

# INSPECTION REPORT

**ST. MICHAEL & ALL ANGELS CATHOLIC  
PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Wombwell Barnsley

LEA area : Barnsley

Unique reference number : 106641

Headteacher : Mr. F. Woulfe

Reporting inspector : Mrs. E. B. Camplin  
3586

Dates of inspection : 26<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> February 2001

Inspection number : 194082

Short inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and Junior School  
School category: Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided  
Age range of pupils: 4 to 11  
Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Stoneyford Road  
Wombwell  
Barnsley  
South Yorkshire

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs. R. C. Nugent

Date of previous inspection: 11<sup>th</sup> March 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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## **REPORT CONTENTS**

	<b>Page</b>
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>6</b>
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
 <b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>	
<b>WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>19</b>
 <b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	<b>20</b>

## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

St Michael and All Angels is a small Catholic primary school within the Yorkshire Diocese of Hallam. It is situated in Wombwell, a densely populated and relatively disadvantaged, though not ethnically diverse, urban district on the outskirts of Barnsley. Most pupils live locally. Approximately a third of the 130 pupils on roll come from Catholic families, and there is also a significant minority from the Traveller community. They add to the cultural diversity of the school whose pupils all have English as their home language. The percentage of children entitled to free school meals is above the national average, whilst attainment on entry has historically been low compared with a national sample of schools. This year, levels of achievement of rising five year olds match early learning expectations. Most of the 18 reception children have benefited from attending the 'Little Angels' playgroup that now meets at the school for five mornings each week. The inspection of this school included a detailed inspection of its provision for pupils with special educational needs. Two of the 28 pupils on the register have statements for significant physical or multi-sensory learning impairment. The remaining pupils have less complex individual learning difficulties. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is broadly in line with the national average for primary schools.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

This is an effective and improving school where strengths outweigh weaknesses. The pastoral leadership provided by the headteacher is strong. Overall, leadership and management are sound. At Key Stage 2 pupils' performance in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science is above the national average and they achieve highly when taking account of levels of attainment at Key Stage 1. Statutory assessment grades in English are excellent when compared with schools having similar socio-economic circumstances. At Key Stage 1 pupils achieve well in their reading and are confident in speaking, listening and in their use of number. However, writing is well below the national average. Teaching is very good in Years 5 and 6 and satisfactory overall. The school enables pupils to make very good progress between admission and leaving at Year 6 and is providing good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Standards achieved at Key Stage 2 are high compared with similar schools, especially in English. They reflect very good teaching at Years 5 and 6, and pupils' sustained effort and very good progress in their final two years at school.
- The headteacher provides strong pastoral leadership. He has gained the trust and confidence of parents, successfully managed the induction of newly qualified teachers, is developing a positive team spirit amongst staff and has formed an effective partnership with governors.
- The school promotes Christian values, positive attitudes to learning and good conduct. It enables pupils to develop very good personal relationships, self-confidence and the maturity to behave responsibly in and out of school.
- Recent initiatives to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs are helping to improve the quality of learning and raise standards.
- During a period of disruption, caused by building repairs, staff have worked particularly hard to ensure pupils' health and safety and to preserve the bright and welcoming quality of the learning environment.

#### **What could be improved**

- The school needs to strengthen efforts to raise standards in writing to the good levels achieved in reading, by improving the curriculum for children under six and the quality of writing tasks at Key Stage 1.
- Teachers need to manage time during group activities and at the end of lessons as effectively as time spent on discussion and instruction when lessons start.
- There is a need to develop more effective management systems and policies so that the headteacher, staff and governors can make the most of their time, energy and skills.

*The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.*

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Improvement since the last inspection in March 1997 has been satisfactory. The school has improved its schemes of work and managed the implementation of the literacy strategy very well. It has raised standards in English to high levels at Key Stage 2. Strengths in provision for pupils' moral and personal development and their care and welfare have been sustained. There are still inconsistencies in the quality of lesson planning and the rigour with which pupils' progress is assessed. Governors have still more to do to be fully effective in determining the school's future development.

### STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by eleven year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
English	B	C	A	A*
Mathematics	A	C	B	A
Science	C	C	C	B

**Key**

well above average    A

above average        B

average                C

below average        D

well below average   E

At Key Stage 2 the outcomes of statutory tests in core subjects are high. Pupils are exceeding the appropriate attainment targets set by the school. Their performance in English, compared with results in similar schools, is excellent and was in the top five per cent nationally in 2000. Progress at Years 5 and 6 is particularly rapid. Pupils with special educational needs, and from Traveller backgrounds, make considerable gains in relation to levels of achievement at the end of Key Stage 1. More able children also perform very well in speaking and listening, reading, writing, and in acquiring knowledge and understanding of problem solving in mathematics and science. At Key Stage 1 pupils' achievement in reading is high. It improved substantially in statutory assessment in 2000 compared with the previous two years. The same pupils' achievement in writing was poor in 2000 and reflected a lack of improvement between 1998 and 2000. The school is satisfactorily addressing this aspect of underachievement. Standards in the areas of learning for children under six, and in the core and foundation subjects at both key stages, were at least satisfactory. They were above average in English and mathematics in Year 6. They represent good levels of achievement compared with below-average levels of attainment on entry. There is still potential for children at reception to achieve higher standards in aspects of communication, language and literacy and, at Years 2 to 4, to improve their writing.

### PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils enjoy school, are interested when activities are stimulating, and are keen to succeed. Older juniors show obvious pride in their achievement.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is good or better in three-quarters of lessons. Pupils earn an excellent reputation for good conduct when out on educational visits.
Personal development and relationships	Good overall. Relationships amongst pupils are very good and lead to a harmonious atmosphere at work and play.

Attendance	Attendance is just satisfactory and punctuality is good. Unauthorised absence has declined but authorised absence has increased since the last inspection.
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## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 6 years	aged 6-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Good

*Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.*

Most teaching in the reception year to Year 4 is at least satisfactory in English, mathematics, other subjects and areas of learning. It enables pupils of five to nine years of age to make steady progress in all aspects of their learning. In Years 5 and 6 teaching is consistently good or better in English, mathematics, science, history and other subjects. It helps older juniors of all levels of prior attainment and from different backgrounds to learn at a rapid pace during their final two years at the school. These pupils work hard and make particularly good use of oral and writing skills. All teachers are increasingly effective in teaching literacy and numeracy. This has resulted in a significant improvement in the way pupils throughout the school make use of their reading and mental arithmetic skills. The teaching of writing is also improving at Key Stage 1 but teachers do not always make the best use of lesson time to advance pupils' knowledge or understanding of how well they are using literacy and numeracy skills. Overall, 92 per cent of teaching is satisfactory or better, 15 per cent is very good and eight per cent is unsatisfactory.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. The use of the National Literacy Strategy is increasingly effective. Community volunteers' involvement and educational visits enrich the curriculum but there are too few extra-curricular activities for pupils. Planning for classes of mixed-age and ability is inconsistent in quality.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. Since the autumn, the school has worked hard to meet the requirements of the special educational needs' Code of Practice.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Good overall. Highly effective ways of fostering moral and social development help pupils to develop very good relationships and a mature sense of responsibility. A strong emphasis on Catholic values benefits pupils. A broader interpretation of spiritual and cultural development is not as well planned.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Sound. The school is successful in providing a very safe learning environment, promoting good behaviour, and fostering parents' involvement in helping pupils with their learning targets. To further help pupils, it needs to improve assessment practice, staff knowledge of the child protection policy and pupils' attendance rates.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Sound overall. The headteacher provides very effective pastoral leadership and has developed informal communication systems between home and school well. Induction of new staff is good. The process of planning for future school development requires managing more systematically and with greater rigour.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory overall. Governors meet statutory requirements to set the school's aims and provide an appropriate curriculum for pupils. They have only recently been sufficiently involved in monitoring the quality of educational provision and standards.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The vision for future improvement is being developed and is based on sound knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Systems for monitoring and evaluating the school's performance and planning effective action need to be more effectively planned and managed.
The strategic use of resources	Financial administration is good and the school is making very effective use of special grants for building improvements and to improve provision for lower achieving pupils. Governors have a sound understanding of how to manage costs to achieve good quality educational services.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many feel the headteacher is very approachable and has made the school much more welcoming.</li> <li>• Many feel the school has high expectations of pupils to work hard, behave well and achieve their best.</li> <li>• Parents feel that rewards' systems work well.</li> <li>• Parents of pupils with special educational needs and from Traveller backgrounds are pleased they are being consulted about their children's progress and welfare.</li> <li>• Many parents are pleased that a Parents' Association has been established.</li> <li>• Parents are happy with the building improvements.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some parents would appreciate more guidance on how to help with homework and feel it should be more structured in some classes.</li> <li>• Some parents find some staff more approachable than others.</li> <li>• Some parents would like more leisure activities for children either at lunchtime or after school.</li> <li>• Parents of reception age children would like more written information about starting school and the content of the Foundation Stage curriculum.</li> <li>• Some parents think the size of junior classes should be reduced.</li> </ul>

The inspection team gave due consideration to parent views and agree with the positive points expressed and the areas for improvement though these will take careful thought and time to take effect. The school has been through an unsettling period and the emphasis until recently has, of necessity, been on maintaining rather than developing the partnership with parents. There is a need now for further consultation about how to make the most of the increasingly positive relationships between home and school so that the partnership will support children' learning and achievement.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

