

St Michael's CofE Primary School

Dalston, Carlisle, Cumbria, CA5 7LN

Inspection dates 25–26 June 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		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- St Michael's is highly valued by pupils, their families and staff.
- Pupils' behaviour in and around the school is exemplary. Pupils value each other and say they feel happy and safe here.
- Pupils have an extremely positive attitude toward learning from an early age.
- Pupils get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and make good progress during their time at school. Their progress in Key Stage 1 is particularly good.
- Pupils achieve well and standards reached in English and mathematics are higher than those found nationally.
- The teaching of reading is a priority and a significant feature of the school.
- Overall, teaching is good and some is outstanding. Teachers and teaching assistants provide good support by clearly explaining how pupils can improve their work.
- There are many interesting activities in lessons which the pupils clearly enjoy. They particularly like trips to different places which stimulate their learning and contribute extremely well to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Topic work helps pupils to develop their numeracy and literacy skills in other subjects.
- This is an improving school. Leaders and managers have successfully introduced changes to enhance the quality of teaching further. The new tracking system to check on the progress pupils are making is now skilfully used by teachers to plan lessons and, when necessary, provide additional support.
- The governing body provides a good balance of support and challenge for the school. Together with senior leaders they are concentrating on raising the quality of teaching even further.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Occasionally, activities in lessons do not provide the appropriate level of difficulty for pupils of different abilities.
- Pupils do not always have enough opportunity to work things out for themselves, particularly in mathematics lessons.
- The role of middle leaders is not yet fully developed.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed eight teachers and visited 18 lessons. In addition, the inspectors made a number of short visits to lessons and listened to pupils read.
- Discussions were held with school staff, groups of pupils, senior staff and leaders with responsibility for a specific subject, parents, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation including safeguarding documents, the school's procedures for gaining an accurate view of its own performance, its development plans, records of pupils' standards and progress, documents relating to attendance and behaviour, and pupils' work in their books.
- The inspectors took account of the 72 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the school's most recent parent survey.

Inspection team

Naomi Taylor, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Barbara Waugh

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Michael's is an average-sized primary school.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding is well below that found nationally. (The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children that are looked after by the local authority.)
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is below average and at school action plus is well below average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well below the national average and no pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The school is a National Support School and the headteacher is a National Leader in Education.
- Awards held by the school include Healthy School Status, Activemark and International School award.
- There is an after-school club at St Michael's.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of teaching that is outstanding and thereby drive pupil progress at an even faster rate, particularly in mathematics in Key Stage 2, by:
 - making sure that work set for pupils of all abilities is at the right level of difficulty to challenge them to make as much progress as possible
 - ensuring that pupils have more opportunities to work things out for themselves, particularly in mathematics.
- Develop the role of middle leaders to enable them to closely check on their areas of responsibility and make necessary changes in a timely manner.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children settle very well into the Early Years Foundation Stage. This is because there are very effective transition arrangements between school, home and nurseries. Children make good progress because of the clear focus on communication, language and calculation skills. The Reception-aged children benefit from the good range of activities that are on offer both in the classroom and outdoors.
- Most children join the Reception class with skills that are similar to those typically expected for their age. The good progress made in the Early Years Foundation Stage continues through Years 1 and 2. They join Year 3 with standards in reading, writing and mathematics which are higher than those typical for their age. This has been sustained over many years.
- Younger children learn effectively how to link letters and the sounds that they make (phonics). In the 2012 tests, most pupils in Year 1 achieved the expected level in reading. At the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, significantly more pupils than the national average reach the higher levels in reading.
- Standards in writing at the end of Year 2 are well-above national levels because of increased opportunities across the curriculum to develop pupils' writing skills. The dip in writing and mathematics in 2012 in Year 6 has been addressed and the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels is now higher than the national average. There is a whole-school systematic approach to teaching mathematics ensuring pupils have secure mental mathematics skills to help with problem solving.
- The proportion of pupils making the progress expected of them in English and mathematics from their individual starting point is generally higher than that found nationally. More pupils make more than the expected progress in English than they do in mathematics. They are well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- Most pupils, including those who are known to be eligible for pupil premium funding and those who have special educational needs, make the same good progress because of timely and sharply focused support. The standards reached by pupils known to be eligible for free school meals are similar to other pupils in school and sometimes better. This demonstrates the school's commitment to ensuring all pupils have an equal opportunity.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is consistently good throughout the school and some teaching is outstanding.
- When teaching is at its best, lessons are planned very well to ensure pupils are given interesting work to get the best out of them. Consequently, pupils learn rapidly because they are given work which matches their ability and they can find things out for themselves.
- For example, in a Year 2 English lesson the pupils were writing about their visit to a nature reserve. The experience had captured their imaginations and they enthusiastically talked to each other about what they had seen and done. The teacher had prepared a range of time connectives to encourage them to then write down the sequence of activities. Excellent questioning by the teacher encouraged pupils to extend their vocabulary and enhance their writing. Outstanding progress was made during this lesson.
- Similarly, in a Year 4 mathematics lesson, the teacher and teaching assistants had prepared a carousel of activities, each promoting pupils' use of numeracy skills to solve subtraction problems. The pupils were having so much fun that they were reluctant to move to the next activity. The adults in the class acted as facilitators as the pupils were finding things out for themselves. Again, excellent progress was made by pupils of all abilities because the tasks were challenging them to extend their learning.
- Phonics is very well taught. The Reception children enthusiastically use their rapidly growing knowledge of letters and the sounds they make to work out the spelling of unfamiliar words.

