

St Michael-in-the-Hamlet Community Primary School

Neilson Road, Aigburth, Liverpool, L17 7BA

Inspection dates 10–11 June 2014

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		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils throughout the school make good progress and achieve well. Standards in English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 have risen and are currently above average.
- Teaching is good. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning because their knowledge of both the pupils and the subjects they teach is strong.
- The school supports pupils who need extra help in learning well and these pupils make good progress.
- Pupils enjoy their learning because they are valued by all staff as unique individuals. The leadership team has brought about a caring and supportive culture where the aim for high achievement is shared by the whole-school community.
- Pupils' outstanding attitudes to learning, their behaviour around the school and the way that they are kept safe contribute well to the life of this thriving school.
- The wide range of trips, visits and additional activities provided by the school help to broaden pupils' horizons and provide extra interest and excitement about learning.
- Governance of the school is strong and effective. They support school leaders in setting high expectations that are raising pupils' achievement. Teaching is checked and swift action taken so that it is improving.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school.
- Partnerships within the local cluster of schools help to accelerate pupils' progress.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some teaching does not ensure that the most able pupils are set hard enough work so that they make the best possible progress.
- Although marking has improved, it is not always helpful in showing pupils what they need to do next to improve their work.
- Presentation of pupils work is not consistently good throughout the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 20 lessons and part-lessons during the inspection. Three lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Meetings took place with pupils, staff, parents and members of the governing body. There were also discussions with a representative from the local authority.
- Also taken into account were 27 responses from parents via the online questionnaire (Parent View), as well as questionnaires completed by members of staff.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and examined a wide range of documentation that included: national assessment data and the school's own assessments; samples of pupils' work; local authority reports; the school's own view of its work; curriculum information; minutes from governing body meetings; and safeguarding documents.

Inspection team

Gillian Hunter, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Maureen Coleman

Additional Inspector

Peter Martin

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is a larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for support through the pupil premium funding is above the national average. The pupil premium is funding to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is below the national average. The proportion supported by school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below average, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The school meets the current floor standard, which is the minimum government expectation for pupils' attainment and progress at the end of Year 6.
- The school has an additional resource base unit to support pupils with identified additional and sometimes complex learning needs. The unit currently supports pupils from within the school.
- There is a breakfast club that is funded and run by the school. The after-school club is operated by a third-party provider.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and raise achievement by:
 - making sure teaching always challenges the most able pupils in all year groups so they learn at a rapid rate and reach the highest levels of which they are capable
 - making sure that the systems for marking pupils' work are consistent in all classes so pupils gain a clear understanding of what they need to improve and have time to respond to teachers' written comments
 - improving consistently the quality of presentation of pupils' work in all books.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children enter Nursery with abilities below what are typical for their age. Good teaching and exciting activities lead to good progress. By the end of their Reception Year the proportion of children reaching a good level of development in all areas of their learning is in line with the national average.
- Pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2. There has been a rising trend in achievement. Effective teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) has improved steadily the results of the screening check in Year 1, which are now above average. Pupils read confidently by the end of Year 2. They read both at home and at school, enjoy books and achieve well. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 were in line with the national average in 2013, although the proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 3 did not meet the national average. Current assessments show that although standards remain broadly average pupils are on track to improve on last year's performance.
- Standards and progress at the end of Year 6 also show an improving picture. Standards were in line with the national average in 2013 and are rising. In the current year, progress in Year 6, as in other classes, has been more rapid. The work in pupils' books and the school's assessments show Year 6 pupils to be well on track to reach above-average standards in reading, writing and mathematics with more on target to reach the highest Level 6 than in 2013.
- Reading is taught well and pupils in Year 6 read fluently and enjoy a good variety of authors. They read for pleasure and research. Writing is imaginative and interesting to read although it is not always presented neatly. The highest level pupils in mathematics are very skilful in applying their skills to solve a range of difficult problems.
- The most able pupils in Year 6 are challenged and currently overall progress is good. However, teaching in other year groups is not fully effective in ensuring that activities take enough account of what the most able pupils have already achieved and so they make less progress than they might otherwise do.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress from their starting points and, as a result, they achieve in line with other pupils in the school.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress. Their learning is planned carefully so that the knowledge and skills they most need are boosted at a good pace. The inclusion manager, who takes responsibility for these pupils' learning, is very knowledgeable about how to help them. Skilful support staff, including those in the resource base unit, are very sensitive to pupils' particular needs and this helps them to make good progress.
- Pupils in the school who are supported by pupil premium funding, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, make at least good progress and achieve well. Analysis of their current progress shows almost no differences in the attainment between these pupils and other pupils in the school. There is regular discussion between the headteacher and governors about the impact of pupil premium spending, so that pupils who are supported by the funding continue to achieve their best. Senior leaders leave no stone unturned in the way that the group's progress is checked to secure the right provision for them. This reflects the effective promotion of equality of opportunity for all pupils.

