

# St Michael's Primary School and Nursery, Colchester

Camulodunum Way, Berechurch Hall Road, Colchester, CO2 9RA

**Inspection dates** 10–11 July 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Progress in writing is too slow. Pupils have too little time to write in lessons, and teachers' expectations for the quality of their writing in subjects other than English are sometimes too low.
- There is not enough good teaching to ensure that pupils achieve well in all classes.
- The quality of teachers' marking is inconsistent, so pupils do not always know how well they are doing or how to improve their work.
- Behaviour in some classes is not good enough to ensure pupils make the best progress possible.
- More-able pupils do not have enough opportunities to work on their own, and lesson activities do not always match their needs and abilities.
- Leaders' observations of teaching do not concentrate sufficiently on how well pupils are achieving.
- Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals do not always achieve as well as others in the school. While the gap is closing, leaders do not ensure that teachers check these pupils' progress regularly enough to help them catch up quickly.

### The school has the following strengths

- The Nursery and Reception classes give children a good start to school. Teaching is consistently good or better.
- Good teaching in Years 2, 4, 5 and 6 is characterised by strong relationships and high expectations for pupils' work and behaviour.
- Bullying is very rare and when it does happen it is dealt with promptly. Pupils feel safe and enjoy coming to school.
- Pupils take responsibility well. They enjoy helping each other and are sensitive to others' needs.
- Recent action taken by leaders is helping to improve teaching and achievement.
- The school has done much to ensure that the 'topics' taught capture the interest of boys as much as girls.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 19 lessons, two of which were seen together with the headteacher. The inspectors also made a number of brief visits to other lessons.
- Meetings were held with pupils, leaders of subjects, governors and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors took account of the 39 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- They observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including records of the progress of pupils in each class, planning and monitoring files, behaviour records and documents relating to attendance and safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Kelly Stock, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Terry Elston

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school, although the number of children in the Nursery is rising.
- An above-average proportion of pupils are supported by the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for pupils in local authority care, known to be eligible for free schools meals, or from a family with a parent in the armed services. Thirty-nine per cent of the pupils come from military families.
- The proportion of pupils who join or leave partway through their primary school education is higher than average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The vast majority of pupils are White British.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- There have been a significant number of changes of staff since the last inspection.
- The school is part of the Colchester Consortium partnership.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to at least good by making sure that:
  - every teacher insists on a high standard of behaviour in all lessons
  - lesson activities are planned carefully to challenge all pupils, but especially those of higher ability
  - marking helps pupils to understand what they are doing well and how they can improve their work.
- Raise pupils' achievement in writing by ensuring all teachers:
  - give pupils enough time to write in lessons
  - plan regular opportunities for pupils to write at length in all subjects
  - demand the same high standards of handwriting, spelling and punctuation in all subjects
  - check the standards and progress of each individual pupil more carefully in lessons
  - regularly check the progress of different groups, particularly those who are of high ability or known to be eligible for free school meals.
- Improve the impact of leaders and managers by:
  - ensuring that their observations of lessons focus on how well groups of pupils are learning
  - developing the skills and subject knowledge of staff in the teaching of writing and phonics
  - checking the impact of the pupil premium funding more regularly, and making sure teachers quickly identify which pupils need extra support.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement as it is not yet consistently good for all groups of pupils. Writing is the main weakness because pupils have too little time to write in lessons, and when writing in subjects other than English they are sometimes careless with spelling and punctuation.
- By the end of Key Stage 1, attainment is improving but below average. Reading is stronger than writing because pupils have regular opportunities to learn how to improve their skills in phonics (the sounds letters make) and build sounds into words. They occasionally write interesting accounts, for example about the powers of superheroes, but few write at length and their weak use of punctuation sometimes lets their work down. In mathematics, most pupils calculate accurately but sometimes struggle when asked to work out sums quickly in their head.
- By Year 6, recent test results have varied from average to, as was the case in 2012, below average. Pupils achieve better in reading and mathematics than in writing. However, inspectors' observations and school data show that more pupils are attaining at and above nationally expected levels this year, particularly in reading and mathematics.
- The school has used its pupil premium funding to provide additional teaching assistant support and one-to-one help and guidance. Pupils eligible for this support have generally made steady progress by the time they leave. However, there are attainment gaps in some year groups of up to two terms in both English and mathematics. Although these are closing gradually, not all teachers are sufficiently aware of who these pupils are to give them the full support they need.
- The achievement of pupils from military families is similar to that of others in the school. While their attainment at Key Stage 1 tends to be a little below that of others, the gap closes as they get older and by Years 5 and 6 there is little difference.
- Children come into the school with skills a little below typical for their age, and do well in the Nursery and Reception classes. They make good progress in developing their reading and number skills because they have many opportunities to practise these skills in all areas of their learning. They learn to work and play together well, and how to take turns with activities.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make steady progress in English and mathematics, and they achieve at broadly the same levels as the others across the school. They benefit from regular support and their parents say how this helps their achievement and confidence.
- The systematic approach to teaching phonics has led to better results in reading. Children in Years 1 and 2 who read to the inspectors showed enthusiasm for their reading, and boys in particular make good progress.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Teaching is not consistently good enough to ensure that all pupils make good progress. The many recent changes of staff and long-term absences have held back improvements in teaching.
- Where teaching is less than good, teachers' management of behaviour is not good enough and this wastes time in lessons. They allow pupils to call out and chatter when they should be working.