**Standards achieved at Key Stage 2 are high compared with similar schools, especially in English. They reflect very good teaching at Years 5 and 6, and pupils' sustained effort and very good progress in their final two years at school.**

1. Standards achieved at Key Stage 2 in 2000 in statutory tests and in current work at Year 6 are above average overall. They are high both in comparison with the school's Key Stage 1 results in 1996 and with schools that have a similar proportion of pupils who qualify for free school meals. Test results are particularly high in English. They are in the top five per cent of schools in similar contexts to St Michael's.
2. At the time of the last inspection, standards at both key stages were average in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Throughout the school pupils with special educational needs attained standards that reflected their capability. However, higher attaining pupils did not achieve as well as they should have done because they were not challenged enough in many of the activities provided for them. One of the key issues the school was asked to address was to ensure that pupils, especially juniors, received work that matched their different levels of attainment.
3. The action taken has been very effective in raising the achievement of pupils in their last two years of primary education. The school has successfully risen to the challenge of setting relevant improvement targets in English and mathematics. The Year 6 groups have been small and results have, as would be expected, varied slightly from year to year between 1997 and 2000. Overall, however, pupils' performance has improved at a rate that matches the national trend. Grades achieved not only reflect significant advances in English but also above-average standards and high achievement in mathematics, and the maintenance of average standards in science.
4. Careful implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies has proved to be a major factor in raising standards since the first inspection. Above-average standards are likely to be sustained this year. Despite a class size of 39, teaching and learning are very good and pupils in Years 5 and 6 are all working close to their capacity. It is impressive to see the energy and enthusiasm the teacher brings to the productive use of teaching time. Planning is thorough and expectations of pupils are rigorous but realistic. Activities are relevant, interesting and allow scope for pupils to work co-operatively as well as independently. Pupils, as a consequence, are highly motivated, and sustain interest, concentration and effort throughout lessons. They could not try harder irrespective of their levels of capability.
5. Examples of this successful teaching and learning at Year 5 and 6 are taken from a literacy, a numeracy and a history lesson. In the first, pupils used their speaking and listening, reading and writing skills very effectively. They were engaged in a well-managed exercise about zoos, considering arguments for and against keeping them open. They showed a mature understanding of this controversial issue, skill in orally sharing and then quickly jotting ideas about animal captivity. They moved rapidly on to reading extracts from their text books and drafting the first paragraph of a report. They read with expression, displayed a good knowledge of a reporting style of writing, and accuracy and variety in the use of sentence structure. In the history lesson, dialogue was equally effective as pupils discussed their views about the feelings the Aztecs of South America were likely to have experienced at the time of the Spanish invasion.

Children's knowledge and understanding of historical evidence was secure and the ability to empathise reflected growing maturity. In both lessons the teacher was helpfully encouraging and critical, whilst a classroom assistant unobtrusively, but effectively, supported pupils who required special help to persevere and complete their assigned tasks.

6. In numeracy, the teacher was extending pupils' understanding of area in the third lesson of a sequence of lessons on this aspect of mathematics. The main objective of the lesson was to consolidate understanding of how to calculate area by dissecting rectangles, and to learn how to use the formula  $l \times b$  for calculating the perimeter of a regular polygon. In a brisk start to the lesson pupils used table cards to show answers to multiples of 6, then individual pupils explained how they had worked out their answers. Group work was set to make the most of pupils' mathematical knowledge and confidence. The most able were challenged to use decimals to two places whilst lower attainers concentrated on practising how to deal with a half as expressed in percentages. Throughout the lesson the teacher encouraged each pupil to describe their working process as clearly as she knew they were capable of managing, and to use subject specific language. As the lesson ended, success was acknowledged and pupils were made very aware of their progress.

**The headteacher provides strong pastoral leadership. He has gained the trust and confidence of parents, successfully managed the induction of newly qualified teachers, is developing a positive team spirit amongst staff and has formed an effective partnership with governors.**

7. Governors appointed the present headteacher in September 1999. One of the governors' key objectives was to restore stability to the school, develop a new staff team and consolidate a traditional welcoming Catholic ethos.
8. The headteacher aimed from the start to get to know pupils and their families and to develop effective liaison between home and school. Two of his early decisions involved sending newsletters to parents each week and making sure he was accessible to them. The introduction of these communication methods has proved very popular. Parents feel comfortable with the headteacher and are confident of a welcoming reception from him. For example, one parent wrote on the back of the survey questionnaire, "The weekly newsletters keep parents well informed. I have found the headteacher to be very supportive of both the pupils and the parents in the year he has been there". Another wrote, "I feel that the school is being brought back into parish life which is very important for my child's education". A third said, "I feel very comfortable about approaching the headteacher with any problems or concerns as I trust he will deal with them swiftly". These three individual views supported those voiced at the official Parents' Meeting and at other meetings. The lay inspector received positive feedback from representatives of the local Traveller community, two parents of pupils with special educational needs, and parent representatives from the governing body. They confirmed a climate of mutual respect and trust, irrespective of their backgrounds and family circumstances.
9. In September 1999 the deputy headteacher returned to take responsibility for a class having been acting headteacher for five terms. In addition, two newly qualified teachers were just beginning their working careers and three new classroom assistants joined the school during that autumn term. This was a time when it was important to support new members of the team, re-allocate responsibilities and forge a team identity. Discussions with staff soon revealed they feel a sense of common purpose and are comfortable with each other. They speak positively about the effort the headteacher makes to include them in developing policies and making decisions.

