

St Michael's Church of England First School

Watery Lane, Minehead, Somerset, TA24 5NY

Inspection dates

11–12 June 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 make good progress and achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching across the school is consistently good, and some is outstanding.
- Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage where they are very well taught and supported.
- Pupils learn to read successfully because phonics (the sounds letters make) is taught well.
- Pupils enjoy their learning because teachers plan interesting lessons, activities and experiences for them.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Pupils enjoy school and feel safe.
- The school has a warm and caring family atmosphere where each pupil is valued as an individual.
- Strong leadership from the headteacher has led to a continuous process of improvement.
- Leaders' robust checks on the quality of teaching have assured its good quality. Pupils' progress is checked very thoroughly and quick action taken to ensure all maintain their good progress.
- Governors support the school well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Teaching is not yet outstanding. Not all teachers encourage pupils to discuss their learning, or to assess their own work and that of classmates. Teachers' marking, while good in English, is not so helpful in other subjects. Teaching assistants are not always directed effectively to help pupils to learn.
- School leaders do not plan sufficient opportunities for pupils to use and apply their skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) across different subjects.
- A few pupils do not attend school regularly enough.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 11 lessons or part-lessons, three of which were joint observations with the headteacher.
- The inspector attended an assembly, visited the after-school club, listened to pupils read and looked at pupils' work.
- The inspector spoke to a number of parents and carers informally, and considered the 19 responses to the online parental questionnaire, Parent View. He also took into account the results of the school's own recent larger survey of parents' and carers' views, and the 25 staff questionnaires received.
- Meetings were held with staff and school leaders. The inspector met with a group of pupils, and spoke to a number of pupils informally at break and lunchtimes. He met with members of the governing body and spoke on the telephone with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector looked at a number of school documents including plans for improvement, information on pupils' progress and nationally published results. He looked at records of pupils' behaviour and attendance, and at policies and procedures to ensure pupils' safety.

Inspection team

Mike Phipps, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Michael's is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported through school action is higher than average. The proportion who are supported through school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is lower than average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is broadly in line with the national average. The pupil premium is the additional government funding provided for children in local authority care, those known to be eligible for free school meals and children from forces families. Almost all supported children in this school are those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school is part of the Exmoor Coast Federation, which includes five other local first schools and a middle school.
- The school runs an after-school club each day, which was included in this inspection.
- A privately-run pre-school setting operates on the same site. It is separately inspected, so was not included in this inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching to ensure pupils' achievement rises to outstanding by:
 - giving pupils more chances to discuss their learning in lessons so they can explain and develop their thinking
 - giving pupils more opportunities to assess their own work and that of their classmates, so they are clear about how they can improve their work
 - making sure that teachers' marking in all subjects is as helpful as it is in English in showing pupils how to improve their work
 - improving some teachers' directions to teaching assistants to ensure they do more to help pupils to learn, especially when the teacher is talking to the whole class.
- Plan more frequent opportunities for pupils to use and apply their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across different subjects.
- Take more effective action to work with the few parents and carers who do not send their children to school regularly.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- From starting points that are often very low when they enter the school, pupils make good progress and achieve well by the time they leave at the end of Year 4.
- Lesson observations, listening to pupils read and checks of pupils' work made by the inspector confirm that pupils are making good progress in all subjects and year groups.
- Children get off to a good start in the Reception Year because teachers plan a wide variety of activities that encourage and interest children in their learning. By the end of Year 2, although progress of all pupils is good, and standards in reading, writing and mathematics have risen well, they are still below average.
- The good progress pupils make throughout the school ensures that by the time pupils leave the school at the end of Year 4 they have caught up with the standards that are in line with their age.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make similar progress to that of other pupils, as do pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language. This is because the additional help which is readily available ensures these groups of pupils make the same rates of progress as their peers.
- Pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals also do well. Extra funds from the pupil premium have been spent on extra support in classrooms, on nurture group support for pupils with social and emotional needs, and on subsidised places on residential trips and clubs. Supported pupils make progress in line with other pupils in the school. Attainment for these pupils in the Key Stage 1 teacher assessments in 2012 was broadly the same as for others in their class.
- Writing skills develop well. Older children have a range of writing experiences in different subjects, though these opportunities are not planned systematically. Pupils are taught to read successfully. Pupils use their knowledge of phonics (the sounds that letters make) to work out unfamiliar words. Pupils enjoy reading and by Year 4 they talk with enthusiasm about their favourite books and authors.
- In mathematics, pupils enjoy calculation, but do not have enough planned chances to use and apply their numeracy skills in different subjects to link their mathematical learning to what might be encountered in real life.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The consistently good teaching is characterised by warm and friendly relationships which develop in pupils a lasting eagerness to learn.
- Teachers know individual pupils well, and they take account of pupils' starting points and needs when planning lessons. This enables disabled pupils and those with special educational needs to be well taught, as well as other pupils, including the more able. For example, in a mathematics lesson, Year 4 pupils made good progress in handling money because tasks were very closely matched to pupils' abilities.
- Teaching is particularly strong in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where some is outstanding. There is a wide range of activities and resources for children to choose from. The children have many opportunities to learn by exploring and finding out for themselves. This builds their confidence and independence.
- Phonics is taught well through regular, ability-matched sessions that enable pupils to make good progress in reading and writing.
- Teachers plan lessons with creativity and imagination. In a mathematics lesson, for instance, Year 2 pupils made good progress in adding two-digit numbers because the teacher linked the learning to the class topic on rainforests. This link with a familiar topic helped pupils to

understand the mathematical method more easily.

