

Maidstone, St Michael's Church of England Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118625
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	358403
Inspection dates	29–30 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Michael Sutherland-Harper

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	150
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jeanette Ardley
Headteacher	Katherine Spencer
Date of previous school inspection	25 September 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 14 lessons taught by five teachers and held meetings with staff, representatives of the governing body and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at documentation, including the school development plan, the School Improvement Partner's reports, minutes of meetings of the governing body, policies and data about pupils' attainment and progress. The team analysed the responses to 52 questionnaires returned by parents and carers in addition to those completed by 94 pupils and 13 staff.

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

- the development of pupils' skills in mathematics and writing
- the effectiveness of teaching in meeting the needs of different groups of pupils, including the gifted and talented, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and boys in English
- the extent to which the use of assessment and target setting is being used to support pupils' learning and progress
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers at all levels in monitoring progress and driving forward improvement. ♦

Information about the school

This junior school is smaller than average. Pupils come from the local area. The large majority of pupils are from White British families and most pupils speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average overall, but the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is average. The school has a number of awards, including Healthy School status and safe school accreditation. Over the last two years, there has been a number of long-term staff absences and the school has had difficulty recruiting appropriate staff. The school is entering into a loose federation with the local infant school from January 2011 under the leadership of the headteacher of that school.

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?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to pupils' behaviour and the quality of teaching.

Pupils' attainment has risen to nationally expected levels. Achievement is satisfactory and pupils' progress increases as they move up through the school, although this progress has been slower than might have been expected. This is because of inconsistent behaviour management which allows disruption to occur in a minority of lessons. This in turn is because expectations of how pupils should behave vary too much across the school. An appropriate focus on eliminating underachievement in mathematics and reading has paid dividends, and outcomes in writing are improving, although not enough pupils are reaching the highest levels in national tests.

The school is just beginning to emerge from a period when staff absences have adversely affected the quality and consistency of teaching, with a resulting negative effect on pupil outcomes and their behaviour. Teaching is inadequate overall because pupils' behaviour is not managed well enough. However, there is a small but increasing proportion of good practice. Pupils are often keen to do their best but when the teacher talks for too long, or lessons are not engaging, some pupils begin to lose interest and misbehave. Although leaders have introduced suitable behaviour policies and procedures, including those dealing with bullying and racism, the systems for encouraging good behaviour are not applied consistently in lessons or around the school. Poor behaviour is often tolerated for too long and pupils lack an awareness of what is acceptable. These concerns about behaviour were reflected in a significant number of inspection questionnaire responses from parents and carers, staff and close to half of the large number of pupils surveyed. Pupils who were interviewed also expressed concerns about a number of behavioural incidents which they consider have not been fully resolved.

In the best lessons, all pupils move forward swiftly in their learning because all pupils are challenged to do well, as a result of teachers' high expectations. Support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is coordinated effectively and good use is made of teaching assistants and outside specialists. Basic skills are given appropriate emphasis, but cross-curricular planning is not yet ensuring that pupils have regular opportunities to consolidate their skills in literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT) in other subjects. The curriculum is appropriately enriched through visits and well-supported extra-curricular activities.

Support for pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable is strong. Transition arrangements are improving and academic guidance has developed in line with improved

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approaches to target setting, marking and assessment. Pupils are friendly and have clear opinions about the school. The large majority of pupils say that they feel safe and well cared for in school, despite the strong concerns about behaviour expressed by those who were interviewed.