The quality of teaching is good

- Effective checking on pupils' progress is one of the many strengths in the good-quality teaching. Progress is reviewed every eight weeks and what pupils should be aiming to learn across the year is also checked. Pupils' ongoing achievement in reading, writing and mathematics is recorded systematically. Additional support for individual pupils who are falling behind helps them to catch up.
- Work meets different abilities and makes pupils think hard. In an effective Year 3 English lesson,

for example, sharp questioning and high expectations enabled pupils to think of alternative ways to phrase and construct sentences. All pupils were challenged and made good progress. While all teachers provide work for different ability groups, sometimes the work is too easy for the most able pupils. This prevents some from reaching the higher levels because they often only get to the harder work after they have completed similar tasks to those of other pupils.

- Teachers have good subject knowledge especially in English and mathematics. This leads to the skilful use of questions to check that pupils understand their work and have sufficient time to practise new skills. Pupils are keen to answer questions and have the confidence to ask if they are unsure of something.
- Pupils produce a good amount of work; however, the expectations of the quality of presentation are not consistent in all classes and books.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work well as a team, including in the resource base. Adults know the pupils well and provide good support for their particular needs. They check that pupils understand the work and make sure that they do not do the tasks for them, but allow them to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. This contributes successfully to improving progress.
- The quality of marking of pupils' work has improved since the previous inspection but it is not always made clear to pupils how to improve. Pupils do not always learn from their mistakes because they do not have the opportunity to respond to points made by their teachers.
- An overwhelming number of parents feel that teaching is good and that pupils make good progress in lessons.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils love learning and endeavour to do their very best whether working by themselves or with friends in lessons. These exemplary attitudes to learning are evident in all classes and enable pupils to make good progress in all subjects.
- Pupils are exceedingly friendly, polite and courteous to each other, staff and visitors. Pupils of all ages play together happily and safely on the playground and staff join in with playground games.
- Excellent relationships between adults and pupils are evident in the whole school. This creates a harmonious atmosphere in which pupils take responsibility for supporting and encouraging one another.
- Pupils take pride in what they do whether representing others on the school council, acting as 'buddies', or taking part in school and community events.
- In class, pupils are very keen and excited to learn and all staff are skilled in using different ways to keep pupils engaged and fully focused on their learning.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils report there is no bullying in school and well-kept school records support this view. Misbehaviour of any form, including name-calling, is extremely rare and swiftly tackled; because of this pupils are confident that adults will help them when needed.
- The school places high priority on keeping pupils safe, and this pervades the curriculum. Pupils in all year groups understand how to keep safe when using computers because they receive regular guidance and support on cyber bullying. The impact of this is frequently reviewed with pupils.
- Pupils arrive at school on time every morning excited by the challenges that await them.
- Attendance has improved and is in line with the national average. School leaders have tackled previous low attendance effectively. This helps pupils make good progress. The number of pupils who are absent persistently is very low and has improved significantly since the previous inspection. The breakfast club is also used to encourage potential absentees to attend well.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher leads the school well with an outstanding determination that the school will continue to improve. She is accurate in her judgements about how well pupils are doing and on the quality of teaching. All staff and governors are highly ambitious for the school and share a commitment to driving standards and achievement up further.
- Senior leaders, supported by the governors, have created effective systems of communication between all staff, including support staff. As a result all share what they need to do to further raise standards. Links with the resource unit are effective so that the needs of these pupils are fully met.
- The monitoring of teaching is diligent and effectively identifies aspects that need attention. Plans are put in place to support teachers where needed. The expectation of good and better teaching is measured rigorously through the Teachers' Standards. Teachers know that financial reward is linked to classroom performance. There remain some aspects that need further development, including the quality of teachers' marking, which, although improved, varies and at times is not as effective as it could be.
- Checking on pupils' progress is detailed and accurate. Support is targeted where it is most needed. Information about the quality of teaching and pupils' progress is used well to set priorities and clear actions for the school. These are followed through by all and are effective in raising attainment.
- All leaders are clear of their responsibilities for leading on improvement in teaching and learning. Middle leaders carry out effectively their responsibility for leading improvement in subjects. They work well to raise attainment alongside maintaining a balanced curriculum for pupils to enjoy.
- The well-thought-out curriculum has a good selection of activities to enrich pupils' learning and broaden their personal horizons. It is extended by many additional activities, such as residential trips for outdoor pursuits, theatre visits and classes for both parents and pupils.
- The wide range of sports activities provided is especially popular with pupils. There is a good take-up of sports and pupils do well in them. Pupils' health and well-being are enhanced by the school's thoughtful use of the primary schools sport funding. Less-active pupils are encouraged to take up more sport, and physical education teaching skills are improved.
- There has been light touch support from the local authority representative who has kept a check on the school's progress and is confident in leaders' ability to continue the path of improvement.

The governance of the school:

- Governors review data and have a very good understanding of the progress pupils make. They check that the pupil premium is spent wisely and these pupils make good progress. Governors have a wide range of skills and experience which they use fully to benefit the school and all its pupils.
- They are committed to their own development and have commissioned their own review to evaluate their effectiveness and swiftly acted upon its advice. As a result they offer more challenge and support to the headteacher.
- Governors play an active role in evaluating the school and planning for improvement. They monitor the quality of teaching and make sure the pay policy reflects how better teachers will be rewarded financially. They know what to do in the event of any underperformance.
- The governing body has a clear programme of policy review and it makes sure that all statutory requirements relating to safeguarding are met.

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	133330
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	443948

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	471
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Amanda Patmore
Headteacher	Ruth Town
Date of previous school inspection	27 April 2011
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