

St Michael's Primary School

Station Road, Withyham, Hartfield, East Sussex, TN7 4BP

Inspection dates 10–11 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- Pupils increasingly attain at levels above the national average by the age of 11. The great majority of pupils, including the very few disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, make good and often very good progress from their starting points.
- Pupils of all levels of ability share in the good achievement and develop as confident and articulate individuals.
- The quality of teaching is good, with teachers questioning pupils well, using teaching assistants constructively to support learning and using a range of resources to motivate pupils and increase their levels of skill and understanding.
- Pupils behave well and feel very safe in school. They enjoy both the lessons and out-of-school clubs and visits. Attendance is high, well above the national average.
- The headteacher has a strong commitment and high expectations. She monitors teaching and learning systematically and is well supported by a knowledgeable governing body. The school shows a clear capacity to improve further.
- Parents and carers are very supportive of the school and firmly believe that it promotes high standards, good progress and a high level of care for their children.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Teaching does not ensure that all pupils, and particularly the more able, make as much progress as they could in every lesson.
- Occasionally the more able pupils do not get sufficient opportunity to tackle challenging work on their own.
- Teachers' marking does not consistently help pupils see how to take their work to the next level.
- The thorough monitoring of teaching and learning in lessons is very dependent on the headteacher alone. Other staff have very limited opportunities to observe, share in and disseminate the best practice although plans have been made to develop these opportunities.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed nine lessons or part sessions. Four of the lesson observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher. Four teachers were observed in all.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, a group of pupils, staff and governors. The inspector also had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, minutes of the governing body, data on pupils' progress, samples of pupils' work and information relating to safeguarding.
- The inspector took account of 30 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the responses made in eight staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

John Laver, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and other groups) is well below average.
- There are no pupils at school action. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught separately in a Reception class. Pupils in the rest of the school are taught in three mixed-age classes.
- There have been several staff changes in the last two years, including the appointment of a new headteacher and deputy headteacher, as well as other changes in staffing and staff responsibilities.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, so that more of the consistently good teaching becomes outstanding, by:
 - raising teachers' expectations and the level of challenge for more-able pupils so that they always achieve as well as they can in lessons
 - making more use of pupils' targets and success criteria in their marking, so that pupils always have a clear idea of how they can improve their work to the next level.
- Develop the role of teachers as subject leaders so that the benefits of checking the quality of teaching and learning outside their own classroom, and of observing the best practice in the school and elsewhere, are spread across more staff.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children usually join Reception with attainment at or just above the levels expected for their age, although the small number of children involved each year means that this can be quite variable.
- Children in the Reception class achieve well, responding to good teaching of basic literacy and numeracy skills. They also develop the full range of skills and personal qualities when following their own chosen activities. Children talk clearly and confidently to adults, as when explaining to the inspector what they were drawing, writing or constructing. Children make good progress in developing word recognition and linking letters and sounds (phonics).
- Throughout the rest of the school there is a rising trend of attainment, except for last year when there were several pupils with particular learning difficulties who did not attain well in the national tests. Typically, pupils leave school with above average levels of attainment in English and mathematics.
- Pupils made progress at an impressive rate in 2011 and 2012 and this is occurring again with the current year groups. The great majority of pupils are on track to meet or exceed challenging targets. Performance in the Year 1 phonics check improved significantly in 2013.
- The very few pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs make similar progress to their classmates because they are supported well by both teachers and teaching assistants.
- The very few pupils eligible for pupil premium funding, which in this school are just those known to be eligible for free school meals, make rapid progress in English and mathematics, in line with other pupils in the school, and mostly at a faster rate than similar pupils nationally. The school has used the funding well, for example through spending on additional adult support for these pupils both inside and outside the classroom.
- The good achievement was observed in most lessons, for example when younger pupils were enthusiastically doing creative dance, responding to confident teaching.
- The more able pupils usually achieve well. However, a few of these pupils do not always achieve as much in individual lessons as they should. This is usually when the work they do with the class teacher or on their own is not hard or stimulating enough. This was observed both in mathematics and English lessons when able pupils did routine tasks rather than being stimulated earlier in the lesson by more challenging activities, particularly when working by themselves.
- Parents and carers are very appreciative of the good progress made by their children.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is typically good, ensuring that all pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, and those of all ages, circumstances and abilities, make good progress. They are very well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Typical strengths in the teaching include good questioning to draw out pupils' understanding and good use of resources such as interactive whiteboards to motivate pupils and support their learning. Teaching assistants provide good support. In some of the best lessons observed, pupils were encouraged to discuss their ideas and opinions.
- They are taught to explain their thought processes, for example when resolving mathematics problems, while other pupils listen well. This helps them to develop above average skills in reading, speaking, listening and mathematics.
- Pupils believe that they are taught well, insisting that the work they are set is usually pitched at the right level for them. They say that their teachers are good at explaining things, although they also enjoy subjects like art and physical education in which they are encouraged to express their own ideas.
- Teachers share lesson objectives with their pupils, and when marking pupils' books, they

sometimes encourage them to respond directly to the written comments about their work. However, teachers do not always set pupils clear targets or give enough detail in their marking to show exactly how pupils can improve their work.

