

# St Michael's VA Junior School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	121146
<b>Local Authority</b>	Norfolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	358942
<b>Inspection dates</b>	9–10 December 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Judi Bedawi

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>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	260
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Orlando Reeve
<b>Headteacher</b>	Helen Newell
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	17 April 2008
<b>School address</b>	Astley Road Norwich NR5 9LA
<b>Telephone number</b>	01603 745812
<b>Fax number</b>	01603 748315
<b>Email address</b>	office@st-michaelsjunior.norfolk.sch.uk

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 12 teachers in 19 lessons or parts of lessons. The inspection team held meetings with pupils, representatives of the governing body and staff. They observed the school's work, and looked in detail at pupils' books, a range of school documentation, policies, monitoring records and data on pupils' attainment. Inspectors received and analysed 98 parental questionnaires.

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

- Are initiatives to raise standards having a positive effect on pupils' progress?
- What is the impact of tracking and assessment on pupil outcomes?
- How well do pupils behave, settle to work, and learn independently?

## Information about the school

St Michael's is a larger-than-average urban primary school. Most pupils enter from two local infant schools, one of them being a new partner school. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds; a small percentage are of minority ethnic heritage, largely of Arabic and African origin. A small proportion of these pupils have little or no knowledge of English on arrival. Pupil numbers are falling. There is a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and statements. For these pupils, speech, language and behavioural and emotional difficulties predominate, followed by autistic spectrum disorders and moderate learning difficulties. The school has National Healthy Schools status, the International Schools and the Investors in Families awards. From September 2010, the school has been in partnership with Clover Hill Infant and Nursery School. Both schools are led by the executive headteacher, but have separate governing bodies.

**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?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**3**

## Main findings

This is a satisfactory school. The headteacher and her staff are working with determination to raise standards and improve pupils' progress, within a warm and supportive learning environment. Parents express satisfaction with their children's education. For instance, they say, 'I believe that the school treats every child as an individual, 'and 'My child enjoys school and will be sad to leave.' The school recognises that although pupils receive good quality pastoral care and guidance, academic achievement and attainment have not been sufficiently high in recent years. Following a dip in Year 6 test results in 2010, the school has refocused sharply to improve pupils' academic outcomes.

Current standards are broadly average. The drive to increase pupils' basic skills is forging ahead and well embedded in Year 3. This is having a positive impact on pupils' confidence as prior gaps in their learning are filled. The good strategies are improving pupils' mathematical understanding and their writing. Using letters and sounds to aid spelling and reading is working particularly well. In Year 6, progress for almost all pupils accelerates because in most lessons teachers have high expectations about what pupils should achieve. This is not yet consistent across the school so teaching is satisfactory. Strategies to improve learning are not yet securely embedded in Years 4 and 5, where pupils are still consolidating basic skills. Work is not always challenging or sufficient to fully meet pupils' differing abilities and teachers could do more to instil in them a sense of responsibility for their own learning. Assessment and tracking data accurately identify individual learning needs. This information is not used, monitored and reviewed rigorously enough, however, to 'raise the game'. As a result, pupils do not always take advantage of learning to work responsibly and independently. Their behaviour and work ethic is satisfactory. However, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress and attain well from their lower starting points. Pupils at an early stage of learning to speak English make steady progress that accelerates as they become more fluent. This is due to good quality, well-targeted support.

Aspects of pupils' personal development are good. They enthusiastically adopt healthy lifestyles and understand the value of exercise. They tackle school council duties responsibly, contributing well to the local community through visits and fundraising. They are developing close links with their new partnership school through shared events. Pupils feel safe, enjoy school life and relate well to each other. The satisfactory curriculum has strengths in enriching learning beyond the school and into the community. A stronger focus on literacy and numeracy across all subjects and topics is developing.

Senior leaders and the governing body increasingly monitor and evaluate the school's performance to sustain the upward drive to improve provision and outcomes. Staff accountability and responsibility varies in identifying development needs and in taking

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prompt action to secure improvement. As a result, the pace of change has lacked rigour and drive. Realistic targets are set and issues identified at the previous inspection have been addressed. Standards, pupils' progress and outcomes, alongside leadership and management, are satisfactory with some good features. Self evaluation is satisfactory. The school is committed to ensuring higher standards in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6. The capacity to improve further is satisfactory.