- Teachers' marking in pupils' English books is detailed and helpful. It gives pupils a clear idea of how to improve their work. Marking in other subjects gives less clear advice. There are relatively few opportunities for pupils to assess their own work or that of their classmates. This means some pupils are not always clear how to improve their work.
- Teaching assistants are not always used effectively to help pupils to learn, particularly at the start of lessons when teachers are talking to the whole class. Opportunities were missed, for example in a Key Stage 2 science lesson, for teaching assistants to work with groups of pupils to explain what they would be doing in the lesson.
- There are too few opportunities for pupils to discuss their learning, so they can explain their thinking and develop their language skills. In a Key Stage 2 English lesson, for example, pupils spent too long listening to the teacher, so there was not enough time for them to talk and think for themselves how to do the next task.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils are well behaved in class and around school. They are polite and friendly, and look after each other. There is a calm and purposeful learning atmosphere in school.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. They enjoy learning because their lessons are interesting, and they want to do well. Pupils are keen to answer questions and offer opinions. They concentrate well on their work.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school because they are well looked after by teachers and other adults. They understand different types of bullying, and say that bullying in this school seldom happens. School records confirm this. Pupils are confident that any bullying would stop if they told an adult.
- Pupils with more challenging behaviour are managed well. Some pupils with particular social and emotional needs receive extra support in the school's nurture group, which provides effective help for pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable.
- Parents and carers agree that pupils behave well in school, are well looked after and feel safe. Staff also feel that pupils behave well.
- There have been no racist incidents or exclusions from school for many years.
- Most pupils attend regularly but a small proportion do not. A few parents and carers have not responded fully to the school's efforts to ensure all pupils attend regularly. As a result, pupils' attendance dipped in 2012 from a high previous level.

The leadership and management are good

- Strong leadership from the headteacher, accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and well-focused plans have led to continuous improvements in pupils' progress and the quality of teaching. This shows that the school is well placed to improve further.
- Systems for managing the performance of teachers are robust and are linked to their salary progression. Judgements are based on pupils' progress. There are good opportunities for teachers to develop their skills.
- The school has a warm, welcoming and caring family atmosphere in which each pupil feels valued as an individual and this enables them to do well.
- The headteacher checks each pupil's progress very carefully. She holds regular meetings with class teachers, who are held accountable for the progress of the pupils they teach. If any pupil falls behind, effective support is quickly given.
- The school's arrangements to keep its pupils safe meet legal requirements. Children are kept safe and receive good quality care in the after-school club.
- The good progress of all pupils and the extra support provided for any falling behind demonstrate the school's commitment to equality of opportunity and ensuring that discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.
- The school has very good relations with its parents and carers, who are highly supportive of the school. One parent or carer spoke for many in describing it as 'a very friendly school with a

family atmosphere'. It is working with the few whose children do not attend school regularly enough.

- The school receives appropriate light touch support from the local authority.
- The close links with local schools in the Exmoor Coast Federation bring good benefits to staff and pupils. For example, pupils visit each other's schools for joint ventures, including a joint pupil council, and staff benefit from joint training sessions.
- A number of clubs and activities help pupils to enjoy school. Pupils have many opportunities to take on positions of responsibility. Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is promoted well.
- The school's curriculum is good. Teachers plan interesting and enjoyable lessons based on different themes and topics, and the school provides a wide variety of experiences for its pupils. However, opportunities for pupils to use and apply their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across different subjects are not planned in detail.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body is ambitious for the school to improve further. Individual governors are linked to year groups, and visit the school regularly. They know what is happening in school, and understand its strengths and weaknesses. They contribute well to the school's self-evaluation, and lead reviews of specific areas of the work of the school. Governors have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and how teachers' performance is managed, and take part in decisions on teachers' pay. They oversee the school's budget well, and know, for example, how funds from the pupil premium are spent and the impact of this spending. They have a growing understanding of the performance of the school compared to other schools nationally, and are increasingly able to hold school leaders to account. They are keen to develop their skills, and several governors have recently undertaken further training.

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	123768
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	413372

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	139
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kate Atkins
Headteacher	Anna Boulton
Date of previous school inspection	11–12 March 2010
Telephone number	01643 702759
Fax number	01643 703280
Email address	office@st-michaels.somerset.sch.uk

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