

St Michael's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104656
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	395556
Inspection dates	20–21 June 2012
Lead inspector	Elaine Murray HMI

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	317
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	J Riley
Headteacher	A Hegarty
Date of previous school inspection	30 April 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

Elaine Murray
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Her Majesty's Inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 19 lessons taught by 11 teachers. Meetings were held with parents, carers and pupils, representatives of the governing body, and a wide range of staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation including self-evaluation documents, strategic plans and other development plans. Inspectors also heard a small number of children from Year 1 and Year 2 read individually. Inspectors scrutinised 61 questionnaires returned by parents and carers and those returned by staff and pupils.

Information about the school

St Michael's Catholic Primary School is a larger than average primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is high. Most pupils are White British but the proportion of pupils from other ethnic backgrounds is above average, as is the proportion of pupils whose first language is not English. An above average proportion of pupils join and leave the school throughout the school year. The school meets the current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported by School Action Plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average. The school provides a breakfast-club for pupils. The school has the Basic Skills Quality Mark.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a good school. The school has a strong focus on providing a nurturing environment for pupils and developing their well-being. The school is not outstanding because the quality of teaching and pupils' learning and achievement are not yet outstanding. Attendance is low and persistent absence is higher than average.
- Achievement is good. From below average starting points on entry to nursery, pupils make good progress to reach broadly average standards in mathematics and English by the end of Year 6.
- Teaching is good overall. Relationships between adults and pupils are positive. In most lessons teaching motivates and enthuses pupils. Most lessons are adapted to meet the needs of different abilities. In a few lessons, more-able pupils are not provided with a sufficient level of challenge. Guidance given to pupils through marking does not always make clear to pupils what they need to do to improve.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around school. They co-operate well together in lessons and are polite. Despite the school's determined efforts to tackle the issue, a higher than average number of pupils is persistently absent from school. A very small minority of pupils are not consistently punctual to school.
- Leadership and management are good. The management of teaching performance ensures that most lessons are good. The curriculum is effective, inclusive and meets the needs of the school's diverse population. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well-promoted.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement by:
 - ensuring that more-able pupils are given an appropriate level of challenge in lessons
 - ensuring that the marking policy is used consistently so that all pupils have a clear understanding of the next steps in their learning.
- Work closely with parents and carers to improve rates of attendance, reduce rates of persistent absence and ensure that more pupils are consistently punctual to school.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

All of the parents and carers who completed the questionnaire believe that their children are making good progress at the school. Inspection findings agree with this view. Most children join the nursery with skill levels that are below, and for some children well below, expectations for their age. Skill levels are particularly low in personal, social and emotional development and in communication language and literacy. Children make good progress during their time in nursery and reception class, particularly in developing communication and social skills. They continue to make good progress through Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 to attain broadly average standards by the end of Year 6. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 dipped last year, largely due to a high level of movement of pupils in and out of the Year 2 class during the year. Standards have risen again this year, but remain lower in writing than in other subjects. The school is aware of this and has clear plans in place to raise attainment in writing. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress from their individual starting points through a wide range of support strategies. There are no notable differences in the attainment of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are not. Pupils for whom English is an additional language are well-supported and make good progress.

Basic reading skills are well-taught and by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 most pupils attain broadly average standards in reading. Children in nursery class show a good understanding of the sequence of the 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears' story, which was the focus for activities. Pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 show a keen interest in books and stories and growing fluency in reading. Those pupils who are not yet reading with confidence are learning to use their knowledge of the sounds that groups of letters represent to read unfamiliar words.

Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and co-operate well together in lessons. In a Year 4 literacy lesson, pupils worked individually to draft open questions with which to interview a book character. They then worked well in groups to read each pupil's question and decide which would best encourage the book character to explain his feelings.

Quality of teaching

The very large majority of parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire agreed that their children are well-taught, and this view is supported by inspection evidence. Good teaching was observed in most lessons. Lessons are typically well-paced, with clear explanations and effective questioning. Teachers have mainly high expectations of pupils. In a Year 2 mathematics lesson, pupils' problem-solving skills were effectively developed through very clear explanations and use of challenging subtraction problems to extend more-able pupils' understanding. In a Year 6 lesson, good pace and use of a game in the lesson introduction ensured that pupils effectively reinforced and developed their understanding of multiples of 7. Where teaching is good, adults enthuse and motivate pupils well. In a Year 4 lesson, a discussion about how the main character in a story may have felt is brought to life as the teacher acted out what the character might have said.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage respond well to effective questioning during their self-chosen play. They decide which is the 'biggest', 'smallest' and 'medium-sized' bowls and use the appropriate vocabulary to describe this. They show imagination as they act out a story using different-sized soft toys. Early reading skills are well-taught as pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 engage in regular sessions to reinforce their knowledge of the sounds that letters make to build words.

