

St Michael's VA Junior School

Astley Road, Bowthorpe, Norwich, NR5 9LA

Inspection dates

5–6 December 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.

- The determined and ambitious leadership of the headteacher and the senior leadership team has driven a range of crucial improvements which have led to a marked improvement in the achievement of all pupils.
- Pupils make good progress and are now reaching above-average standards.
- Rigorous systems and checks by the headteacher and senior leadership team are used effectively to organise training for staff to improve the quality of teaching.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils. Good subject knowledge and relationships contribute to the positive and purposeful atmosphere throughout the school.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent. They are keen to improve their work and the school is a happy and friendly place.
- Pupils behave politely around the school. They feel very safe and enjoy coming to school.
- Attendance has improved and is now above the national average. This is due to the support that the school gives to families.
- Governors are very knowledgeable about all aspects of the school. They provide a good level of support and challenge to school leaders and are clear about what is needed in order to continue to improve the school.
- A wide range of well-planned and interesting activities support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers and support staff do not always work closely enough to ensure that all groups of pupils are supported in their learning.
- Occasionally pupils are not given work that pushes them on further.
- Pupils are not routinely given the opportunity to respond to the helpful advice in teachers' marking that shows them how to improve their work.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 25 lessons, of which two were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, the inspectors listened to pupils read in Year 3 and Year 6 and attended an assembly.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation including the school development plan, the school's own assessment data and self evaluation, the school's safeguarding documentation, teachers planning and attendance data.
- Meetings were held with the Chair and other representatives of the Governing Body; staff, including senior leaders; and two groups of pupils. The lead inspector spoke to a representative of the local authority by telephone.
- Inspectors took account of the 11 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), the paper questionnaire distributed to parents earlier this term, and met with parents informally at the start of the school day. Staff questionnaires were also checked.

Inspection team

Valerie Palmer, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Edwin Powell

Additional Inspector

Josephine Lewis

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Michael's VA Junior School is slightly larger than an average-sized primary school.
- The large majority of pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language are in line with the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils, those with a statement of special educational needs or those who need extra support at school action or school action plus, is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or in the care of the local authority, for which the school receives additional income (the pupil premium), is above average.
- From September 2010, the school has been in partnership with Clover Hill Infant and Nursery School. Both schools are led by the executive headteacher but have separate governing bodies.
- The school has a number of awards including National Healthy Schools status, the International Schools and the Investors in Families awards.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that more is outstanding by ensuring that:
 - teachers and other adults work together more effectively to make sure that all groups of pupils are well supported in their learning
 - all teachers consistently set work at the right level by providing harder work in mathematics and literacy where appropriate.
 - pupils are given time to respond to marking and feedback given by teachers.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils have not always done well enough at this school. In 2010, standards were low. In English, pupils left the school the equivalent of more than a year behind pupils nationally. This represented serious underachievement. Since that time, a concerted effort from the headteacher, senior leaders and staff has resulted in a dramatic turnaround. Underachievement has been eliminated and standards have risen sharply. They improved in both 2011 and 2012, and current pupils' work shows them on track to continue this upward trend.
- Rigorous monitoring of pupils' performance by all members of staff, means that any pupil falling behind is quickly identified and measures are put in place to help them to catch up.
- Reading is taught through well-structured lessons that systematically teach pupils the sounds that letters make (phonics). Pupils who were falling behind make good progress and confident readers enjoy a wide range of books. Older pupils speak with knowledge about the books they like best and can compare books written by different authors.
- Progress and achievement in mathematics is good. This is because the school has linked mathematics with real-life situations. For example, pupils investigated the divisions on weighing scales to ensure that the correct amounts of ingredients were mixed to make peppermint creams to be sold at the 'Christmas Fayre'.
- Pupils are able to show good improvement in their writing skills because they are given opportunities to observe their teachers modelling good writing and to write at length in other subjects for different purposes. For example, in a science lesson, pupils wrote an explanatory text about the water cycle.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress. The school has high expectations of pupils regardless of any difficulties they have to overcome.
- Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those pupils who are new to English make good progress and achieve better than their peers nationally.
- Pupils who are eligible for support through the pupil premium make good progress and achieve better than their peers nationally. The school has used the funding to provide additional staff to support pupils outside of lessons and a range of resources to support reading and mathematics.
- Pupils are proud of their work and achieve well in a range of subjects, and not just English and mathematics. Art is particularly strong, with many examples of excellent work around the school, and every pupil has the opportunity to learn a musical instrument.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is good. Some teaching is outstanding. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are very clear about what they intend to teach and why. Proficient use is made of open-ended questions to develop pupils' communication and thinking skills, and good use is made of pupils talking in pairs, which allows them to share ideas with each other.