Long-serving teachers feel valued as senior colleagues and the newly qualified teachers also find the headteacher sympathetic to their needs. They are happy with their induction into teaching and have received their statutory entitlement to a professional development programme. The headteacher is, for example, flexible in the way he manages his own time so that he can sometimes relieve them from class duties if they want to go on a course or make a visit to another school to observe good practice. In addition to attending courses they were also well supported by the two more experienced members of staff and by classroom assistants. Advice and support was there when they needed it. Now they are responding positively to their newly delegated subject responsibilities. They are confident they can succeed in an environment where good working relationships prevail.

10. Members of the governing body work closely with the headteacher. He meets regularly with the chair of governors and they have established a very good rapport and constructive partnership. They share a mutual respect and are able to debate their ideas about the future direction of the school in a critical manner. Every Thursday, the governor with responsibility for monitoring provision for special educational needs works with individual children or small groups. The leader of the 'Little Angels' playgroup is a parent representative and is encouraged to make suggestions about how best to develop effective liaison between the playgroup and the school. These links are having a beneficial impact upon the quality of the Early Years' provision. A very productive and recent outcome of the improved communication between home, school and governors has been the reconstitution of a Parents' Association. The aim is that it will be a forum for consultation about school policy and practices and not just a fund-raising organisation. Parents are keen for it to succeed.

**The school promotes Christian values, positive attitudes to learning and good conduct. It enables pupils to develop very good personal relationships, self-confidence and the maturity to behave responsibly in and out of school.**

11. Governors have devised a list of intentions that everyone at the school sets out to achieve in order to fulfil its mission statement. Top of the agenda is a commitment to "develop positive relationships showing gospel values in action, between all in the community". During the inspection there was plenty of evidence that the school is promoting pupils' personal development through consistent demonstration of these values. Observations of assemblies, playtimes, lunchtime and class lessons and a browse through school newsletters and copies of letters from and to pupils combine to exemplify the school's success. It is clear that pupils develop confidence in themselves and others and understand that the contribution they make to the school and the wider community is appreciated.
12. During assemblies moral themes such as friendship, love and forgiveness are explored through stories from the Bible and everyday life. Even the disruption caused by the current building works was used to good effect when the headteacher described his morning exchange of news with the foreman about the day's events. He explained how grateful he was to one workman who had helped him to deal with a potentially serious plumbing problem with leaking water. He related this to how children can be friends to each other. They demonstrate this friendship at all times of the day. In addition to working very well together in lessons, where behaviour is always friendly and co-operative, they support each other out of lessons.

At playtime, one small girl came to tell the teacher on duty that she was lonely. She was quickly helped to find a friend who was willing to spend time with her. Both played happily together for the remainder of breaktime. During lunchtimes, older pupils lent a cheerful hand to younger pupils as they ate their lunch and helped them to clear away afterwards.

13. Pupils earn high praise for their conduct, attitudes and good manners when they are out of school or receiving visitors at school. Last summer, for example, the oldest pupils went on a residential visit to Durham and they went to the Cathedral as part of their itinerary. They thoroughly enjoyed their tour from the Cathedral guide and everyone in the class wrote thank-you letters, voting her 'The best guide in Northumbria' and some sent her a 'Certificate of Merit'. She replied "I have to tell you that you were one of the best groups I have ever shown round the Cathedral because you were so ready to listen, look and ask questions. I was most impressed by your letters".
14. On another occasion, class 4 pupils took part in a Crucial Crew Day at Grimethorpe. The police organised the day and commented extremely favourably on the behaviour and attitude of the children. The police were particularly impressed with four boys who submitted their project to build a Prayer Garden at St Michael's Church.
15. Pupils' behaviour and response to school was recognised as a strength in 1997 and has been undeniably sustained since then.

