

St Michael's Church of England School, Louth

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120574
Local Authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	380064
Inspection dates	18–19 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Jeremy Spencer HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Matthew Clarke
Headteacher	Paul Fox
Date of previous school inspection	10 December 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. Inspectors visited 11 lessons, observing eight teachers. They also held meetings with staff, pupils and members of the governing body. They observed the school's work, and looked at a variety of school documents including safeguarding arrangements, policies, minutes from meetings, data about pupils' progress, pupils' workbooks and the school's improvement plans. The inspection team also analysed responses on 111 questionnaires from parents and carers, together with 13 from staff and 112 from pupils.

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

- Is teaching good enough to secure improving pupil progress across the school for different groups of pupils?
- Have leaders and managers been successful in implementing plans to increase pupils' awareness of diversity in contemporary Britain?
- Do children make good progress during their time in the Early Years Foundation Stage, particularly in the development of their calculation skills?

Information about the school

This is slightly smaller than the average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The large majority of pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly above the national average. Children join the school's Early Years Foundation Stage provision in the Reception class. The school has achieved a number of awards, including the Activemark award and the Eco-Schools Silver award and has gained Healthy Schools status.

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

The school provides pupils with a good education and operates in an atmosphere of calm, warmth and understanding. Pupils feel safe, valued and well cared for and this supports their good attendance and behaviour in school. A particular strength of this school is the outstanding role pupils play in contributing to the improved quality of life for others, both in the school and in the wider community.

Most pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the more able, make good progress in school. Children enter the Reception class with skill development that is broadly in line with national expectations. They make good progress during the Early Years Foundation Stage and through Key Stages 1 and 2 and leave Year 6 with standards above those normally expected in reading, writing and mathematics.

Pupils make good progress because the quality of teaching and the curriculum are good. A small minority of lessons observed during the inspection were outstanding. Although teaching of the highest quality is evident in the school, there are currently too few opportunities for teachers to observe and support the improvement of their colleagues' teaching. As a result, the key features of the best practice are not consistently in place in teaching across the school. In the best lessons, teachers ensure that time is not wasted and lessons progress at just the right pace to fully engage and challenge learners. The questions teachers ask in these lessons are often sophisticated and open-ended, requiring pupils to think carefully in order to fully apply their knowledge and skills before answering. Furthermore, pupils fully understand what they are learning to do, and do not simply focus solely upon completing a set task. This is often because the teacher plans carefully to develop specific skills, in addition to broadening pupils' knowledge.

The leadership and management of the school, including the work of the governing body, are good. Members of staff are clearly motivated and keen to improve. The school has been successful in implementing plans to increase pupils' awareness of diversity in Britain and in raising the number of pupils achieving higher levels in national tests. Both of these were areas for improvement outlined by inspectors in the last inspection. This indicates that the school has good capacity to continue to improve. Despite the many strengths of leadership and management, whole school and subject leader action plans do not always contain clear milestones. Consequently, members of the governing body and other identified senior leaders are not able to easily measure how well the school is progressing with initiatives over

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shorter periods of time. Although the governing body has a systematic monitoring cycle in place to review the school's work, they do not always monitor the school's most current priorities in as much depth as they could do. This is because the school's action plans do not always clearly state who will be responsible for monitoring and evaluating the success of new initiatives and when.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and accelerate progress throughout the school by improving the quality of teaching so that all is good or better by January 2013, through:
 - ensuring that subject leaders are given more frequent opportunities to observe and support the continued improvement of colleagues' teaching
 - ensuring that all lessons run at an appropriate pace for pupils
 - developing pupils' extended speaking and thinking skills through improved questioning by teachers
 - ensuring that lesson objectives focus more sharply on the development of skills for different ability groups.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by identifying clear milestones in action plans, to enable identified senior leaders, and, where appropriate, members of the governing body, to closely monitor initiatives and more sharply evaluate the school's progress over time.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils' achievement is good. National test results for pupils over the last three years show that most groups of pupils meet their targets and make good progress from their starting points. Pupils' work, as observed in lessons and in exercise books by inspectors, and the school's detailed pupil progress tracking records indicate that pupils continue to achieve well. Pupils were observed enjoying lessons and their questionnaire responses indicate that they enjoy coming to school. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well and are often very effectively supported in lessons by teaching assistants. The support is often provided on a one-to-one basis, or while working with a small group of pupils and this helps to ensure that individual needs are met well. The school's well-developed and timely intervention strategies also support their good progress effectively.

