

St Michael's CofE (C) Primary School

Sturgeons Hill, Lichfield, WS14 9AW

Inspection dates 25–26 September 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- There has been a marked improvement in standards over the past three years as a result of good leadership.
- Pupils achieve well. Attainment at the end of Year 6 is now consistently above average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching is good. Teachers explain new learning clearly and make sure that pupils know exactly what they have to achieve.
- Pupils take a pride in their school and are keen to learn. Attendance is consistently above average.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils clearly understand how to keep themselves safe.
- The school keeps a very close check on the progress made by every pupil.
- Leaders and managers at all levels, including governors, make sure that their actions always focus on improving teaching and pupils' achievement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In a few lessons, the work provided for the most able pupils is too easy.
- Sometimes, teachers use worksheets too much; these prevent pupils from developing independence in organising their own work.
- Some of the least able pupils in Key Stage 1 do not have enough opportunities to improve their understanding of phonics (the sounds made by letters) in other subjects.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited all classes and observed teaching in 28 lessons.
- They looked at the work in pupils' books, heard a sample of pupils read in Years 1, 2 and 6, and held discussions with pupils about many aspects of school life.
- They held meetings with all senior members of staff, representatives of the governing body and a local authority officer. The views of staff given through 40 questionnaire returns were considered.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documents including the school improvement plan, safeguarding checks, and data about pupils' current progress.
- They took into account the views of 78 parents through the online questionnaire (Parent View). Inspectors supplemented information from this sample through informal discussions with parents and scrutiny of a recent survey of parents' opinion organised by the school.

Inspection team

Mike Thompson, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Julie Fox

Additional inspector

Elizabeth Cooper

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Michael's is larger than most primary schools.
- There are fewer pupils from minority ethnic groups than in most schools of this size, and most pupils speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- In comparison with the national average, there are few pupils known to be eligible for additional funding.
- The school meets the current floor standard set by the government, which determines the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- On-site childcare, provided by Beacon Badgers is independent of the school and is inspected separately.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop consistently outstanding features of teaching in all lessons by ensuring that teachers:
 - fine-tune their planning and questioning to make sure that there are high levels of challenge in all lessons, particularly in respect of the highest attaining pupils
 - routinely use strategies to make sure that pupils think more for themselves and develop skills in planning how they are to tackle and set out their work
 - in Key Stage 1 take every opportunity to consolidate pupils' knowledge of letter sounds and blends during lessons in all subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The proportion of pupils making and exceeding expected progress compares favourably with national figures. In almost all instances, pupils make good use of their skills in reading, writing and mathematics to help them learn quickly in a wide range of subjects.
- Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage classes. They learn well as a result of good-quality individual attention from skilled practitioners who understand the ways in which young children learn best.
- In Key Stage 1, most pupils successfully develop basic skills in literacy and numeracy. Within this positive picture, some of the lowest attaining pupils lack a secure understanding of the sounds made by blends of letters. This is because the strategies learned in phonics lessons are not routinely reinforced in other subjects.
- Pupils learn well in Key Stage 2 because, in almost all cases, teachers pitch work at suitably challenging levels. In some instances, the highest attaining pupils are first required to complete relatively mundane tasks before moving on to tasks that really make them think.
- Almost all pupils read well in relation to their age, and make good use of their skills to help unlock learning in other subjects. They become skilled in writing through direct teaching and regular opportunities for practise. They listen well, and express their views clearly.
- Pupils develop their skills in numeracy well. They become adept at identifying patterns in numbers and, by the end of Year 6, have a quick recall of multiplication tables.
- The school supplements the extra funding it receives for pupils whose home circumstances might result in educational disadvantage. It uses its resources well to ensure that these pupils have the same full access to learning opportunities as their classmates. These pupils make at least good progress.
- Throughout the school, the learning of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is closely checked. Teachers use the information gathered to adjust their planning and to carefully tailor the additional help provided by other adults. These pupils make good progress.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching has increased greatly over the past three years. Few of the lessons observed were judged to require improvement. Teaching is now most often good, with examples of outstanding teaching in some classes.
- Most parents feel that their children are taught well. Pupils say that they enjoy their lessons 'because they are fun'. They also appreciate the help provided by teachers whenever they have difficulty in grasping new learning.
- Teachers are generally good at pitching work at different levels so that all groups of pupils are suitably challenged. The assistants who support teachers are highly skilled in explaining and modelling what needs to be done to individuals or small groups who need extra help.
- In all lessons, teachers are good at regularly checking on pupils' learning and responding to what they find by adjusting their teaching. They manage lesson time well and ensure that

pupils have plenty of opportunity to practise the skills learned.