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

- Raise standards and achievement in English and mathematics by:
  - making rigorous use of assessment data to monitor, evaluate and review the progress of all pupils so that they are consistently challenged to reach higher levels
  - extending, into Years 4 and 5, the strategies used in Year 3 to close gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding of basic mathematical concepts, English sentence structure, handwriting and spelling
  - increasing opportunities for pupils to develop their reading, writing and mathematical skills across the curriculum.
- Improve teaching and learning so that it is all good or better by:
  - ensuring that expectations are consistently high and that pupils are challenged and motivated to sustain their involvement throughout
  - maintaining a fast pace and ensuring that lesson objectives and work meets pupils' differing abilities so their progress accelerates rapidly
  - ensuring that pupils take responsibility for their own learning and challenge themselves to achieve and work independently.
- Develop leadership and management at all levels by:
  - accelerating the pace of change and staff accountability for learning and areas of responsibility, to impact on raising academic standards
  - senior leaders and middle managers rigorously monitoring, evaluating and reviewing teaching, learning and school performance, and identifying and addressing improvement areas within sharp timescales.
- Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****3**

Pupils enter the school with attainment that is broadly average. They settle into school life easily and soon make friends. They have satisfactory attitudes to learning but do not readily push themselves to consistently work hard, especially in lessons that proceed at a slower pace, or where learning offers less challenging activities. However, the youngest pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because learning is well structured and they are well supported, which keeps them motivated and eager to succeed. This was observed in an impressive Year 3 intervention

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class that included pupils learning English. The teacher shared the Black Hat Bob story with excellent focus on expressive written and spoken language. The reading grasped pupils' imagination and involvement, when discussing Bob's character with talking partners. A boy, recently starting to speak English, eagerly described Bob's sword fight, with 'swashbuckling' actions, inspiring others to contribute their views. Paired reading then enabled pupils to work very well together and build their skills.

Average standards were observed in lessons. The recent focus on writing is driving improvement. Some writing is extended and well structured, particularly in Year 6, although spelling and handwriting are still developing for many pupils. Behaviour is satisfactory. Pupils do not always focus on their learning tasks and do not show a clear desire to organise their own learning or to work independently. Behaviour at play is better. Pupils have a good sense of fairness and appreciate the diversity of cultures represented in the school, though they have fewer opportunities to learn about British lifestyles that differ from their own. Attendance is broadly average although some pupils are taken on extended holidays in term time, which slows their progress.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

<sup>1</sup> 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?

Although the overall quality of teaching is satisfactory, there is an increasing proportion of good or better teaching, helping to ensure that the needs of all pupils, including the more able, are fully met. Teamwork is strong and teachers have good subject knowledge. Their

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questioning mostly extends pupils' thinking skills. Staff work flexibly to provide well-focused support, for example, in one-to-one teaching or basic skills intervention work, often led by well-trained teaching assistants. Tracking and assessment clearly identify those pupils who are not doing as well as expected but progress data is not yet used rigorously by staff to move pupils on at a faster rate. Additionally, not all teachers set consistently challenging learning objectives or work that is well-matched to pupils' learning. In some classes, expectations are too low and learning is limited by the teacher talking for too long and/or lack of sharp timescales within which to complete activities. Pupils know their targets and understand how to reach the next level. They find marking a helpful aid in improving their work.

The curriculum is broad and carefully adapted to meet the needs of those learning to speak English as an additional language and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Intervention work now starts in Year 3 rather than the last year of school. This is having a positive impact on consolidating basic skills but is not yet extended to Years 4 and 5. Information and communication technology is used well across the curriculum, but opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy skills and opportunities for independent research in different subjects and in topic work are less evident. The 'Mantle of the Expert' is recently adopted to develop thinking skills and confidence but it is too soon to measure the impact of this on learning. Enrichment is strong; pupils enjoy after-school clubs, including the homework club, and visits and visitors.