All pupils report that they feel safe in school, and parents and carers agree. Pupils are exceptionally proud of their school and make an outstanding contribution to school life. 'Lunchtime helpers' and the school's pupil council carry out their roles with pride. The school's 'Eco-team' has persuaded the school to purchase recycled paper only and have also successfully organised the installation of a water butt in the school grounds. Pupils were observed voluntarily turning off light switches on several occasions as classes were leaving teaching areas, demonstrating a care for the environment, as well as the school. Pupils also make an outstanding contribution to

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the wider community. During the inspection, the school choir made a pre-arranged visit to the town centre to make a public performance during lunchtime. The choir perform frequently, including performances in a local residential care home, which are very well appreciated. The school also support a broad range of charities in local, national and international contexts. Pupils demonstrate good spiritual and cultural development. This has been well supported by the school’s ‘multi-faith weeks,’ when representatives from different faiths and cultures have visited the school to work with pupils.

Pupils are aware of the importance of healthy eating and the need to exercise. They are active at break-times and enjoy a broad range of well-attended school sports clubs. Pupils also undertake daily physical exercise activities in the classroom and this supports them well in their preparation and readiness for learning. Pupils’ above average attendance and their well-developed basic skills indicate that they are securing good development of workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being. Pupils’ good moral and social development is reflected in their good behaviour in all areas of the school. On some occasions, including when pupils are eating lunch in the dining hall, behaviour is outstanding.

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	1
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	2
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Inspectors observed three outstanding lessons. During these lessons pupils made very good progress because they were completely clear about how their learning was developing, and learning was pitched

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

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at exactly the right level for pupils of differing abilities. Teachers in these lessons also demonstrated outstanding flair and imagination in their delivery, and used sophisticated, open-ended and challenging questions. Pupils were required to use a broad range of thinking skills and articulate answers carefully in response to these questions. There was also a significant focus upon developing pupils’ skills, rather than simply broadening their level of knowledge. This completely engaged and absorbed all pupils in their learning. For example, a mathematics lesson, observed in Year 2, focused on pupils developing their observational skills while identifying common features of 2D shapes. The teacher’s skilful questioning ensured that pupils had to justify in detail the answers they gave. As a result, pupils made very good progress during the lesson and also showed good understanding of a broad range of mathematical vocabulary. Although the large majority of teaching is good or better, some satisfactory teaching remains. In these lessons, the pace of learning is often too slow for pupils, or they do not fully understand what is expected of them, causing them to lose interest and make slower progress. Teachers tend to ask pupils basic questions during these lessons, which do not challenge their thinking well enough to support good progress. Learning objectives also tend to focus on developing pupils’ knowledge, rather than expanding their range of basic skills.

The curriculum is good and is enriched well through a broad range of well-attended extra-curricular activities and school trips, including a residential trip to Robin Hood’s Bay. Pupils told inspectors that they enjoy taking part in weekly curriculum enrichment sessions, which have included a wide range of themes including ‘thinking skills’ and ‘being healthy.’ The school provide very good opportunities for pupils to develop their sporting and musical talents.

The school provides good care, guidance and support for pupils. Learners who are experiencing social and emotional difficulties are cared for well. Additional support for those whose circumstances may make them more vulnerable is secured through effective links with external agencies. Pupils receive clear guidance on how to improve their written work in English books. Marking in mathematics books is satisfactory, and although teachers reward pupils’ efforts, there are fewer constructive comments to support accelerated learning.

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?

Since the school’s last inspection, it has worked hard to improve pupils’ writing skills,

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increase the number of pupils achieving higher levels in core subjects and improve opportunities for pupils to gain a better understanding of different cultures. Leaders have been successful in securing good improvements in each of these areas. Staff feel proud to be a part of the school and demonstrate a clear determination to continue to improve. They have full confidence in the school's leadership team. This is because leaders have established a calm and well-organised environment and have embedded high expectations of staff. School leaders and the governing body acknowledge that the quality of monitoring, evaluation and action planning is not as rigorous as it could be and the school has been asked to make further improvements in these areas.

