

St Michael's Woolmer Green CofE VA Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117461
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	379424
Inspection dates	3–4 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Brian Netto

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	129
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev David Munchin
Headteacher	Brendan Mallon
Date of previous school inspection	26 March 2007
School address	London Road Woolmer Green SG3 6JP
Telephone number	01438 813267
Fax number	01438 815623
Email address	admin@woolmergreen.herts.sch.uk

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They visited 11 lessons or parts of lessons and observed five teachers. They met with the acting headteacher, senior and middle leaders, members of the governing body and pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at school development plans, records of pupils' progress, pupils' work, school policies, minutes of meetings and self-evaluation documents. They received and analysed 104 questionnaires from parents and carers.

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

- The consistency in the achievement of different groups, including boys and girls.
- The progress and learning of all pupils given their starting points, and the impact of measures taken to narrow gaps in achievement.
- The accuracy of the school's monitoring and evaluation strategies in supporting and driving improvement, and the impact of leaders on improving the quality of teaching and the curriculum.

Information about the school

St Michael's Woolmer Green Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School is a small village school, with a higher percentage of girls than boys. Most pupils come from the local area and the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is low. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is around the national average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The school runs a breakfast and after-school club. There is also a privately-run pre-school which is based on the school premises. The school has received a number of awards including Healthy School status, Arts Mark and Active Sports Mark. There is an acting headteacher at the 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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. It has some outstanding features. Attainment is above average, and this represents good progress from pupils' starting points. In 2011, attainment in English was well above average. Parents and carers are very happy with the care and education provided. As one parent said, 'I could not be happier with my child's education; this is a wonderful school from top to bottom and a credit to the staff, headteacher and local community.'

Pupils of all abilities enjoy a good quality of education. When children join the school, their skills and abilities are typical for their age. Pupils have highly committed attitudes towards learning. They develop strong skills in communication and numeracy, and together with excellent support, particularly when they move to different secondary schools, this prepares them well for the future. These skills are developed very early on because of exceptional provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage and are built upon well as pupils progress through the school.

The behaviour of pupils is mainly good: it is occasionally exemplary. Pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities, and the Year 6 buddy system provides a safe and familiar support for the children in the Reception Year. Pupils feel exceptionally safe because they are extremely well looked after and cared for, and they have a good understanding of safe behaviour. Safeguarding procedures are effective in maintaining a safe environment. The school provides exceptionally high levels of care, guidance and support for its pupils and, in this small school, pupils are known as individuals by all adults. The strong emphasis on sports means that pupils quickly learn the importance of exercise to their health and well-being. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, and pupils develop as articulate, confident and considerate young people. Community cohesion is promoted well. Pupils' strong contribution to the local community is demonstrated in their travel forum which has been campaigning to reduce speed limits on the main road outside the school. This has involved surveys and this has been reported in the local newspaper.

The acting headteacher and the senior staff have established a culture of improvement and of innovation in teaching and the curriculum. Teaching is consistently good, and the curriculum provides stimulating experiences which match the interests and needs of the pupils. An imaginative curriculum is well supported by excellent partnerships with a range of external agencies which help to enrich the achievement and well-being of the pupils. Improvements have been made in

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procedures for monitoring pupils' progress. However, there are occasionally missed opportunities in the use of this information to help pupils understand how well they are doing, and how they can better contribute to their own learning. Self-evaluation is not always consistently used across the school to help inform this progress, although the school has a good understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement. Effective action has been taken to address issues raised at the last inspection, and the school has sustained improvements in a number of areas. As a result of robust monitoring, the school has a good capacity for further improvement.

Attendance has been high over the last three years and, working in partnership with parents and carers, is regularly above 96%. A large majority of parents and carers are supportive of the school's work. They take an active interest in the school, and many act as volunteers.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build upon the improved rates of attainment in English and mathematics by:
 - providing regular and specific feedback to pupils so that they are confident about how to improve their work
 - involving pupils more in setting challenging targets
 - promoting greater independence in learning, so that pupils take on more responsibility for their own progress.
- Fully engage all leaders, managers and the governing body in sharpening self evaluation to identify how best to improve pupils' learning and progress.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Attainment in English and mathematics at Key Stage 2 is rising. Current data show that all pupils make at least good progress, including the small number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This is because teaching assistants work closely with teachers to ensure that no one is left behind. Boys and girls make similar progress to each other. Pupils are keen to learn, and respond enthusiastically to stimulating work..