In a few lessons where teaching is satisfactory, tasks do not provide sufficient challenge for more-able pupils. In Years 5 and 6 marking generally gives pupils clear guidance about their next steps in learning. This is not consistent throughout the school, as in other year groups guidance is less clear and pupils are unsure of the targets for their next steps in learning. The progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is carefully tracked and effective support provided to ensure their good progress in lessons.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The school has worked hard to reduce the higher than average rate of persistent absence. Although there has been a reduction in this rate, it remains high, which has an impact on overall attendance rates. A very small minority of pupils are regularly not punctual to school, but this is more pronounced in Year 1. These issues have a negative impact on the learning and sustained progress of some pupils. The school has recognised this and is taking steps to tackle the problem.

Almost all parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire said that their child feels safe in school and most thought there was a good standard of behaviour in the school. Inspection findings agree with this view. Pupils respond well to the high expectations for their good behaviour and this makes a positive contribution to their learning. They listen well and co-operate with others during lessons, which promotes their good progress and their social and moral development. Pupils have a good understanding of what is meant by bullying and say that instances are rare and dealt with swiftly. The school manages the behaviour of a small number of pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties well. Pupils show positive

relationships with adults and each other during breakfast-club and behave well. Behavioural records and discussions with pupils indicate that pupils' good behaviour over time is sustained. Pupils say they feel safe in school and can identify factors which may make them feel less safe, for example when they were aware of a gap in the school outer fencing which has since been repaired.

Leadership and management

The headteacher, well-supported by the senior leadership team, ensures that pupils make good progress during their time at the school and achieve well. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching is effective in ensuring that most teaching is of good quality. Since the last inspection, some senior leaders have undertaken professional development in leadership skills. As a result, some aspects of leadership and management have improved. Systems for monitoring and tracking of pupils' progress have developed and are more effective in ensuring that pupils who are lagging behind are given necessary support. For example, senior leaders recently identified that a group of Year 2 pupils was not on track to achieve expected levels in reading and so put in place support which ensured that all identified pupils attained expected levels in recent statutory tests. Leaders have worked well with partners, such as the education welfare officers, to bring about improvements to the rate of attendance and reduce persistence absence in recent years, and are working to bring about further improvement in this area. The accuracy of leaders' tracking of pupils' progress and their success in sustaining good levels of achievement show that there is good capacity for securing further improvements.

The governing body provides an effective level of challenge and support to the senior leadership. It has a good awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The governing body has recently played a key role in the development of succession planning necessitated by the imminent retirement of the current headteacher. Safeguarding systems follow recommended good practice and meet government requirements.

Pupils benefit from a balanced, well-planned curriculum. It meets the diverse needs of pupils successfully and promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness well. The curriculum provides interesting experiences which encourage pupils to apply their skills. For example, Key Stage 2 pupils use their writing skills to produce scripts to be broadcast on a local radio show as part of a session working in partnership with a local community group. Equal opportunities are promoted well, and reflected in the inclusive and welcoming environment provided by the school for all pupils.

The school usually works well with parents and carers, who praise the level of communication they have with the school and the extent to which they are involved in promoting their children's learning. This positive partnership contributes well to pupils' good level of achievement.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



22 June 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Michael's Catholic Primary School, Liverpool, L6 9DU

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed visiting you in your lessons and talking to you. We were impressed by the way your school cares for you and how well you get on with each other and the other adults in your school. You told us that you enjoy your time in school.

We found that St Michael's is a good school. Your teachers make your lessons interesting and teach you well. You make good progress during your time in school. You behave well in lessons and around the school. For the school to become even better, we have asked the adults who run your school to:

- give greater challenge in lessons to some of you who may find the work easy
- make sure that adults help you all to know what you have to do next to improve your learning
- make sure that you all attend school very regularly and come to school on time.

You can help by continuing to work hard and doing your best to help your parents and carers to bring you to school every day on time.

Yours sincerely

Elaine Murray
Her Majesty's Inspector

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