- Occasionally, however, the activities do not fully meet the needs of all pupils based on their ability. This was seen in a mathematics lesson where too long was spent on a whole-class activity when some found the work too easy and others found it too hard.
- Teachers insist on good presentation across all subjects and pupils take pride in their work. Marking is usually thorough and ensures pupils know how to improve their work.
- Teachers and teaching assistants who support those with special educational needs and pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding are well trained to provide for the individual learning needs of each pupil. They always encourage pupils to do their best.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils learn from an early age how to value each other, the adults around them, and their school environment. There is an exceptionally strong atmosphere of mutual respect starting in the Reception class and continuing throughout the school. This leads to pupils feeling happy, safe and secure. This is reflected in their above-average attendance and their very good punctuality at the start of the day.
- Pupils behave exceptionally well both in lessons and around the school and this results in extremely good attitudes to learning and care towards each other. This was reflected in conversations with pupils, families, staff and from almost all the views expressed on Parent View.
- Pupils feel safe and learn how to keep themselves safe including when they are working on the internet. All parents who spoke to the inspectors believe that their children are well cared for at school. The school helps pupils to learn how to stay safe beyond the school environment. For example, during the inspection, a local policeman presented the Year 6 pupils with their cycling proficiency certificates.
- Pupils' experiences are widened through a range of well-managed trips and after-school activities. During the inspection, pupils visited a Hindu temple in Newcastle, a farm and a local secondary school. They drew on these experiences to enhance their learning.
- Pupils say that bullying is not an issue at this school and this is reflected in the school's behaviour logs. All pupils learn about different types of bullying and are adamant that they could turn to any adult in the school if they ever felt unsafe.
- Older pupils are excellent role models for the younger children and this is evident at all times through the school day. When the weather is bad and pupils are confined to indoors, the older pupils act as play leaders for the younger children.
- Each year group has a garden area in the school grounds of which they are very proud. For example, the Reception children were keen to show inspectors their flower bed and talk about how they had chosen and bought the plants from a local nursery.
- The annual summer fair is organised by the Year 5 and 6 children who get a taste of business planning while applying their numeracy skills to a real event. This experience contributes particularly well to preparing pupils for their future lives.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and senior leaders have a good understanding of how to bring about whole-school improvement. The quality of teaching is continually improving and the school's systems to check pupils' progress are now good.
- Since the previous inspection, new staff have been appointed and new roles and responsibilities have been created. Staff are supported through training opportunities both within the school and beyond but middle leaders have yet to fully develop their skills in bringing about improvements in their areas of responsibility.
- The local authority provides guidance for the school with 'light-touch' support.
- The curriculum meets the needs of pupils well. The school has a sharp focus on literacy and

numeracy development but is also extremely keen to provide additional experiences. Topic work provides opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy and literacy skills across all subjects and the pupils clearly enjoy this approach to learning.

- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and helps pupils to make an excellent contribution to the very pleasant atmosphere in school. Pupils are aware of different religions and cultures and this is made real for them with trips beyond the village environment.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body is committed to ensuring that the school continually improves. Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities, for example all staff have been vetted and trained appropriately to keep pupils safe. Governors have an accurate overview of all that the school provides. Their understanding of data is improving and they question staff appropriately about pupils' progress. In response to the dip in progress in mathematics in 2012, the governing body and senior leadership team worked closely in appointing additional staff to make sure that more support was available for pupils and that progress was checked regularly. Governors are aware of the quality of teaching which, together with their targets, is linked to teachers' salary progression. They check that staff make effective use of pupil premium funding to ensure every pupil has an equal opportunity and that all groups of pupils achieve well.

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	112246
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	413208

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	222
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stephen Withers
Headteacher	Stephen Fraser
Date of previous school inspection	16 November 2006
Telephone number	01228 711544
Fax number	
Email address	admin@st-michaels.cumbria.sch.uk

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