Pupils say that they feel safe and that adults know them all personally. Pupils greatly value the fact that adults listen to them and trust them. Parents and carers agree that the school keeps their children extremely safe. Pupils are confident that any rare incidents of bullying are dealt with appropriately. Behaviour is good, especially in lessons that engage and motivate pupils.

Pupils have a good understanding about food and healthy living; for example, pupils in Year 3 and 4 investigated Roman food following a visit to a local museum, and demonstrated an awareness of healthy eating in different historical periods. Year 6 sports leaders demonstrated effective leadership skills during a lunch time 'Huff and

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Puff' session with the youngest children. The children thoroughly enjoyed exercising while participating in fun-filled and imaginative games. As one Year 6 pupil said, 'They were brilliant today. It felt so good to actually teach them.' With outstanding personal skills and their good progress in literacy and numeracy, pupils are well prepared for their next school and for the future.

A very large majority of pupils come to school regularly and on time, and attendance is high. Pupils readily take on a range of responsibilities and are actively involved in the school and local community. One parent commented about the school that, 'it has a wonderful sense of community spirit in a small village'. Pupils have a growing interest in ethical and social issues, such as through the eco-club where pupils have been involved in planting seeds to help contribute to a new forest. Year 6 pupils in particular contribute to an exceptionally strong family ethos in the school through their 'buddy' work with children in the Reception Year. These experiences, supported by a strong spiritual dimension to the curriculum, result in highly reflective and mature young people.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	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	1

How effective is the provision?

The curriculum is rich and varied and, by involving the pupils in its design, it effectively meets all their needs. Enrichment activities at lunch and after school, especially in sports, further enhance their learning opportunities.

Teaching is mostly good, and at times outstanding, especially when pupils are

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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provided with challenges to reflect on their learning. For example, pupils in Year 1 experimented with estimating lengths using different measuring instruments. This challenged them to rethink and apply their mathematical skills in different contexts. The paintings of Cezanne were an excellent stimulus for Year 5 and 6 pupils to develop their understanding of composition and perspective in art. Pupils showed high levels of engagement as they practised some of the painter’s techniques. Year 3 and 4 pupils learnt about similarities and differences between Roman life and today, for example in the different number systems.

In the best examples of marking, pupils are encouraged to reflect on their work and to take responsibility for improving it. They respond positively to the ‘tickled pink’ colour coding which identifies what they have done well, although this is better in literacy than in numeracy books. However, pupils are not always aware of how well they are doing and what they need to do better. The best teaching enables pupils to organise their own learning and think about their targets. Teachers use subtle questioning to probe ideas further and challenge pupils in their thinking. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on their own learning and that of their peers. This enables the pace of learning to accelerate. However, this is not consistent across the school.

The outstanding care, guidance and support contribute strongly to pupils’ progress and to their personal development. Effective transition arrangements and excellent links with external agencies ensure that the needs of pupils whose circumstances might make them vulnerable are extremely well met. Learning contracts are helping these pupils to take responsibility more for their own learning. Relationships between adults and pupils are outstanding. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are provided with the good support they need through focused interventions, and as a result they make good progress.

The school provides good wrap-around care through a well-attended breakfast club, and an after-school club which enable pupils to engage in a range of different types of activity. There is also a diverse menu of enrichment activities, some led by older pupils, which contribute to pupils’ strong personal development. Most pupils take advantage of these activities.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The acting headteacher is supported well by an effective leadership team. He has set

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out a clear vision for the school that is based on high expectations and a close knowledge of each pupil's needs and interests. The promotion of care and well-being is at the heart of the school. Rigorous monitoring by the leadership team ensured that the quality of teaching has improved and is now good.

The school is sometimes overly optimistic in making judgements about pupils' progress and attainment but, nevertheless, is reasonably accurate in evaluating its strengths and weaknesses. Members of the governing body ensure that all statutory duties are met, including requirements for safeguarding. Staff have been suitably trained in child protection and there are effective procedures in place to ensure pupils' safety.