- Target setting, which enables pupils to know how to improve their work, is firmly established in the school. Pupils speak with confidence about their targets in mathematics and English. They know how well they are doing, are very clear what their next steps are and what to do in order to achieve them. As a result, they are highly motivated to succeed.
- In the most effective lessons, teachers use information from previous lessons to plan work to match pupils' skills and understanding whilst providing the correct amount of challenge. Occasionally, in some mathematics and English lessons, some pupils are given work to do which is too easy.
- Teachers' ongoing feedback in lessons is good. Marking in books shows pupils what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. However, pupils are not always given the time they need to respond to this.
- Teaching assistants and other adults are mostly deployed effectively. They successfully support individual pupils and groups of pupils towards clear learning targets. Sometimes, however, their input is not so effective, for example, during whole-class introductions.
- Responses to Parent View, talking to parents and the school's own questionnaire show that all parents believe their children are taught well and make good progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour in and around school, in lessons and at break and lunchtime, is good. Pupils are polite and well mannered and get on well with adults and each other. They respect one another and everybody is included. One pupil said, 'School is like one big family.'
- The school atmosphere is warm and friendly. Pupils say they 'want to come to school' and 'teachers make you feel good'. This is reflected in the improving attendance, which is now above average. This is due to the excellent care and support provided to pupils and their families.
- Pupils are very proud and have extremely positive views about their school. They talk enthusiastically about the many and varied clubs, visits, visitors to school, art projects, musical opportunities and the exciting topics which they have studied, such as the Tudors and Victorians, and International Days.
- Pupils enjoy taking on positions of responsibility; for example as peer mediators, house captains or as a member of the Eco or School Council. They take their roles seriously and discuss their actions thoughtfully.
- Pupils celebrate each other's successes and progress. Every morning a child in each class is nominated to be 'complimented' and this positive caring and praise culture runs through the day.
- Pupils say they feel very safe at school. They say that bullying does not exist but any minor incidents such as a 'falling out' are dealt with by the peer mediators. Pupils said that they knew who to speak to if they were worried about any issues and were confident that any adult would deal with the difficulty quickly and effectively.
- Pupils are fully aware of dangers to themselves and understand how to keep safe in a variety of situations, including the use of the internet.

- All parents who completed the online questionnaire and the school's own survey agreed that their child is well looked after and that the school keeps their child safe.
- The caring culture is very strong and is much appreciated by parents. Pupils respond well to the encouragement and kindness of other pupils. This commitment to respectful relationships is set and modelled by leadership and staff at all levels.

The leadership and management are good

- Tenacious leadership from the headteacher, supported by the determined deputy headteacher and senior leadership team, has resulted in a thriving and forward-thinking school. Together, school leaders have turned the school around in a short period of time. Teaching has improved and underachievement has been tackled successfully so that pupils have made up previously lost ground.
- There are rigorous procedures in place for leaders to gain an accurate view of the school's performance. They observe lessons, look at books and analyse carefully the results of their checks on how well pupils are doing. This gives them a good understanding of how to improve standards across the school.
- The needs of all pupils are met through the well-planned mix of subjects and activities. There is a wide range of enrichment activities from visits to art and sporting after-school activities. Links with the church, assemblies, a prayer room for all faiths and the sponsorship of a child abroad, strengthen pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Partnerships with parents are excellent. There are lots of opportunities for parents to undertake classes for their own learning or to support their child's; for example, English for Speakers of Other Languages, self-defence and learning through play. Parents make good use of the comprehensive website, feel well informed about their child's progress and say they would recommend the school to other parents.
- The relationship between performance management, the progress and outcomes which pupils should achieve and pay progression is clearly established. The quality of teaching is monitored regularly and accurately by the headteacher and members of the senior management team. Strengths and weaknesses are identified and this leads to effective professional development to improve the quality of teaching and its impact on learning.
- The pupil premium has been allocated to provide extra resources and additional staff to support individual pupils and school initiatives to raise standards. The impact is carefully measured and can be seen in the good results achieved by the pupils who receive this additional support.
- The local authority has become less involved with the school as it has continued to improve.
- Safeguarding meets statutory requirements and all staff have had training in child protection procedures.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the governing body are very actively involved in the school and visit regularly. They have taken up appropriate training and they demonstrate a clear knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are energetically involved in supporting school

improvement and monitor the school's performance. They know how the school is performing because they ask pertinent questions about the quality of teaching and standards. They are aware of the importance of data and are kept regularly updated by the headteacher. Subject leaders also make regular presentations to the governing body. Governors set targets for improvement and monitor the performance of the headteacher, staff and pupils. They are fully aware of the relationship between standards and pay-related performance. They have knowledge of the school's finances and challenge decisions related to spending, for example of pupil premium funding. They ask questions to check that changes and spending are having a positive impact on outcomes for all groups of pupils.

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	121146
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	405999

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	262
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rebecca Cordy
Headteacher	Helen Newell
Date of previous school inspection	9–10 December 2010
Telephone number	01603 745812
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