- Teachers are skilled at posing open-ended questions that require pupils to express opinions. They generally use extra questions well to raise the level of discussion. However, in some instances they miss opportunities to pose questions to provide specific challenges for the highest attaining pupils.
- In some lessons, teachers focus well on developing pupils' skills as independent learners, so they think for themselves and learn to plan and set out their work. This practice is not fully embedded. In a Year 2 mathematics lesson, for example, pupils initially struggled when asked to devise a systematic way of adding two different numbers to make 20.
- The teaching of phonics is, in most instances, crisply paced and results in good learning. Teaching groups are small, so pupils are well supported. However, on some occasions pupils take too long in getting to their teaching groups and this reduces the time available for learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Parents and pupils value their school. Parents' appreciation of the quality of education provided is clearly demonstrated in the support they provide and in ensuring that their children arrive punctually.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive in their views about the ways in which the school cares for their children and keeps them safe. The school warmly welcomes all pupils and values them equally. Pupils agree.
- Pupils' learning behaviours are good. They are attentive, know that they are at school to learn, and sustain concentration well. Pupils take good care of school equipment.
- Meal times and play times are well supervised and provide good opportunities for pupils to develop their social skills.
- Pupils relate well to one another. They behave consistently well in lessons and around the school. In closely supervised situations, behaviour is impeccable.
- There have been no exclusions. Pupils say that instances of bullying of any kind are extremely rare. The school is quick to act in these circumstances.
- Where there are disputes between pupils, these are usually the result of name-calling. In the few instances where pupils use homophobic or racist language, they have little understanding of its implications. The school is alert to any comments of this type.
- Pupils are well informed about the importance of using the internet safely. They have a clear understanding of cyber-bullying, and say that this does not occur.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has been instrumental in bringing about marked improvements in teaching and achievement. These are the result of high-quality training for staff at all levels and the strong commitment demonstrated by all staff in implementing the changes needed.

- The local authority provided good quality advice and support in helping the school develop the teaching and leadership skills of its teachers. It now provides light-touch support for this effective school.
 - There are clear and detailed plans for school improvement. Progress in meeting the targets to be achieved is constantly reviewed.
 - Systems for checking on the progress made by all groups of pupils are rigorous. The good-quality information gathered is used well to ensure that extra help is targeted effectively and to promote equal opportunities.
 - All members of staff provide good role models in consistently promoting the clear values and beliefs that permeate all aspects of school life. As a result, pupils fully understand what is expected of them and, at work or play, respond in 'The St Michael's Way'.
 - Staff and parents have positive views about the changes made. Many parents spoke appreciatively about the progress that their children are now making. One of the teaching staff commented: 'This school has been a busy place to work in over the past few years.'
 - Senior leaders closely monitor the impact of all aspects of the school's work. The information they gather is used effectively to set targets for teachers to achieve.
 - The school's involvement in the 'Outstanding Teacher Programme', in partnership with a local teaching school alliance, is clear evidence of its ambition to improve further. This partnership is beginning to have a positive impact in helping good teachers develop and sustain high-level teaching skills.
 - The topics planned for pupils provide exciting, first-hand learning experiences incorporating many subjects. At the same time they give pupils good opportunities to improve their basic skills in literacy and numeracy. These opportunities are not fully exploited in Key Stage 1.
 - Topics capture pupils' imaginations and hold their interest. For example, pupils in Year 6 were engrossed throughout their audit of ways in which energy consumption could be reduced. This included lively discussions about the technology that might be required and pupils' use of a light sensor.
 - The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, and social development well. Pupils' achievements are celebrated weekly. Pupils' cultural development is particularly good in terms of art and music. For example, well-established links with Staffordshire Performing Arts and activities such as the Year 6 boys' dance project as part of the Cultural Olympiad considerably enrich pupils' experiences. The school's promotion of pupils' awareness of non-western cultural influences has less emphasis.
 - The school website is easy to use and provides useful information for parents about news and events.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - is well informed through direct monitoring of learning in lessons and regular presentations made to governors by members of the teaching staff
 - ensures that the budget is carefully managed
 - ensures that safeguarding meets requirements
 - is effective in ensuring that the improvements made in teaching and learning are being sustained.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	124258
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	406225

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	442
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jenny Bryant
Headteacher	Helen McKay
Date of previous school inspection	17 October 2010
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