**Recent initiatives to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs are helping to improve the quality of learning and raise standards.**

16. Since the autumn term 1999 the school has placed particular emphasis on providing additional support for children on the register of special educational needs. Most of these pupils were identified during the headteacher's first year in post. In consultation with the governors, a key decision was made to use part of a special grant from the government to obtain the services of a part-time teacher who would work for two days a week. This meant that each class would receive the equivalent of half a day a week of additional support. The school speedily made a judicious appointment, though it has, of necessity at present, to be on a supply basis.
17. The teacher has tackled her brief in a well-organised and systematic way and already her contribution is having a positive impact. In the period between November and March she has conducted a comprehensive needs' analysis for those pupils that teachers identified as having learning difficulties of some kind. Having diagnosed these, the next task was to set very specific and measurable individual targets for them. These are relevant and carefully monitored. Pupils are keen to participate in the variety of activities devised. Some benefit from games and simple exercises that increase their knowledge of letter sounds and blends, their ability to spell, and the confidence to write independently. Others receive help to develop their powers of listening and concentration with various subject skills, including the ability to apply mathematical knowledge to solve number problems. Assessment notes are recorded every week and are used to plan for the subsequent work. This monitoring ensures pupils' progress is steady, and in some cases is very good. One child in Year 2, for example, has moved from lacking secure knowledge of initial consonant and vowel sounds, to confidently building words with long and short vowel sounds and more complex vowel/consonant blends such as 'igh', and 'ould'.
18. Classroom assistants also play an important part in helping pupils on the register, in class and in withdrawal groups, during English lessons. They have attended special training courses and these have successfully added to their already established skills in encouraging pupils' interest in learning. They are making productive use of materials published in support of the National Literacy Strategy and it is likely that as a result more pupils will achieve the expected level 2 or 4 than predicted before the programme of support started.

19. Advice is sought termly from a special educational needs advisor from the local education authority. Working with the co-ordinator she has identified learning objectives for pupils with statements and has helped the school decide upon teaching and learning methods to meet them. These are proving constructive. Discussion with parents of these pupils revealed how pleased they are with their children's recent progress. They are now encouraged to meet with the classteacher once a week to review progress in meeting targets and to identify the next learning objectives. They appreciate this regular exchange of information and feel their views are valued. The school now needs to capitalise on the parent partnership by keeping notes of these discussions and encouraging parents to write comments on individual education plans, something they are not doing at present.
  
20. The school is ideally placed to make further improvements in provision. The deputy headteacher is undertaking, at her own expense, a master's degree in special educational needs and wants to make the best use of this qualification at school. Furthermore, a governor with designated responsibility for the oversight of the implementation of the special educational needs policy makes herself available every Thursday to observe, work with, or discuss pupils on the register. She is therefore very well informed about provision and its outcomes. She is able to report to the full governing body on the clear benefits of recent investment into additional human resources and professional development. It will be important for these recent initiatives to be sustained in order to ensure the school meets its aim to cater well for all its pupils.

**During a period of disruption caused by building repairs staff have worked particularly hard to ensure pupils' health and safety and to preserve the bright and welcoming quality of the learning environment.**

21. Since the Christmas holidays, the school has faced resolutely a particularly unusual challenge. It has managed the effects of a substantial building renovation programme and a simultaneous independent inspection. Despite all the extra work involved, the staff have concentrated on ensuring the safety and well-being of pupils in their care. In the first instance, all the building workers were required to go through police checking procedures to be sure that pupils were not put at risk from strangers. The school's security measures have been enforced, with visitors expected to sign in each day. Contractors have been vigilant in ensuring rubble and debris is kept away from pupils and vulnerable areas have been screened off. Teachers, classroom support staff and lunchtime supervisors have been well briefed about the building programme. They have kept pupils away from hazards and also worked together to move equipment and resources to places of safety, or temporary storage. The hall, stage and library are all areas that have been re-organised appropriately. As far as practically possible, the staff has ensured pupils' continuing access to the things they need to support learning.
  
22. Over and above these practical care and safety strategies, the school has prioritised preserving, as much as it can, a bright and inviting environment. This has ensured that pupils can still feel at home in familiar surroundings. The library has a very attractive display of pupils' art work in the style of Picasso, and some well-presented examples of junior pupils' poetry based on an appreciation of nature theme. Much effort has been expended making work in the infant classes stimulating, as so far they have been least disrupted by the renovations. Class 1 is an excellent example of how to inspire pupils and celebrate achievement through careful displays of work together with interactive word-processed captions of high quality. A map of the local area incorporates a very good emphasis on

matching and classifying as well as on mapping skills. This geography work has also led to children writing and recognising their own name and address. Class-made books hang in abundance from the walls including a delightful big folder entitled 'Welcome to Class 1'. There is also a colourful display about Victorian England, with artefacts attractively accessible to look at and touch, as well as pictures, photographs and posters about that period. The centrepiece, as far as the children are concerned, is the role-play area housing the big ship 'Explorer' and the 'Space Rocket'. They made absolutely sure an inspector sat in these to experience the thrill that they obviously experience in playing in them. It is a tribute to staff commitment that they are prepared to work so hard on pupils' behalf, even at times of great pressure.