The school benefits from a range of different outstanding partnerships, notably in relation to sports. Pupils represent the school and the local district in a number of different sports. Equally, as part of a small schools' network, teachers' professional development is enhanced in collaboration with other similar schools. This cohesive school has strong links within the local village community, particularly through the local church and parish. Excellent local partnerships contribute significantly to the well-being of the pupils. These links are currently being developed more widely into urban areas, and also through the church with a school in Kenya. As a result, the school makes a positive contribution to community cohesion. The promotion of equal opportunities is good. This is illustrated by the good progress made by all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils treat each other with respect and care, and show strong consideration for others.

The school's engagement with parents and carers is exceptionally strong. This is reflected in the very positive parental comments, and families' full involvement in the life of the school. Many parents and carers act as volunteers and regularly attend parent consultations. Communications with parents and carers are regular and varied, and keep them well-informed.

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	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2

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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 Reception Year with skills typical for their age, and they make outstanding progress so that by the time they reach Year 1 they exceed expectations across most areas. They do particularly well in personal, social and emotional development and communication, language and literacy. Very strong relationships with all adults ensure that children develop confidently within a secure environment.

The teachers work well together so that children’s learning is consistent and is well supported by accurate and rigorous tracking of their progress. Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are outstanding. The leader has an excellent understanding of the curriculum and, through partnership work with local schools, constantly reviews her practice to ensure that all children are safeguarded and receive high-quality care and support. Children’s learning journals provide secure and detailed evidence of their high achievements.

Effective collaboration between the staff of the Reception class and the staff at the pre-school ensures that the outdoor areas are fully used for the benefit of all the children. This results in high quality provision which closely matches their needs and interests. There is a good balance of outdoor and indoor learning, and adults use the children’s interests as effective starting points for new challenges. For example, children enjoyed acting as shopkeepers and shoppers to sell and buy healthy fruit. Through careful questioning by the teacher, they learnt about handling money and making active healthy choices. Strong relationships and a sensitive understanding of the safety and well-being of the children contribute to a highly effective and exciting curriculum which makes full use of the local community.

Staff work closely with parents and carers, who are given a thorough induction when their children join the school. Detailed plans are shared regularly so that children can extend their learning into the home environment. This ensures that children settle very quickly and enjoy their first experiences of school.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

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Views of parents and carers

A large majority of parents and carers returned the questionnaires. They are overwhelmingly positive about the school. They are particularly pleased by the quality of the teaching and how the school prepares their children for the next stage of their lives. These positive views reflect the findings of the inspection. A small minority of parents and carers expressed a few concerns and these were investigated thoroughly during the inspection.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Michael's Woolmer Green CofE VA Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

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

The inspection team received 104 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 129 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	73	70	30	29	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	78	75	25	24	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	59	57	42	40	2	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	54	52	49	47	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	80	77	24	23	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	64	62	37	36	2	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	59	57	42	40	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)	71	68	31	30	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	59	57	43	41	2	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	53	51	40	38	6	6	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	52	50	48	46	1	1	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	63	61	33	32	5	5	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	78	75	25	24	1	1	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.



7 November 2011

Dear Pupils,

**Inspection of St Michael's Woolmer Green CofE VA Primary School,
Woolmer Green, SG3 6JP**

Thank you so much for your warm welcome when we visited your school recently, and for giving us your views and showing us your work. We very much enjoyed the visit, and were particularly impressed by the care and respect which you showed each other.

We would like to tell you about what we found. Yours is a good school, and it has many features which are outstanding. These were some of the strengths:

- Most of you make good progress because the teaching is good. The children in the Reception year get off to a really good start.
- You told us that you feel very safe in school because teachers and other adults look after you and help you to understand how to keep safe.
- The school helps you develop the skills that you will need to do well in the future.
- You enjoy learning and taking on responsibilities.
- You make valuable contributions to the school and to the local community.

The headteacher and his staff are working hard to make your school even better. We have asked them to tell you on a more regular basis how well you are all doing and how you can help yourselves to improve. We have also asked the school's leaders use what they know about the school's strengths and areas of development, so that you can all achieve even better.

We would like to commend the Year 6 pupils in particular for the care and support shown to the younger children, and we were impressed by your leadership skills in running after-school clubs. We wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Brian Netto
Lead inspector

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