

St Michael's Church of England Primary School, Alkrington

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105822
Local Authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	355848
Inspection dates	22–23 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Brian Holmes

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	216
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Dalziel
Headteacher	Mrs Jill Brenchley
Date of previous school inspection	11 June 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They visited 12 lessons and observed seven teachers. Members of the team held meetings with parents and carers, groups of pupils, members of the governing body and staff. They also observed the school's work and looked at its assessment data, evidence of activities and events, information about the curriculum, and monitoring and evaluation documents. Inspectors analysed 113 questionnaires completed by parents and carers, 93 pupils' questionnaires and 13 questionnaires returned by staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Whether pupils in Key Stage 1 make sufficient progress to build on the start they make in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Whether pupils in Key Stage 2, notably boys and those who are more able, make enough progress in writing.
- Whether pupils are given sufficient opportunities to use and apply their writing, mathematical and information and communication technology (ICT) skills in all subjects.
- Whether all leaders are fully involved in the school's self-evaluation processes and in measuring the impact of actions taken to bring about improvement.

Information about the school

St. Michael's is an average sized primary school. The large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average.

There is a play group on site which is not managed by the school and this provision is subject to a separate inspection. The school has achieved Healthy School status, Eco School status, the Activemark and the International School 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. Good leadership and management at all levels, including governance, have rigorously addressed the weaknesses identified in the last inspection report. As a result, the school has improved significantly in key aspects of its work. Pupils' achievement and enjoyment are good. The success of the school is reflected in the fact that it is increasingly popular and oversubscribed. The improvements in the quality of teaching and curricular provision, which have resulted in more consistent progress by pupils across the school, the high rate of attendance and the accurate evaluation of its own effectiveness demonstrate the school's good capacity to improve further.

Pupils enjoy coming to school, which they describe as happy and friendly. They work and play in a harmonious school community where they feel safe because of the good provision that the school makes for their care, guidance and support. Parents and carers are appreciative of the care that the school provides and of the school's caring, Christian ethos. Pupils' behaviour is good and fosters positive attitudes to learning, reflecting good levels of respect which they show towards adults and each other. This, together with their good basic skills in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT), shows that they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Children get off to a good start in the Reception class and make good progress despite the fact that their learning is hampered by limited outdoor provision. Enthusiastic and committed leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage ensures that the effect of this on children's learning is minimised but their learning outdoors does not match the quality of their learning indoors. In Years 1 to 6 effective teaching enables pupils to make good progress. Assessment has improved markedly since the previous inspection and is used well to plan learning and to give pupils opportunities to evaluate their own work and that of other pupils. Pupils have a good awareness of their own learning. Improvements to the curriculum have given pupils increased opportunities to use and apply their writing and ICT skills which have led to a significant improvement in attainment in writing, particularly for boys and pupils who are more able. Achievement in mathematics, while good, is not as high because pupils are not given enough opportunities to develop their problem-solving skills and have less frequent opportunities to apply their mathematical skills in all their subjects. Leaders and managers are driving the school forward purposefully. Thorough monitoring and evaluation have enabled the school to identify its key priorities and take effective action to address them.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve achievement in mathematics by ensuring that:
 - pupils have more opportunities to develop their problem-solving skills

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- pupils have more planned opportunities to apply their mathematical skills in all their subjects.
- Improve the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage by ensuring that the quality of outdoor provision consistently matches children's learning indoors.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

When they start school, children's skills are broadly in line with those expected for their age but with some weaknesses in reading and writing. Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. In Years 1 to 6 the progress of all groups of pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, boys and those who are more able, is good because of the effective support that they have received since the last inspection. By the end of Key Stage 1 progress has improved and attainment is now above average. In Key Stage 2 progress is particularly strong in Years 5 and 6, so that by the end of Year 6 attainment is well above average and stronger in English than in mathematics. Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive. They work enthusiastically, as seen in Year 4 when pupils worked collaboratively on a drama activity related to Macbeth to demonstrate their speaking and listening skills. Pupils are keen to apply their learning, as seen in Year 3 when research on the human body was used to produce a presentation using ICT.

Pupils' good academic progress is matched by their personal development. Their good behaviour makes a significant contribution to their successful learning. They say that they feel safe, appreciating the worry boxes and the efforts that staff make to listen and to help if the need arises. Pupils make healthy choices for lunch and enjoy sports activities to promote their fitness, for example, the involvement of a professional football club during the inspection. An increasing number of pupils are taking part in the weekly 'walking bus' initiative that is being promoted through the eco committee. Pupils make a good contribution to the life of the school and the community. For example, older pupils act as playground activity leaders for younger pupils. Pupils have been involved in the planning of the development of the school grounds to include a Forest School for younger pupils and have worked with local companies to develop an allotment. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Spiritual awareness is strong and, through its Christian ethos, the school strongly promotes a respect for self and for other cultures and faiths.

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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	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	1
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 characterised by thorough planning to link subjects together, secure subject knowledge, high expectations and good use of assessment to support learning. Teachers make lessons challenging and interesting for all groups of pupils. As a result, pupils produce good work, as when Year 6 wrote leaflets on Water Aid. Very occasionally, teachers spend too long explaining tasks and, when this occurs, pupils' have too little time to spend on learning independently. The team of teaching assistants provide effective support for pupils with different needs, including the more able as well as those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Assessment is used well to check pupils' understanding and marking makes clear to pupils what they have achieved and sets clear targets for what they need to do next. Pupils have good opportunities to check their own work and that of other pupils, which gives them a clear understanding of their learning and how to improve.