## **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

**The school needs to strengthen efforts to raise standards in writing to the good levels achieved in reading, by improving the curriculum for children under six and the quality of writing tasks at Key Stage 1.**

23. Every year, the school receives information that enables it to compare its pupils' end of key stage test results with all schools nationally, schools with similar contexts, and other schools in its local education authority. When St Michael's Key Stage 1 data are carefully analysed, it is easy to identify pupils' growing competence and achievement in reading. Last year it was a significant strength. Just as crucially, the analysis highlights low achievement in writing. The inspection team took account of the fact that, in a small school, it is particularly important not to attach too much significance to one year's results. Inspectors looked at the pattern in the writing results over a four-year period. The trend did not show enough improvement. The data pointed to underachievement in writing. It was important for the team to establish the reasons for the significant differences and to establish whether results are likely to be better this year.
24. Inspectors sought to find out whether the school identifies the reasons for differences in pupils' performance, sets specific improvement targets, and plans effective remedial action. The minutes of a meeting between governors and the headteacher in December 2000 revealed that the school is beginning to analyse assessment information in a positive way. Together they have agreed targets that specifically focus on the need to raise standards of writing and especially to increase the percentage of seven year old and eleven year old pupils who reach the level above the expected levels 2 and 4 respectively. The aim is to ensure all pupils make appropriate progress and more able pupils, in particular, are effectively challenged and achieve their best possible performance.
25. There are encouraging signs that standards are rising in writing because teachers and support staff are conscientiously addressing underachievement. They have progressed beyond initial aims to improve spelling, punctuation, grammar, and handwriting. They still place appropriate emphasis on these skills but are now concentrating on ensuring pupils' motivation to practise and improve them.

Observation of literacy lessons, the scrutiny of teachers' medium-term plans and pupil records, and samples of pupils' work, provided good evidence of considerable progress this year in the variety of writing opportunities provided. This has definitely raised pupils' levels of motivation and the quality of their work. Teachers are capturing pupils' interest and their overall effort to achieve their best is predominantly good. Examples from work seen include recipes, shopping lists, class-made story books and dictionaries, diaries, names and addresses and police 'Wanted' posters.

26. Most tasks have as much appeal to girls as to boys and there is no significant difference in their achievement. This too is reassuring as the trend over the last three years shows boys' performance ahead of that of the girls. Tasks set at group-work time indicate that pupils who

are academically able are usually given tasks that require them to apply and extend their relatively advanced knowledge and skills. Middle and lower achievers have modified tasks, but these are still usually appropriately matched to the main focus of the lesson. One such example was the work Years 1 and 2 were doing on describing characters based on the repetitive, traditional style of a text called 'The Runaway Pizza'.

27. The main issues arising are either a lack of consistency in the quality of work set or insufficient attention to ensuring pupils make the very best use of group-work time. The choice of activity is very occasionally weak, then children lose interest and fail to demonstrate satisfactory achievement. Reception-age children, for example, have good phonic awareness. However, they failed to use their good knowledge of the sounds of letters and understanding of alphabetical order after reading a dictionary text sensibly together. This was because their subsequent activities lacked sufficient focus. The tasks set to meet objectives in the individual education plan of a child with special educational needs were unimaginative and therefore relatively unproductive. Whilst the classroom assistants were soundly briefed and their presence and support encouraged pupils, they could have been given more opportunity to use their initiative to devise relevant and more enjoyable activities.
28. At present, although leadership of English is appropriately delegated, the school lacks a sufficiently rigorous subject action plan. This should be produced as soon as possible to enable the co-ordinator to support colleagues effectively in eliminating weaknesses in teaching methods. To accelerate the pace of improvement it will be necessary to systematically observe lessons and evaluate the success of teaching strategies, especially in Classes 1 to 3. In addition to analysing Key Stage 1 test results, the school also needs to take equal account of pupils' achievement when they enter the reception class and build even more carefully on what children know and can do. The retention of samples of work that have been marked and assessed would help teachers to measure progress. Factors such as gender, age and the consequences of irregular attendance, should all be carefully evaluated. Finally, teachers should be given more opportunities to see and learn from the very effective practice in Years 5 and 6.

