

St Michael's Church of England Primary School

The Causeway, Steventon, Abingdon, OX13 6SQ

Inspection dates 27–28 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.

- Achievement is good. Attainment has improved since the previous inspection and is now above that seen in many primary schools across the country.
- Pupils now make much faster progress in all stages of the school.
- Teaching has improved and is now good. There are positive relationships in lessons and pupils support each other when working in groups.
- Teachers present work clearly to classes, have good subject knowledge and plan a range of interesting activities for pupils in lessons.
- One pupil said, 'We all connect, we're like one big family.' Pupils get on well with each other and say they feel safe in school. Parents and carers are also positive about pupils' behaviour.
- The headteacher and the governing body have focused well on the issues from the previous inspection and this has led to improvements in teaching and achievement.
- The governing body is now much more rigorous in its monitoring of the school's work.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching does not always encourage a sense of anticipation and curiosity about learning or give pupils enough opportunities to work independently.
- Teachers do not always check on learning in lessons and then adjust teaching to ensure pupils' faster progress.
- Pupils do not do as well in writing as reading as best practice is not shared enough across the school and teachers do not give enough opportunities for pupils to write long pieces of work and show them how to structure these.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 11 lessons or part lessons.
- Five lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspector observed the school's work, attended two assemblies and talked to pupils in lessons, in the playground and held a meeting with the school council.
- Meetings were also held with members of the governing body, staff and a local authority representative.
- The inspector took account of the 52 responses to the on-line Parent View survey, the school's own parental surveys and spoke to a number of parents and carers in the playground.
- A range of documents were scrutinised including the school's development plan, the self-evaluation and raising attainment plan, the governing body minutes, and behaviour and safeguarding documents.

Inspection team

Susan Williams, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Michael's Church of England Primary School is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported at school action is above average and the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is much lower than that seen nationally.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Pupils are taught in six classes with a mixed-age Year 4/5 class and Year 5/6 class.
- Following an extended period of acting headship, the headteacher took up the substantive post in June 2011.
- There is a pre-school on site which did not form part of this inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure teaching is consistently good and much is outstanding by:
 - encouraging a sense of anticipation, curiosity and positive expectation about learning
 - checking on learning in lessons and adapting teaching to ensure accelerated rates of progress
 - giving pupils more opportunities to develop independent learning skills.
- Raise attainment in writing so it is similar to reading by:
 - sharing best practice in developing writing across the school
 - sharing short examples and steps for writing in lessons
 - giving pupils regular opportunities to write extended pieces using the techniques learnt in lessons.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Achievement has improved in all key stages since the previous inspection. At Key Stage 2, attainment has risen from average three years ago to above average in both English and mathematics. Provisional test results show this improvement has been maintained in 2012 with all pupils reaching at least the nationally expected level in reading.
- Children enter the school in Reception with skills and knowledge lower than that expected for this year group. There are a high proportion of summer-born children. They make good progress to be at expected levels in most areas of learning when they enter Key Stage 1. They make particularly strong progress in their communication, language and literacy development.
- At Key Stage 1, attainment is broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics. Assessments from 2012 show that this standard has been maintained. There is a strong, systematic programme to support pupils' early reading skills which is applied consistently across the school. In the recent phonics screening, a very large majority of pupils met the required standard.
- Progress throughout the school is good and embedded, as shown by the school's accurate assessment data, the pupils' work and lesson observations. For example, in a Year 2 literacy lesson, pupils were thoroughly engaged and learnt well. They enthusiastically joined the teacher in the story *Suddenly!* before writing their own end to the story.
- The school survey results show that an increasing number of parents and carers believe their child makes good progress in school. Pupils also think they learn well in school.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are assisted in their learning with additional support which makes a very positive contribution to their learning in lessons. These pupils make good progress in school. The pupils supported by the pupil premium make good progress in school because additional support is targeted at where pupils need it the most.
- Attainment in writing is not as strong as in reading. Teachers do not always show pupils the steps for writing and share good practice enough in the teaching of writing across the school.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Strengths in the teaching are the positive climate for learning in classrooms, the clarity of expectations, consistent routines and how well teachers encourage pupils and use praise. Teachers and pupils are respectful towards each other and teachers listen carefully to what pupils have to say.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge, make explanations clear and use a 'hands-down' approach to questioning so all pupils are involved. Success criteria are made clear and are often developed by pupils so they have ownership of the learning in the lesson.
- Teachers plan a range of activities which engage pupils. For example, in a Year 5/6 mathematics lesson, pupils were involved in a practical challenge with Venn diagrams in pairs. Pupils enjoyed the activity which brought learning mathematics alive.
- Pupils make good progress in reading because there is an emphasis on developing reading skills through the use of structured programmes of teaching phonics (letters and the sounds they represent). For example, in a Year 1 phonics lesson, the teacher led a fast-paced activity for the class to practise their sounds before the pupils moved on to different activities which supported them at their level of understanding. These included different group sessions led by adults as well as pupils working independently on activities.
- Teaching assistants make a positive contribution to the learning of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. They question pupils well and make sure they take a full

part in lessons.

