

St Michael's CofE Primary School

Bothel, Wigton, Cumbria, CA7 2HN

Inspection dates

5 December 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 achieve well. They are making increasingly good progress as teaching improves. The best progress is in English.
- Teaching is good. Teachers understand the individual needs of pupils exceptionally well. They create bright classrooms with wall displays that celebrate pupils' achievements and encourage them to work hard and take pride in their work.
- Pupils behave well in and out of the classroom. There is no evidence of bullying or unpleasantness and pupils feel safe. Attendance is good.
- Leadership and management are good. Actions to improve teaching and learning and pupils' achievement over the past two years are paying dividends. The school is increasingly well placed to speed up improvement.
- Governance is strong. Governors are keenly interested in pushing for further improvement and play an important part in checking on the effectiveness of the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not outstanding. There is no inadequate teaching but nor is there enough that is outstanding. Sometimes, teachers do not make good enough use of the time that is available for new learning. Sometimes they do not expect enough of the most able pupils.
- The headteacher is set very precise targets against which his performance is measured but some of those set for teachers are not specific enough for leaders and managers to be absolutely certain how much improvement there has been.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors spent most of the morning of the inspection observing teaching and learning. They observed significant parts of six different lessons.
- All pupils were participating in rehearsals for the Christmas production on the afternoon of the inspection.
- Meetings took place with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body.
- There was a discussion with the school advisor as the representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors talked to three parents as they dropped their children off at school. There were 13 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's on-line questionnaire.
- Inspectors talked informally with several pupils during lessons and break times and also had a meeting with members of the school council.
- A discussion was held with the headteacher of a school that St Michael's collaborates with to share resources and expertise.

Inspection team

Alastair Younger, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Derek Sleightholme

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is much smaller than the average sized primary school.
- The number of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs varies from year to year. This year, the proportion of pupils supported through school action is higher than average. The proportion of pupils supported through school action plus is lower than average. No child has a statement of special educational needs.
- A lower-than-average proportion of pupils is known to be eligible for the pupil premium. The pupil premium is additional funding for those children who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children who are looked after and children from service families. In this school this funding applies only to children who are known to be eligible for free school meals. In 2013 there were no Year 6 pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium and very few eligible pupils in 2012.
- All pupils are White British. There are similar numbers of boys and girls.
- The school works closely in a consortium of eight other small primary schools and a secondary school.
- Until 2012, restrictions on the budget meant that the headteacher had a 90% teaching commitment. This has now been reduced to 60%.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to move it closer to outstanding by:
 - making sure that teachers make better use of all the time in lessons with substantial learning tasks set rather than the occasional low-level tasks that result in little new learning
 - making sure that the most able pupils are always sufficiently challenged, especially in mathematics.
- Improve the leadership and management of teaching and learning by ensuring that the targets for improvement set for teachers are as specific and measurable as those set for the headteacher.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- A large majority of parents agree with the inspectors that their children achieve well because they are happy, well cared for and well taught.
- In such a small school, results vary widely from year to year but generally speaking, attainment at the end of Year 6 is broadly average. In 2013 it was above average and greatly improved on the year before. The work pupils are currently producing is good.
- Children joining the nursery and reception class often do so at levels which are below those expected for their age. Progress from thereon through the school is good for almost all pupils. With the improvements in teaching more pupils than in the past are making better than expected progress in mathematics and English. There are still a few of the most able pupils who could do even better given their starting points. This is more evident in mathematics than in English.
- The younger pupils make good progress in learning how to read. All Year 1 pupils last year achieved at least the expected standard in the national check of learning how letters combine to form different sounds (phonics). In Key Stage 2, reading improves more rapidly than either writing or mathematics. Pupils enjoy their books and are keen to talk about them and write about what they have read.
- Boys and girls make similarly good progress. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are well supported to help them achieve equally well. School data shows that across the whole school there is no significant difference in the attainment of these pupils and all others. In this way, all pupils can be seen to share equal opportunities to fulfil their potential.
- Primary schools' sports funding is being well used to support progress, enjoyment and participation in physical education and sport. Some of this funding is pooled with that from the other small schools in the consortium. It is being used to hire specialist coaches, for instance for tennis, and to develop new sporting opportunities such as basketball and orienteering.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Most teaching is good and much of this good teaching has elements within it that are outstanding but also elements that require improvement. The very large majority of parents say their children are well taught and are happy that the homework they bring home on a regular basis is appropriate for their children's age.
- Teaching seen during the inspection closely reflected that described by the school's self-evaluation. Good teaching is also reflected in last year's results and the quality of work pupils are currently producing.
- Achievement is celebrated well by displaying many pieces of pupils' best work on stimulating wall displays. This encourages pupils to try hard and has helped to address a weakness identified by the last inspection; that of the way pupils present their work.
- A common strength of teaching is the way adults and pupils show so much respect for each other. This greatly supports the conducive learning atmosphere in classrooms and helps pupils to feel secure, relaxed and ready for work.
- Teachers plan lessons well. They usually include clearly defined tasks for pupils of different ages and abilities. Support staff and volunteers are carefully and effectively deployed to help different groups of pupils. The strength of this deployment is that it is not always the same group of pupils that gets the support. Sometimes it is directed at the most able whilst the teacher focuses on the lower attaining ones; sometimes it is the other way round.
- Occasionally, tasks do not fully challenge the most able. This tends to happen when pupils are not moved on to harder work even when they can be seen to fully understand the work they have been set.