- Where teaching is occasionally less effective, it is usually when a few more-able pupils sit through introductions to lessons which cover what they already know. Although these pupils are keen to learn, occasionally teachers miss opportunities to move their learning on more quickly.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Lesson observations, activities seen around the school and the school's own records indicate that behaviour is very good. Pupils' behaviour, combined with their keenness to learn and their well above average rate of attendance, contributes strongly to their good learning and achievement.
- Behaviour is not outstanding, because there are occasional incidents of minor misbehaviour, although pupils insist that these are dealt with promptly and effectively.
- The school has worked hard and mostly effectively to eliminate occasional incidents of bullying and homophobic language.
- Pupils understand the various types of bullying that can occur but do not see these as a serious issue. Pupils say they feel very safe in school, and their parents and carers agree.
- Pupils generally respect each other, listen to each other well, and are polite and friendly to visitors.
- Pupils greatly value their school council, which meets regularly. The council raises funds for the school and charities. However, there are relatively few other opportunities for older pupils to take on responsibility, other than 'buddying' children in Reception.
- Pupils are particularly appreciative of trips, such as the residential visit to an activity centre.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher demonstrates very high expectations. The school's self-evaluation and the leadership's plans for improvement are both systematic and rigorous, building on existing successes.
- Leadership is not yet outstanding. The headteacher has the sole responsibility for checking the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom. She does this effectively, since teaching has improved and staff share the commitment to continued improvement. However, staff do not have a key role in checking the results of school initiatives. They have had a few opportunities to observe teaching outside their classroom or in other schools in order to pick up and share good ideas, but the school recognises that these opportunities need to be increased.
- Staff are held accountable for the progress of all the pupils in their classes. The headteacher manages staff performance well and pay is linked to pupils' progress and teachers' responsibilities.
- The leadership team has managed recent initiatives very successfully. Pupil premium funding, which is not extensive in this school due to the few pupils eligible, has been used, for example, to increase support for those pupils. As a result they make very good progress. Funding for physical education has been used partly to fund specialist teaching of sport, and the results have been reflected in the school's success in competitive sport, in pupils' enthusiasm and in increased levels of participation.
- The school's curriculum has been very successful in promoting the key skills of literacy and numeracy. Other subjects are taught mostly effectively through a series of topics, while the classroom curriculum is enriched through several visits and after-school clubs.
- Although children in Reception achieve well, the outdoor play area is limited both in space and in the range of resources. Plans are in hand to develop these aspects in order to improve the

quality of early years learning even further.

- School leaders successfully give all pupils the opportunity to achieve well. It also works hard to ensure that there is no discrimination, and pupils are closely involved in developing the rules for living in a harmonious community.
- The school's safeguarding procedures are robust and meet requirements. Staff and pupils are given appropriate advice, and the school works to strengthen safeguarding in key aspects such as e-safety.
- There is good provision to promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils talk about the link with a school in Gambia. Older pupils were observed intently discussing the principles of democracy and representation in considering elections to the school council.
- Partnerships with other local schools have produced benefits. Teachers have the opportunity for joint moderation of work with colleagues elsewhere and pupils participate in some joint sports ventures with their peers in other schools.
- The local authority has a light touch approach to supporting the school, because it has had no concerns about the school's performance. However, it does have plans in place to provide further support to continue school improvement.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has undergone extensive restructuring since the previous inspection. Governors know the school very well, highlighting its strengths and areas for development. As well as supporting the headteacher, the governing body asks pertinent questions, for example about the allocation of resources. Governors have relatively few opportunities to gain information first hand, but they have an accurate understanding of the qualities of teaching and they know how assessment data are arrived at and how they are used to track pupils' progress. Governors have a keen understanding of how pupil premium funding and sports funding have successfully made an impact upon provision and outcomes for pupils. Governors have undertaken appropriate professional training and have a good overview of how staff performance is managed and rewarded. The governing body understands how progress compares to that in other schools. Governors have a realistic appreciation of their role in both checking existing performance and in helping the school to improve to the next level.

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	114423
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	426583

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	96
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mark Clinton
Headteacher	Catherine O'Shea
Date of previous school inspection	21 October 2008
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