- In a Year 3 writing lesson, pupils were engaged in writing a letter explaining why a whale could not live in a pond. This was linked to work they had been doing in other areas of the curriculum and it captured pupils' imagination. However, opportunities for this type of extended writing are not frequent enough for pupils to apply the writing skills they have learnt in lessons to longer pieces.
- While pupils are well behaved in lessons, teaching does not always encourage a sense of anticipation, curiosity and expectation of learning in lessons. There are some opportunities to learn independently, but this is not regular enough for pupils to develop these skills rapidly and well. Teachers plan a range of activities for pupils, but they do not always check on learning regularly in lessons and adapt teaching accordingly to move pupils' learning on further.
- The very large majority of parents and carers are positive about how their child is taught in school. Pupils are also positive about teaching in school.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' behaviour is good. It is particularly strong in lessons where pupils work well together in groups and help each other with their work. Pupils are polite and courteous to adults and to each other. Staff and pupils are positive about behaviour in the school.
- Pupils are positive about the rewards systems of 'smileys' and 'team points'. The weekly awards assembly celebrates a range of achievements including work in lessons, helpfulness or extra effort, such as a girl who built a lifelike model of a Tudor house. The headteacher reminded pupils, 'If you can truthfully say you have done the best you can, you're a winner.' The reward for the best cloakroom was particularly well received by both staff and pupils.
- A very large majority of parents and carers were positive about behaviour in the school and almost all said their child was happy in school. As one parent said, 'It's lovely and nurturing, you don't see any sad faces, they love it.'
- The behaviour log shows that incidents that occur are minor. Pupils say there is no bullying and that adults sort out minor disagreements that arise occasionally. Pupils have a secure understanding of different types of bullying, especially physical bullying and cyber bullying. There has only been one case of bullying in the last three years which the school dealt with.
- Most parents and carers say their child feels safe in school. Pupils also say they feel safe in school. They are aware of how to keep themselves safe and how to manage risks such as when using the climbing frame or in the playground.
- Pupils are punctual to school and lessons. Attendance has improved over the last three years and is now above average, indicating how pupils enjoy being in school.

The leadership and management are good

- Most parents and carers said the school is well led and managed. As one parent said, 'There has been a huge change, the headteacher has done a fantastic job, she has focused the whole school.' The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, has brought about considerable improvements in achievement and teaching since the previous inspection.
- The school's self-evaluation and raising attainment plan accurately identifies the strengths and areas for development in the school. A culture of rapid and sustainable improvement has been achieved by robust monitoring of teaching, effective performance management, rigorous accountability procedures and action planning which ensure that pupils make good progress. This is further helped by good professional development opportunities for staff which carefully match both the school and the individual's needs.

- The local authority has been effective in supporting the headteacher in school self-evaluation, in improving teaching and developing more rigorous monitoring procedures in school.
 - School leaders make good use of pupil premium funds to support identified pupils and evaluate its impact on pupil outcomes.
 - Parents and carers said they were pleased there are school clubs that cater for Key Stage 1 and 2 pupils and particularly like the wide range of sports clubs on offer. They were very positive about the curriculum evenings which show them how English and mathematics are taught and like the new teachers' surgeries.
 - The school has developed a 'creative curriculum' which links learning in subjects in a themed approach including literacy and mathematics. Teachers said this has helped pupils in their learning. The improved achievement in the school confirms this is the case.
 - Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported with the promotion of Christian values. This ensures discrimination is not tolerated and equality of opportunity is promoted. A local vicar delivers an assembly every week and pupils learn about a wide range of issues in lessons. A recent performance at the O2 Arena gave pupils the opportunity to take part in a once-in-a-lifetime experience with pupils from a wide variety of schools.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - has clear roles and responsibilities with a schedule of monitoring which has helped to drive improvements and ensured that areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection have been addressed
 - ensures safeguarding meets statutory requirements and is effective.
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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	123160
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	402141
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	145
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alison Jarratt
Headteacher	Judy Spiller
Date of previous school inspection	14 September 2009
Telephone number	01235 831298
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