- Sometimes, teachers spend too long explaining activities and do not always show pupils clearly what to do, so they lose concentration and do not learn effectively. While some give clear steps in their marking to show pupils how to improve their work, others just add comments to say how well they have done.
- Teachers leave too little time for pupils to write in class and do not plan adequate opportunities for them to write at length in all subjects. They accept lower standards in handwriting, punctuation and presentation in subjects other than English.
- Children in the Reception class benefit from some outstanding lessons that excite and inspire them, so they enjoy their learning and make rapid progress. The planning often includes children's ideas so they are interested and keen to learn. For example, children achieved very well when they hunted outside for dinosaurs with binoculars they had made themselves. Teachers take great care to identify next steps for every child. The support that teaching assistants provide in the Reception class is particularly effective.
- The teaching of reading skills is effective, and at best, lessons are fun and fast-paced. The new system adopted by the school provides pupils with regular opportunities to practise breaking words into sounds and is leading to better progress. Not all teaching assistants, however, have the subject knowledge needed to teach phonics accurately.
- Teaching is good in Years 4, 5 and 6 because relationships are strong and teachers treat pupils as mature individuals. In a Year 5 lesson, for example, pupils responded to the teacher's high expectations by behaving well, and thrived on the teachers' generous praise for their efforts.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils**

### **requires improvement**

- Pupils' behaviour varies from class to class. While it is impeccable in some classes, in others pupils too often forget the rules about putting their hands up and call out their answers to questions. Sometimes they take a while to settle, and lose concentration when asked to work in groups.
- Parents who offered a view about behaviour, either in discussion with inspectors or through Parent View, often expressed dissatisfaction with behaviour in some classes. Nevertheless, the school's records of incidents indicate that effective steps are taken to deal with unacceptable behaviour, and such incidents are few and decreasing over time.
- Where behaviour in lessons is good or better, teachers have high expectations and make the rules clear to pupils, giving praise to those who behave well. Pupils feel able to try things out and to make mistakes, saying, 'If you get things wrong you are just learning.'
- Children in the Nursery and Reception classes learn and play well together. 'Celebration Trees' and 'Wow moments' are used to reward good behaviour at home and in school, and to celebrate pupils who are 'doing the right thing', or 'being kind and patient with others'.
- Pupils who join the school partway through the year, or in different year groups, are supported well and quickly make friends. An impressive feature of the school is how well all pupils support each other. Pupils show sensitivity and care for each other, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.
- Pupils take responsibility well and represent the views of others with maturity and respect. Older

pupils enjoy their roles in helping younger children read and in their sporting activities.

- Pupils enjoy coming to school and say bullying is very rare. Discussions with pupils reveal they have a good understanding of bullying and the different forms it can take, and know how to keep themselves and others safe.
- Attendance has improved; it is now broadly average and pupils arrive to lessons on time. Leaders have worked well with parents to reduce persistent absence.

## **The leadership and management** requires improvement

Leaders and managers have not yet succeeded in making pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching consistently good. Since the last inspection, staff changes and long-term absences have resulted in inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and the progress pupils make. As a result, necessary improvements in both areas have not been made soon enough.

- The way teachers' performance is managed is not yet rigorous enough. Although linked to the national Teachers' Standards, lesson observations have not focused sufficiently on how well all groups of pupils are learning.
- Leaders do not evaluate the impact of the pupil premium funding regularly enough. While the attainment gap is narrowing to some extent for eligible pupils, they do not encourage teachers to identify these pupils early and track their progress to make sure the extra support is helping them to do as well as possible.
- Senior leaders and staff are working hard to improve the school. The leaders' accurate awareness of the school's strengths and their recent actions to rectify identified weaknesses show that the school has the capacity to continue this improvement. Staff value the headteacher's support. She is respected by all members of the school community and has helped create a very good sense of teamwork where all work towards common goals.
- The way subjects are taught provides frequent opportunities for pupils to develop their social, moral, spiritual and cultural awareness. For example, pupils in Key Stage 2 have good opportunities to think deeply by considering hardship in Victorian times and the plight of oppressed people in the Second World War. Pupils visit a range of places of worship, and conduct research into Black history and the lives of Malcolm X, Mohammed Ali and Martin Luther King. In Reception, children compare Brazil with Colchester to gain an insight into how other people live.
- Teachers are given considerable opportunity to work with colleagues within the Colchester Consortium partnership and attend training. This has helped them to see best practice in action, and enabled them to introduce successful initiatives such as 'assertive mentoring' and inter-school events. The school invests in improving the skills and expertise of subject leaders, and therefore the quality of teaching.
- The local authority has provided good support to the school, for example by arranging a helpful review of the governing body.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The recent external review of the governing body has helped governors understand their role more clearly. Members understand the need to make better use of the skills they bring to the school, and are fully committed to improving pupils' education. They know how the pupil

premium is spent, though not necessarily its impact, and have improved their understanding of the school's performance. Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of teaching and how it is being improved, and support leaders in raising achievement. They now provide an acceptable level of challenge to the school, and feel confident in their ability to oversee the systems for managing staff performance and pay. Governors attend a range of training to support them in holding the school to account. They make sure that safeguarding procedures and practices meet national requirements.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	114817
<b>Local authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	405541

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	194
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Patrick Baxter
<b>Headteacher</b>	Gail Burns
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	28 March 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01206 546412
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