

St Michael's Church of England Voluntary Aided Middle School, Colehill

Colehill Lane, Colehill, Wimborne, BH21 7AB

Inspection dates 30–31 January 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	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 headteacher and other leaders, including governors, have high expectations of how well pupils should achieve and develop their personal skills.
- The attainment of pupils at the end of Year 6 and at the end of Year 8 is above the national average. Attainment in mathematics is higher than it is in English at the end of Year 8.
- All groups of pupils make good progress in their learning and achieve well.
- The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and carefully plan lessons to ensure that pupils make good progress in their learning.
- Relationships in the school are very positive. Pupils enjoy school and welcome the range of extra-curricular activities that are provided to enrich their educational experience.
- Pupils are very well cared for. As a result, they feel extremely safe and state that incidents of bullying are very rare.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning in lessons are good.
- Checks on pupils' progress and the quality of teaching are carried out regularly. As a result, the headteacher, senior staff and governors know the school's strengths and areas for further development. Well-planned actions are taken to address identified weaknesses.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Occasionally, teachers do not use information about what pupils can and cannot do to set work that stretches all of them.
- In some lessons, teachers talk for too long and do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to be actively involved in their learning.
- Written feedback to pupils does not consistently provide them with clear and detailed information about how they could improve their work.
- Not all subjects provide pupils with sufficient opportunities to practise and develop their writing skills.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 23 lessons, taught by 22 teachers, of which four were joint observations with members of staff.
- Meetings were held with pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and one other governor, school staff, including the headteacher, and senior and middle leaders. A meeting was also held with a self-evaluation partner employed by the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 124 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) that were received by the end of the inspection.
- Inspectors reviewed the 30 staff questionnaires returned during the inspection. Inspectors observed the school's work, including pupils' books, and looked at a range of documents, including the school's evaluation of how well it is doing, its plan for improvement, records related to the behaviour and safety of pupils, attendance, and assessment data.

Inspection team

Peter Sanderson, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Emma Ing

Her Majesty's Inspector

David Wolfson

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Michael's School is an average-sized middle school.
- The school was awarded specialist status in sports and science in 2008, in conjunction with the upper school and other local feeder schools.
- Nearly all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils whose first language is not English is well below average.
- The proportion of pupils identified with special educational needs and supported through school action is slightly above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is similar to the national average.
- A number of higher-attaining pupils leave the school at the end of Year 7 to enter selective schools.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for additional government funding, known as the pupil premium, is well below the national average.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Key Stage 2.
- All pupils are educated on the school site. The school does not make use of any alternative educational provision.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teaching is consistently good and more often outstanding in order to further raise pupils' attainment, particularly in English, by:
 - making sure that all teachers use information about what pupils can and cannot do to set work that is suitably challenging for them
 - making sure that all lessons contain interesting activities that actively involve pupils in learning
 - giving pupils consistently high-quality feedback so they know how they can improve their work, and checking that they respond to this advice
 - providing greater opportunities for staff to share the best teaching practice that exists in the school.
- Further raise pupils' attainment in writing, particularly for boys, by ensuring that all subjects provide pupils with opportunities to produce extended pieces of writing so that they can practise and develop their writing skills.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The attainment of Year 5 pupils joining the school is above the national average. Attainment at the end of Year 8 is well above average in mathematics and above average in English.
- The progress made by pupils between Year 5 and Year 8 is good. The progress of pupils is best in mathematics, followed by reading and then writing.
- Boys and girls make similar progress in mathematics, although girls make better progress than boys in English, particularly in writing. However, school information on pupils' current progress and lesson observations undertaken during this inspection indicate this gap is closing.
- During the inspection, achievement in the large majority of lessons was good and in some lessons it was outstanding. Pupils work well together and willingly engage in the activities arranged for them by teachers.
- Progress in reading is good. The library is well used by pupils who all have a reading book. Daily reading sessions during afternoon registration effectively encourage pupils' enjoyment of reading.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress. They are extremely well supported in lessons by teaching assistants, and effective one-to-one sessions outside of lessons aid their learning well.
- The attainment of pupils eligible for the pupil premium at the end of Year 8 is below that of other pupils in the school. However, this gap is closing. The school makes effective use of the additional funding it receives for these pupils. For example, it is used to fund additional in- and out-of-class adult support for pupils' academic and personal development. Some of the funding is also used to ensure that these pupils fully benefit from the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities, trips and visits offered by the school. All this ensures they receive an enriched educational experience and make good progress in their learning.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching was good in the large majority of lessons observed during this inspection and some was outstanding. However, teaching in a small minority of lessons required improvement.
- Classroom relationships are a strength of many lessons. Teachers manage pupils with quiet authority and are courteous and considerate. Pupils respond in kind, reacting well to their adult role models, demonstrating positive attitudes to learning.
- Teachers have strong subject knowledge and in most cases plan lessons well providing a range of interesting activities. They focus well on learning objectives, often checking how well pupils are learning and modifying their teaching in response.
- Teachers make effective use of pre-prepared digital presentations to help maintain a good pace to lessons, keep pupils engaged and effectively aid their learning.
- In the best lessons information about the levels pupils are working at is used well to give them tasks that get the best from pupils, whatever their ability. For example, in an excellent Year 5 mathematics lesson on coordinates and graph plotting, pupils were able to work on different tasks that were well matched to their ability, enabling them to make outstanding progress. However, this good practice is not consistent across the school and sometimes work is set that does not stretch all pupils.
- In a few lessons, teachers spend too long explaining things rather than allowing pupils to become actively involved in tasks so that they can find things out for themselves.
- Teachers are provided with helpful information regarding the learning needs of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. These pupils receive extremely effective in-class support from teaching assistants helping them to make good progress.