There is a commitment to inclusion and equality of opportunity, and the school successfully ensures that there are very few differences between the achievements of different groups of pupils. The school's promotion of community cohesion has strengthened to good since the previous inspection. A detailed audit and action plan have resulted in pupils gaining many more opportunities to understand about life in the wider and global community. Pupils spoke passionately about a project linking them with a school in inner-city Hull. They were able to describe the differences between the two school environments in detail, following a visit to Hull. They also talked about how much they enjoyed showing visitors from Hull around their own school and how they had noticed differences between their accents. The school has built up a good range of partnerships in the local community which have been successful in promoting good outcomes for pupils. For example, teachers have undertaken writing moderation exercises with other local schools to help ensure that their assessment of pupils' work is accurate. Strong partnerships also exist with a number of local sports clubs. An up-to-date school website supports the good engagement of parents and carers in the life of the school. The school has also hosted well-attended sessions to support parents in helping their children to learn to read and a popular 'dads, lads and grandads' session engaged families well in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

At the time of the inspection all safeguarding requirements were being met and, as well as being in line with statutory requirements, there are robust risk assessments for all school activities and resources. There are stringent arrangements and checking systems in place to ensure that only suitable adults come into contact with pupils, as well as consistent policies and well-qualified staff that have clear responsibilities for child protection. The governing body show a keen desire and ability to support the school appropriately and also provide a good level of challenge to school leaders.

There are no major shortcomings evident in the school's use or management of resources. As outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils are good, the school provides good value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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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

Children enter the school with expected skills and experiences in most areas. Teachers plan engaging learning activities that enable different groups of children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, to make good progress from their starting points. Children clearly enjoy learning and work well together during learning tasks and structured play activities. Teachers and other adults make effective use of stimulating and engaging indoor and outdoor learning environments. During the inspection children were observed taking great pleasure and interest in a range of planting activities in one of the school's many growing areas. Well-established routines enable the children to respond with confidence to all that is on offer. During the inspection, children took great pleasure during the lunchtime period in playing with some older pupils, who voluntarily organise games and activities for them on the playground on a daily basis. Staff work closely with parents and carers, who feel well-informed about their children's progress.

Strong leadership underpins the good and safe provision. Effective systems are in place to identify and address any areas of underachievement. For example, provision has been adapted this year to place an increased focus upon the development of children's calculation skills, following weaker performance in this area in the last academic year. Inspection evidence indicates that children are now making improved progress in developing their calculation skills.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	2

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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers who returned questionnaires, or spoke with inspectors during the inspection, have a positive view of the school and are happy with their children’s experience. One parent commented, ‘I am really happy with St Michael’s school as a whole. My child is broadening his horizons and reaching his full potential with the help of the school.’ Other parents and carers made similar comments. A few parents and carers raised concerns about some isolated cases of bullying within the school. Inspectors explored these concerns and spoke at length to different groups of pupils throughout the inspection and analysed their responses to pupil questionnaires. Pupils feel safe in school and, although some rare examples of bullying were discussed, all pupils were confident that the school could resolve any problems quickly and successfully. A small number of other parents and carers raised individual concerns. All of these were considered during the inspection and, while preserving anonymity, discussed with the headteacher.

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 School, Louth 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 111 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 210 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	79	71	29	26	2	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	69	62	39	35	3	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	47	42	49	44	12	11	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	52	47	50	45	4	4	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	55	50	52	47	2	2	1	1
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	50	45	54	49	5	5	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	58	52	50	45	0	0	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)	50	45	48	43	1	1	1	1
The school meets my child’s particular needs	50	45	50	45	4	4	3	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	43	39	54	49	3	3	3	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	40	36	54	49	5	5	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	58	52	48	43	3	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	71	64	35	32	4	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 08 April 2011 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.



20 October 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Michael's Church of England School, Louth LN11 9AR

Thank you for the help you gave us when I came with my colleagues to inspect the work of the school and to check how well you are doing. Your views were very helpful to us as we carried out the inspection.

We are very pleased to report that St Michael's Church of England school, Louth is a good school. You are well cared for and the teachers plan good, interesting lessons for you. Your contribution to the school, including the many jobs you do around the school to help each other, and your contribution to the wider community, including all of the work you do for charities and your regular singing performances, are outstanding. You should feel very proud of this. You get on well with each other in the playground and in lessons and feel safe; this helps you to enjoy school. We really enjoyed listening to your excellent singing in assembly and watching how hard you were trying to play the autoharp, during your music workshop.

In order to help you do even better we have asked the school to make sure that teachers help each other to improve their teaching more often. They can do this by watching each others' lessons and sharing ideas. We have asked teachers to make sure that lessons run at just the right speed for you, so that you can learn more. We have also asked teachers to make some of the questions they give you a bit harder sometimes, so that you have to think a little more carefully before answering. During lessons we would like teachers to help you to learn to do things, (develop your skills) more often, rather than simply learn about things. Finally, we would like school leaders and the governing body to decide who will check how well the school is doing in each subject, and check things a bit more often.

You can all help by continuing to try as hard as you can in lessons and coming to school as often as possible. Thank you once again for your help and remember to always enjoy your learning!

Yours sincerely

Jeremy Spencer
Her Majesty's Inspector

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