The headteacher's work to develop the quality of teaching and secure higher standards is adequately supported by a restructured senior team, the governing body and the staff, and a close partnership with the headteacher of the infant school who now provides additional support for the school. School priorities have been accurately identified in the school improvement plan and are now being more rigorously followed through. Increased monitoring is resulting in accurate self-evaluation. The school has a satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement. ◆◆◆◆◆◆

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve behaviour across the school by:
 - ensuring that staff, pupils and their parents and carers are all working to an agreed standard for behaviour
 - applying and monitoring the implementation of agreed procedures for behaviour management consistently in all lessons and out-of-class situations.
- Raise the quality of teaching so that by July 2011, the large majority of lessons are good or better, by:
 - ensuring consistent challenge for the most-able pupils in lessons
 - making sure that a brisk pace is maintained throughout lessons, to engage all pupils
 - identifying best practice and providing training for staff so that it is used in teaching all year groups and classes.
- Raise attainment, and particularly the proportion of pupils reaching higher levels in their key skills, by:
 - ensuring that activities and resources are more closely related to the pupils' interests
 - developing cross-curricular links so that pupils have frequent opportunities to reinforce their key literacy, numeracy and ICT skills in other subjects.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

4

The work seen in lessons and pupils' books confirms that most are making satisfactory progress although there are inconsistencies between classes. Satisfactory progress is most evident in the older year groups, because of the increased focus on developing pupils' skills and understanding and in classes that have been least affected by long-term staff absence. However, outcomes overall are inadequate because ineffective behaviour management results in low-level disruption and this adversely affects pupils' learning on too many occasions

Results in the Year 6 tests are average. Pupils' progress is carefully monitored in English and mathematics, but teachers are not using this information frequently enough when

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preparing lessons so that activities improve learning quickly. The improvements made in reading are now being reflected in writing. The school has however recognised the need to inject greater challenge and motivation into lessons, especially lower down the school in Years 3 and 4.

Pupils know how to stay healthy, as reflected in the achievement of Healthy School status, and are clear about how to stay safe. Older pupils have opportunities to help others as peer mediators in resolving situations between pupils. However, their understanding of what constitutes acceptable behaviour is not sufficiently well developed. During the inspection, pupils were keen to talk to inspectors about their school and readily expressed opinions. They have a voice in the school through the school council, and make a reasonable contribution to the wider local community through good transition arrangements and effective partnerships.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	4
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

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 inadequate overall although the school is steadily establishing greater stability and consistency by the efforts made to ensure that classes are covered long-term by the same teacher wherever necessary. Teachers have sound subject knowledge and good practice is developing, supported through local authority monitoring and by visiting other schools to observe successful practice. The outcomes learned from these visits however

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have not been effectively shared with all teachers across the school and this is limiting further improvement.

Where practice is most effective, teachers use a range of resources to engage pupils' interest, as in a Year 3 English lesson for example, where pictures, individual help from teaching assistants and good use of questioning combined to ensure good progress in writing from both boys and girls in a carefully planned lesson. Sessions in mathematics and spelling skills reinforce these areas well during morning registration. Use of ICT varies from class to class because some teachers lack confidence in the subject and there is not enough sharing of best practice. Pupils' work is marked regularly, with occasional encouraging remarks and tips on how to improve their work, but teachers do not always indicate how pupils can do this. The quality of support provided by the good number of teaching assistants and helpers is satisfactory, although they do not routinely encourage pupils to develop independent learning skills. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are fully integrated into lessons.

The curriculum provides a broad range of learning opportunities, but cross-curricular links are under-developed as a method for reinforcing skills in literacy and numeracy. Initiatives to develop boys as writers have increased their output and there is now more evidence of extended work. However, resources and approaches used do not always tie in effectively with pupils' actual interests and experiences, and this increases low-level misbehaviour because the approach is either not practical enough or teachers dominate lessons for too long. Provision for physical education is satisfactory and pupils are keen to be involved because they enjoy these lessons and understand the importance of health and fitness. A satisfactory range of visits and visitors contributes effectively to pupils' learning.

The school makes satisfactory use of partnerships with local agencies to reinforce the care it provides. Additional one-to-one and small group support ensures those needing extra help make satisfactory progress. Partnership working with the neighbouring infant school has been developed successfully to ensure there is effective transition. The school makes good use of a family liaison officer and special provision is provided through a lunchtime club to meet the needs of children who require additional care. Parents and carers feel strongly that their children enjoy school and the large majority consider that the school works hard to meet their children's needs. ♦

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	4
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

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How effective are leadership and management?