The curriculum underpins pupils' learning well. The redesign of the curriculum, with a focus on relevance, interest and an enjoyment of learning, stimulates pupils and excites them, particularly boys. Literacy, numeracy and ICT skills are taught across the curriculum with frequent opportunities for pupils to use and apply their literacy and ICT skills in their learning, such as when pupils produced podcasts and advertisements in their work on Victorians. Opportunities to apply numeracy skills are less frequent, although good practice was seen in the World War 2 topic. Opportunities for pupils to develop their

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problem-solving skills in mathematics are also less frequent and productive. Themed events, such as Healthy Week, contribute well to pupils' personal development and well-being. There is good enrichment of the curriculum through planned visits and experiences which add to pupils' learning, for example, residential visits and involvement in enterprise learning.

Pupils are well cared for and there are warm relationships between adults and pupils. This gives pupils high levels of confidence in the care that they receive. They are clear that if they have any concerns there are adults whom they trust and go to. The school treats pupils as individuals and meets the vast majority of pupils' needs well. Systems for checking attendance are effective and there are good arrangements for the transfer of pupils to other schools.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Good leadership and management, led well by the headteacher and deputy headteacher, are driving the school forward. The clear vision of senior leaders, including the governing body, and the commitment of staff have led to an improvement in pupils' achievement. Strategies for improvement have been developed consistently, for example, the redesign of the curriculum, the use of assessment and the focus on improving the quality of pupils' learning. Evaluation is thorough, with effective systems, which include subject leaders, for checking pupils' performance and the school's provision. These changes have resulted in clear improvements in attainment in English and in other areas of the school's work such as pupils' ICT skills. The school promotes equality well. It is a harmonious community where pupils from different backgrounds get on well with each other, and they are sensitive to those with disabilities. Gaps between the achievement of different groups, for example, the attainment of boys compared to girls, have reduced rapidly.

The governing body has a good understanding of the school's areas for development. It is fully involved in shaping the direction of the school and offers good support and rigorous challenge for the school's work. Arrangements for safeguarding are good and meet all current requirements. They are supported by clear and effective policies with procedures that are positively reflected in the day-to-day security of pupils. There are good links with parents and carers and good partnerships to develop pupils' learning, particularly through the collaborative work that has taken place with other schools to improve the curriculum and raise attainment in writing. Links with schools in France and Spain have been used well to promote pupils' understanding of community cohesion beyond the immediate

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locality of the school, building effectively on the harmonious nature of the school community and its good links with the local community.

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	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Despite this, progress is good in all areas of learning from broadly average starting points with weaknesses in reading and writing. Outcomes are at least in line with expectations for most children in reading and writing by the time they enter Year 1 and above average for most children in their personal and social development and number skills. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader and other adults have effectively worked to minimise the limitations of the cramped outdoor provision to provide children with a broad range of experiences, mainly indoors, which enables them to make good progress overall. A recent initiative to develop a Forest School in the school grounds has led to some improvement in the range of children's learning outdoors, but the overall quality of outdoor learning does not match that in the classroom. There is a range of well-planned activities and experiences in the classroom, with appropriate use of assessment to plan learning. Children are well cared for and feel safe and secure. As a result, they are happy and settled and demonstrate good behaviour, showing good levels of cooperation when sharing resources. They play well on their own and take responsibility for choosing their own activities. Children demonstrate good knowledge and understanding when talking about their 'bug research' and solving simple number problems.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The large majority of parents and carers who returned a questionnaire said that they are very happy with their children's experiences at school and feel that their children enjoy school and that the school keeps their children safe. A few parents and carers feel that their children do not make enough progress. Inspectors found that the quality of teaching is good across the school and that the vast majority of pupils make good progress from their entry into the school in the Reception class through to Year 6.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Michael's Church of England Primary School, Alkington 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 113 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 216 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	67	59	41	36	5	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	75	66	35	31	2	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	38	34	64	57	9	8	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	40	35	52	46	14	12	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	45	40	61	54	3	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	41	36	65	58	4	4	2	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	41	36	63	56	6	5	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	37	58	51	5	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	46	41	52	46	8	7	2	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	41	36	60	53	10	9	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	35	31	71	63	3	3	3	3
The school is led and managed effectively	42	37	63	56	6	5	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	53	47	52	46	5	4	0	0

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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 2010 and 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.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



24 June 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Michael's Church of England Primary School, Alkrington, Manchester, M24 1GD

Thank you for being so polite, welcoming and friendly when we inspected your school recently. We enjoyed our time at St. Michael's, particularly talking to you. We know that you enjoy being there.

St. Michael's is a good school with many strengths. You told us that the school is a happy and friendly place. We were impressed by your excellent attendance, your good behaviour and your good understanding of how to stay safe. Teaching is good and you make good progress in your learning to reach standards that are above average by the end of Year 6. You are well cared for and older pupils enjoy their role as playground leaders to look after younger pupils. You like your learning and enjoy the activities that are on offer, in lessons and through the extra activities that are provided. You make a good contribution to the school through the jobs you do, particularly through the work of the school council and the eco committee.

We have asked the school to improve your learning in mathematics, so you make as much progress as you do in your reading and writing, by giving you more opportunities to develop your problem-solving skills and more opportunities to apply your mathematical skills in all your subjects. For those of you in the Reception class, we are asking the school to improve opportunities for you to learn outdoors.

All of you can help by continuing to work hard, behaving well and doing your best to help the school improve further.

Very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Brian Holmes

Lead Inspector

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