- Pupils know their targets and how well they are doing. The marking in books is generally good with some helpful specific comment on how pupils can improve their work. However, some marking is purely congratulatory with little or no advice given on how to improve, and there are too few instances of pupils acting on teachers' guidance to make improvement to their work.
- Communication, reading and mathematical skills are taught effectively across all subjects. For example, paired and group discussions were seen in a number of lessons along with many opportunities to practise and improve reading.
- The school has had a recent focus on ensuring that all subjects provide pupils with opportunities to produce longer pieces of writing that enable them to practise and develop their writing skills. Good practice in this regard was observed in English and humanities but this was not the case across all subjects.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils enjoy coming to school and they behave with respect towards each other and the adults working with them. They are courteous, polite and welcoming to visitors. During break and lunchtimes there is a very calm atmosphere around the school site with pupils from different year groups mixing well with each other.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is good. At times it is outstanding, for example when pupils are given the opportunity to work practically or independently.
- The very large majority of parents and carers responding on Parent View felt that behaviour was good in the school although a few did not. Pupils spoken to during the inspection were positive about behaviour in lessons. However, they did say that on a few occasions when lessons were less interesting their learning was disrupted, but only for a short period of time, by one or two pupils misbehaving.
- Pupils are extremely well cared for and they say they feel very safe in school. As one pupil said, 'There is always someone to help you.' They talk knowledgeably about what might be unsafe situations and how to avoid or deal with them. They worked safely in practical sessions during this inspection.
- Pupils spoken too said they knew what constituted bullying and the different kinds that may occur, such as cyber-bullying. They stated that bullying in the school was very rare and if it did occur then staff would deal with the situation well.
- The school has strengthened its systems for ensuring the regular attendance of pupils since the previous inspection. As a result, attendance has steadily improved and is now above average.
- Fixed-term exclusions from school are below the national average.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has high expectations of staff and pupils alike and sets a clear direction for the school. He is well supported by other senior leaders. Together they have secured a common sense of purpose among staff. For example, all staff returning the staff questionnaire stated they were proud to be a member of the school.
 - Targets set for pupils are challenging and good systems are in place to track the progress of pupils towards these targets. This enables the school to quickly identify any pupil who is underachieving. A broad range of intervention activities is in place to support these pupils and help them catch up.
 - Gaps in attainment between different groups of pupils are closing, reflecting the school's commitment to equality of opportunity. Discrimination in any form is not tolerated.
 - Checks made on the quality of teaching and learning by senior leaders are regular and robust. Feedback to teachers identifies strengths and provides clear advice about how to improve their
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practice. However, middle leaders are not sufficiently involved in monitoring teaching and opportunities for staff to share the outstanding practice that exists in the school have not been fully exploited.

- Performance management of teachers is used effectively to support teacher development and inform salary progression.
 - The headteacher and other leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas in need of improvement. The school plan for improvement clearly addresses these areas.
 - The range of subjects and courses, known as the curriculum, offers wide-ranging experiences to all pupils. It meets pupils' needs and enables them to achieve well. Pupils appreciate the many lunchtime and after-school clubs that offer a wide range of sporting, music and other cultural experiences. Numerous trips and visits also widen pupils' horizons.
 - The close links with the local church underpin the strong spiritual aspect of the school's work. The atmosphere of collaboration and friendship throughout the school is a strong testament to pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
 - The local authority provides a relatively light touch level of support for this good school. Visits by the self-evaluation partner are welcomed by the school and have been effective in helping identify key areas in need of improvement.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the governing body have a broad range of skills and experience that they use effectively for the benefit of the school. They ensure that they keep their knowledge of educational issues up to date through appropriate training. The governing body has a good understanding of the quality of teaching and the progress made by pupils in the school relative to all pupils nationally. As a result, governors are able to ask suitably challenging questions of the headteacher and senior staff. They keep a clear overview of the school's performance management procedures, salary structures and how managers set targets for teachers. A finance sub-committee meets regularly and resources are efficiently used to promote learning. Governors are aware of the pupil premium funding and how it is being used to aid eligible pupils' learning. The governing body ensures that the school fulfils its statutory responsibilities in relation to safeguarding
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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	113891
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	395498

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	548
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ed Bell
Headteacher	Paul Nation
Date of previous school inspection	17 June 2009
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