**Teachers need to manage time during group activities and at the end of lessons as effectively as time spent on discussion and instruction when lessons start.**

29. Lessons begin successfully. Time and again a brisk pace was noted. Teachers place plenty of emphasis on involving children in lively and productive dialogue. A high quality of questioning results in well-focused discussion that pupils enjoy and learn from very effectively. This can be exemplified in every class, in literacy, numeracy and foundation subjects such as history.
30. In Class 1, children were highly motivated at the prospect of making pancakes. This prompted lots of animated talk about the choice and quantity of pancake ingredients. Mental mathematics was thoroughly enjoyed as children counted to ten and back to zero, increasing their pace as they practised. Older infants in Class 2 were spellbound by the teacher's lively reading of 'The Runaway Pizza' and joined in with enthusiasm, displaying good reading skill and comprehension. They also responded enthusiastically to imaginative opportunities to practise and improve their skill in recognising odd and even numbers. In Class 3, the teacher put lots of effort into enabling pupils to understand what is meant by main, and subordinate, clauses in a sentence. She made this fun as she used humorous examples made from magnetic strips on the whiteboard. Pupils were willing volunteers to go up to the board and create their own funny sentences. Similarly, all the children were involved in halving and doubling two or three-digit numbers. There was sufficient challenge for the most and least able to make progress. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 worked very hard throughout history, English

and mathematics lessons, responding very well to the teachers' high expectations for sustained concentration and effort. The first report paragraph clearly demonstrates this fact.

31. In three out of the four classes, the brisk opening pace was not always sustained. During the middle of hour-long lessons pupils lost some of their motivation and uncertainty crept in. This was because, at times, teachers did not explain sufficiently well the purpose of the tasks and what was expected of the children. At other times, teachers did not make clear what the worksheet required before pupils began writing. As a result the pupils experienced difficulties in coping with potentially appropriate work. For example, one instance of a need to explain a worksheet more carefully was when more able pupils in Class 2 were asked to make 'Wanted' posters. An instruction to invent a 'description of the crime suspect' was understood but the next one, list some 'distinguishing features' perplexed the children. The teacher soon realised this and intervened to help them.
32. The importance of encouraging initiative and independence is also occasionally overlooked. In Years 3 and 4, it was noticed that some pupils finished their work before group-work time expired and waited for the teacher to tell them what to do to fill the remaining minutes. They could so easily have devised their own extension activity with a little forethought and clear direction from the teacher.
33. The period of the lesson that teachers most fail to capitalise upon is the last five or ten minutes. The work covered is usually soundly summarised. Nonetheless, there are many missed opportunities to involve pupils in their own rigorous evaluation of the nature and extent of their learning. Teachers rarely share their decisions of what pupils are ready to do next and they are not consistent in their use of praise to recognise effort and hard work. In Class 4, for example, pupils did not have the chance to evaluate the quality of their introductory paragraph to their report about animal captivity, or share how their personal experience of visits to a zoo influenced their views about them. Some of the youngest junior pupils were fidgety and inattentive as one pupil read multiple-clause sentences aloud to the class. Strategies such as advising pupils to listen just in case they were asked by the reader to suggest where the commas came, or to make up an alternative clause, would have focused their attention.
34. The very best lessons end in pupils being exhilarated by their success and achievement. After a practical word-building activity two lower-achieving groups received plenty of praise from their support assistant for their efforts to recognise letter patterns. In a science lesson, pupils at Key Stage 1 were so proud of themselves after they had found out which of two samples they had tested would make the best and second best umbrella for their classroom teddybear.

Affirmation and celebration of achievement, when clearly acknowledged by the teachers or classroom assistants, makes such a positive difference to pupils' perceptions of themselves, and is a feature of teaching and learning well worth monitoring. There are times when classroom assistants could contribute so much to giving feedback of this nature instead of being passive observers.

**There is a need to develop more effective management systems and policies so that the headteacher, staff and governors can make the most of their time, energy and skills.**

35. Overall, there is convincing evidence that the school's improvement since 1997 has been at least satisfactory, especially in the context of a 'five-term' period of acting headship. The key issue to resolve the difficulties of pupils missing lesson time was speedily resolved. The development of schemes of work has been satisfactory whilst the implementation of the

literacy strategy has been particularly effective at Key Stage 2. At Key Stage 1 teachers have raised standards in reading and are now addressing writing with increasing success. There has also been sound progress with action to improve pupils' independent learning and research skills, especially in the context of very large junior classes.