- Occasionally, valuable learning time is lost when pupils engage in low-level activities that lead to little new learning. For example, in a Key Stage 1 lesson, the most able pupils spent too long on a simple cutting and sticking task.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- Behaviour in class and around the school is nearly always good. Unpleasant moments are blissfully rare. A very large majority of parents say that the school makes sure its pupils are well behaved.
- A group of pupils talked confidently and politely to a member of the inspection team. They explained what a friendly school this is and how they enjoy helping each other. They said that if they were worried about anything they knew who to go to and were confident that their worries would be sorted out. They showed a good awareness of situations that could be unsafe, such as when using computers to communicate with other people. Observations throughout the inspection fully support pupils' and parents' positive views.
- Attendance is broadly average. Many pupils have 100% attendance this term. In such a small school any absence has a big impact on overall figures. Pupils are very rarely late for school and between lessons they are quick to reorganise so as not to waste time. This factor coupled with their good behaviour, means that teachers can concentrate on teaching rather than managing behaviour and this helps promote faster progress.
- Attitudes towards learning are usually good but there are occasions when the most able pupils in particular do not ask more promptly for harder work when they are finding a task too easy. There are also times when pupils who are finding work a bit too hard go quiet rather than asking for help.

The leadership and management

are good

- The headteacher leads the school well. Leaders, managers, staff and governors share a strong desire to keep making this school better and are working effectively to achieve that aim. Parents appreciate this determination.
- The strong focus on improving teaching is paying dividends. Pupils' progress is speeding up and standards are rising. There are no middle leaders but the two teachers who take on the responsibility for developing different parts of the curriculum complete this task well.
- The main barrier to earlier improvement was that until 2012 not enough was being done to monitor teaching and learning. Weaknesses that were becoming evident were not being addressed and standards fell. There is now an extensive and effective programme of checking on teachers' performance and matching areas in need of development to a good programme of training.
- Effective links with other schools in the consortium have extended into a good initiative whereby senior staff from each school check the quality of teaching and learning in each other's schools; thus giving a very valuable second opinion.
- The headteacher is set clear targets for improvement by the governing body with support from the local authority. These targets are very specific and have easily measured outcomes. The same precision is not always seen in teachers' targets for improvement.
- The curriculum is good. Pupils enjoy the variety of experiences they get in and out of the classroom. In lessons there is a good focus on promoting numeracy and literacy. At other times, a wide range of stimulating activities promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- The local authority has offered much needed support in the past. It has contributed to the resolution of budgetary issues and to the monitoring and evaluation of teaching. Now that the school is getting so much better at doing these things for itself the role of the local authority is diminishing.

■ The governance of the school:

- Since the last inspection, governance has been transformed from being a relative weakness to being a strength. Governors are playing an active part in checking for themselves how well the school is performing and they have got much better at getting the headteacher to explain things that either need celebrating or that could cause concern. They are good at focussing their attention on the school improvement targets that they agree with the headteacher and know about the quality of teaching and individual teacher's performance. Individual governors participate in regular training, often offered by the local authority. Significant parts of this training relate to the safeguarding and protection of pupils, including the safe recruitment of staff. Along with the headteacher, governors make sure that statutory requirements for the safeguarding of children are met. With the necessity of reducing the deficit in the budget, governors have taken a keen interest in making sure that teachers' salaries reflect their responsibilities and the effectiveness with which they are carried out.

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	112332
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	412285

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	45
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Helen Norris
Headteacher	Andrew May
Date of previous school inspection	20 January 2010
Telephone number	01697 320632
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