With support from senior staff, the partner infant school and the local authority, the headteacher is taking appropriate steps to tackle underachievement and to deal with significant staffing difficulties. The senior team has clearly focused on raising expectations with sharper target setting and training of staff about assessment and recording procedures. ♦ Evaluation procedures are improving as seen, for example, through analysis of the work undertaken to improve pupils' mathematical skills. ♦ Senior staff have established clear priorities for improvement, increased the rigour of monitoring procedures and the extent to which teachers are held accountable for pupils' performance. The role of middle managers has been expanded through sharing their analysis of the progress made by pupils in different subjects. Attendance is satisfactory and shows signs of improving, following whole-school action in this area. However, despite the introduction of appropriate procedures for managing unacceptable behaviour, leaders have not yet established consistent practice in all lessons and around the school.

Safeguarding procedures are robust and meet all statutory requirements. Equality of opportunity is adequately promoted to ensure that all pupils have similar opportunities to succeed. The family liaison officer works effectively with those families and children needing additional help. Parents and carers receive a satisfactory range of information about the progress that their children make. The effectiveness of the governing body is satisfactory. Governors visit the school regularly; challenge it to improve and have carefully considered the ways in which they can promote improvement, including the establishment of the loose federation with the infant school. The promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory. The school has a good awareness of the area it serves but links with other schools nationally are at an early stage of development. Interaction with the local community and parish is a strength and there are developing global links with Grenada and international charities. The inadequate management of behaviour and the poor effect this has on pupil outcomes demonstrates that value for money 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	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	4
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Views of parents and carers

The large majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire are positive about the school. They are particularly pleased that their children enjoy school, have a healthy lifestyle and are kept safe. A minority of parents and carers expressed concerns about the amount of progress made by their children and about pupils' behaviour. The inspection team found that progress rates are improving and that the school provides adequate information about pupils' progress. However, the team agrees that behaviour management strategies are not consistently applied and that pupils' behaviour overall is inadequate.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Maidstone, St Michael's Church of England Junior 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 52 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 150 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	19	37	27	52	6	12	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	20	38	24	46	6	12	1	2
My school informs me about my child's progress	15	29	24	46	9	17	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	14	27	21	40	10	19	4	8
The teaching is good at this school	12	23	28	54	10	19	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	11	21	29	56	9	17	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	9	17	37	71	6	12	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)	10	19	32	62	4	8	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	12	23	28	54	6	12	2	4
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	9	17	26	50	10	19	3	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	6	12	29	56	5	10	2	4
The school is led and managed effectively	14	27	22	42	7	13	4	8
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	16	31	23	44	8	15	3	6

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.



1 December 2010

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Maidstone, St Michael's Church of England Junior School,
Maidstone ME16 8ER**

I was very pleased to visit your school recently, with two other inspectors, to look at its work and to see the progress you are making. Thank you for welcoming us into your school and for telling us about it. The best things that we found were that the headteacher and her colleagues are clear about what needs to be done to make your learning better, the staff always try to guide and support you, and extra support is in place to help you improve your mathematics and spelling. ♦

We also found that your school has some important areas it need to improve, particularly in the way that teachers manage behaviour as too often poor behaviour disrupts your learning. We have given the school a 'notice to improve'. This means that inspectors will visit in six to eight months to check on the progress being made. The most important things that your school needs to do are:

- make sure that teachers manage behaviour more effectively so that pupils' behaviour improves. Teachers need to make their expectations clear so that pupils know what is expected of them. This needs to happen consistently in all classes across the school.
- increase your rate of progress in lessons by making sure that in all lessons, teachers challenge you to think hard and aim high
- include more links between subjects and the things which interest you most, so that you really polish up your literacy, numeracy and ICT skills.

Thank you again for letting us share your work and activities. You can all help your school to improve by continuing to work hard and behaving well at all times.

Yours sincerely

Michael Sutherland-Harper
Lead inspector

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