36. The collective commitment of the headteacher, staff and governors to working together for the good of the school is beyond doubt. Some action is already working well. However, some rather outdated policies and ineffective management systems are inhibiting the pace of change and improvement in some important aspects of the school's work.
37. The mission statement 'Working and sharing together' provides a sound rationale for the school's vision but its associated aims could be even better. For example, 'to develop a policy of pastoral care' could now be 'to sustain a high quality of pastoral care' as this is one of the school's strengths in provision. Intentions to attain good academic standards and celebrate personal achievement are not explicitly communicated. The aims have too many gaps or are too repetitive to enable governors to use them as indicators of the school's relative strengths and weaknesses.
38. The present School Development Plan does not clearly set out the vision for the future, being limited to plans for one year only. These concentrate usefully on improving features of teaching and learning but their implementation is not being monitored with sufficient rigour. Despite some improvements since the objectives were agreed, the quality of planning for subjects other than literacy and numeracy is still not consistently good enough. Medium or short-term plans do not always reflect the declared intention to set work that matches pupils' different levels of attainment or specify the range of resources to be made available to different groups pupils. They also omit details about assessment methods and teachers' evaluative comments about the success of lessons.
39. Success criteria in the School Development Plan are also weak. They do not include, for example, manageable methods for measuring how well the specific target to raise standards in writing is being met. This is a backward step from the content and rigour of the development plan from two years ago. The school has recognised the urgency of expanding the School Development Plan to make it a more useful management tool. Governors are soon to consider a thought-provoking document, produced by the headteacher, called 'Towards an Integrated Resource'. It should help them to be much more focused on strategic planning from 2001 onwards.
40. Roles and responsibilities are clearly and equitably delegated and teachers are getting to grips with targets they have set for themselves. The two teachers in their post-probationary year, for example, are taking advantage of local support networks to help them in their tasks of writing new policies for music, dance and the new Foundation Stage for pupils under six. Their achievement has been good. However, the headteacher and subject co-ordinators have yet to agree with sufficient clarity the procedures they will follow to review policies, monitor standards achieved in their subjects or aspects and systematically plan for improvement. They need to produce, at the very least, action plans for National Curriculum subjects, the Foundation Stage, special educational needs and provision for the more able.
41. The chair and vice-chair of governors are aware of the need to improve the Annual Report to Parents, the School Development Plan and the format of the report produced each term for governors by the headteacher. They accept parents' concern about high average class size, and want to reduce the burden on staff. Governors recognise the importance of establishing a cycle of policy review and the further consolidation of methods to help teachers develop as co-ordinators.

42. Governors have developed good financial control and administration systems. Together with staff they now need to take effective action to improve management systems and policies and ensure the most efficient and effective use of their collective expertise, skills and energy.

### **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

43. In order to meet its aims and increase effectiveness the school should now :-

1. Plan effectively to raise standards in writing at Key Stage 1 by :-
  - (a) improving the quality of the Foundation Stage curriculum so that children under six can make good progress in communication, language and literacy;
  - (b) achieving consistency in the quality and range of opportunities for writing at Key Stage 1;
  - (c) making more constructive use of assessment information to help identify future teaching objectives and provide evidence of progress.

*(paragraphs 27, 28)*

2. Improve the organisation and management of teaching and learning so that time spent on group activities and on discussion at the end of lessons is consistently productive and worthwhile.

*(paragraphs (31 - 34)*

3. Develop effective systems for, and ensure more rigorous management of :-
  - (a) monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in each class;
  - (b) the identification of main strengths and weaknesses in standards in each subject;
  - (c) deciding on key aims and objectives for future school development;
  - (d) planning action for change and improvement;
  - (e) judging progress and celebrating success.

*(paragraphs (38 - 42)*

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	13
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	23

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	15	31	46	8	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)		130
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals		20

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		28

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	12
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	5

### Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	8.0
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	0.5

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Some data relating to boys and girls at both key stages is omitted from these numerical tables because the number in each gender group is fewer than ten. This complies with DfEE Circulars 7/99 & 8/99.

### **Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1**

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2000			18

<b>National Curriculum Test/Task Results</b>		<b>Reading</b>	<b>Writing</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys			
	Girls			
	Total	17	12	15
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	94 (70)	67 (60)	83 (80)
	National	84 (82)	85 (83)	90 (87)

<b>Teachers' Assessments</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys			
	Girls			
	Total	12	13	14
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	67 (65)	72 (70)	78 (55)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

### **Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2**

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2000			10

<b>National Curriculum Test/Task Results</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys			
	Girls			
	Total	8	9	10
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	80 (73)	90 (93)	100 (93)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

<b>Teachers' Assessments</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys			
	Girls			
	Total	7	8	8
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	70 (80)	80 (87)	80 (100)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	80 (75)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.



### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	
Indian	
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	
White	111
Any other minority ethnic group	

*This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.*

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups		

*This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.*

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	26
Average class size	32.50

#### **Education support staff: YR – Y6**

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	100

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1999
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	£
Total income	221254
Total expenditure	209239
Expenditure per pupil	1759
Balance brought forward from previous year	(3341)
Balance carried forward to next year	8674

## **Results of the survey of parents and carers**

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	125
Number of questionnaires returned	82

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	54	38	6	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	40	57	1	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	52	42	2	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	27	54	16	1	2
The teaching is good.	52	43	1	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	39	39	17	4	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	63	30	4	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	60	37	2	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	49	35	11	2	2
The school is well led and managed.	65	34	0	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	48	42	6	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	25	32	20	11	12

### **Other issues raised by parents**

The high number of pupils in each junior class concerned parents.