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account: Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Views of parents and carers

The response rate of parents and carers to the inspection questionnaire was good. The vast majority of parents and carers are happy with the quality of provision and support within the school. A very few parents and carers expressed concerns about each aspect of the school on the questionnaire. The inspectors investigated all aspects and found no evidence to support these views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Michaels Catholic Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 119 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 233 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	92	77	25	21	1	1	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	93	78	25	21	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	76	64	40	34	2	2	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	80	67	34	29	3	3	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	93	78	24	20	1	1	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	83	70	32	27	2	2	2	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	76	64	41	34	2	2	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	79	66	34	29	0	0	2	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	88	74	25	21	2	2	2	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	80	67	32	27	3	3	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	85	71	26	22	5	4	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	95	80	20	17	1	1	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	99	83	17	14	1	1	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



10 November 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Michaels Catholic Primary School, Widnes, WA8 8TD

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave to me and my colleagues when we inspected your school. We enjoyed talking to you about your work and hearing your views of the school. We agree with you and your parents and carers that you attend a good school.

The teachers and other staff look after you exceptionally well. The support that they provide for those of you facing difficulties is outstanding. We were particularly impressed by your outstanding behaviour and how safe you feel in school. Your understanding of how to stay healthy and your commitment to achieving this are exceptional. You make a good contribution to the development of the school and the wider community. You are well prepared for your future lives, but your overall attendance is only satisfactory because some of you take too much time off school. You can help the school by attending whenever you are well enough.

You make good progress during your time at the school and attain standards by the end of Year 6 that are higher than in most schools. This is because the teaching at the school is good and the courses that are planned for you meet your needs well.

The school is well led and managed by the headteacher and her senior colleagues. We have asked them to make the school even better by working with you and your parents to improve attendance. We have also asked them to provide you with opportunities to work with pupils from communities that are different to your local community in order to improve your knowledge of other cultures.

Best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Garry Jones

Lead inspector

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