Pastoral care, support and guidance are good. Staff work hard to ensure that pupils and their families are helped and provided with the right kind of support to reduce any barriers to learning. This is particularly true for pupils and families whose circumstances make them more vulnerable. Parents say, 'Communication is very good,' and 'The staff were very supportive in helping my children when we were going through difficult times.' The school makes good use of wide-ranging external support. Health and safety aspects are regularly reviewed. Behaviour and attendance are closely monitored, and parents are kept informed and involved by the learning mentors and parental liaison worker when needed. Transition arrangements are thorough and appreciated by pupils and their parents.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The headteacher, senior leaders and the close-knit staff team, working alongside the governing body, are all strongly focused on the drive to raise standards and improve the school's performance. They have responded positively to the dip in standards in 2010 tests and standards are improving. They have successfully improved pupils' basic skills in Year 3

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and this is providing a firm foundation for raising achievement in the rest of the school, especially in Years 4 and 5.

Safeguarding is good and practice fully meets government requirements. The governing body closely monitors the impact of the school's procedures on pupils' well-being. Parents appreciate the good links they have with the school and the access to staff. Other partnerships, including the shared leadership of a local infant school, has improved the accuracy of entry data and opportunities to hold joint events and staff training to cut costs.

The promotion of community cohesion is good, and there are strong links with the local community and globally. The school's audit has identified, rightly, the need to develop links with schools across the United Kingdom. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory because some pupils of all abilities, apart from those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, could perform better. Multicultural links are good in school and beyond and pupils are very aware that any form of discrimination is totally unacceptable.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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

## Views of parents and carers

Of the parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire, the overwhelming majority agree that their children enjoy school, are kept safe and adopt healthy lifestyles. They further agree that the school informs them about how to support their children's learning, that their children's needs are met and that teaching is good. The very large majority agree that their suggestions and concerns are heard and that the school is well led and managed. A very small minority feel that their children's progress could be better, as could behaviour and the way that suggestions and concerns are managed. Inspection findings indicate that leadership and management, pupils' progress, teaching and behaviour are satisfactory. Suggestions and concerns are recorded and appropriately considered.



## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Michael's VA 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 98 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 260 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	57	58	38	39	3	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	52	53	45	46	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	51	52	42	43	1	1	3	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	46	47	45	46	3	3	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	54	55	43	44	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	44	45	51	52	2	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	45	46	50	51	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)	42	43	45	46	5	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	47	48	48	49	1	1	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	34	35	55	56	3	3	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	35	36	51	52	6	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	45	46	49	50	2	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	53	54	42	43	2	2	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](http://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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



13 December 2010

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of St Michael's VA Junior School, Norwich, NR5 9LA**

I would like to say 'thank you' for giving us all such a warm welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking to you and finding out about your school. You helped us a lot. You told us that you enjoy using computers, playing mathematical games, science, physical education, African drumming and Brazilian dance. We found that you go to a satisfactory school, which means that it does some things well and could do some things better. You reach standards that are similar to those in most schools. We were impressed with all the fundraising you do to support other people, well done. We could see that you get on well with your teachers and enjoy discussing responses to their questions with your talking partners. All the staff are good at caring for you so you feel safe, because they will always help you. Your headteacher and the staff want to make your school even better. I have asked them to do the following:

- to help you reach higher levels in English and mathematics with work and learning objectives that meet your different abilities and challenge you to work hard - some of you think lessons are boring so tell your teacher if work is easy
- to make sure those of you in Years 4 and 5 can work out different mathematical problems and improve your handwriting, sentence work, spelling and reading in different subjects and topics
- to have higher expectations of what you can achieve in lessons so that you work and progress faster - some of you do not work hard enough, join in discussions or work independently, so show your teachers how quickly you can improve to become really good learners
- to make rapid improvements so that standards rise and frequently check how well you are doing, so that you all make good or better progress.

I hope you will enjoy helping St Michael's become even better by working hard and doing your very best.

Yours sincerely

Judi Bedawi

Lead inspector

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