

INSPECTION REPORT

MICHAELCHURCH ESCLEY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Michaelchurch Escley, Hereford

LEA area: Herefordshire

Unique reference number: 116714

Headteacher: Mrs C Gething

Reporting inspector: Mrs M Gough
22361

Dates of inspection: 28th – 30th January 2003

Inspection number: 247674

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 category: Community

Age range of pupils: 4 - 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Michaelchurch Escley
Hereford

Postcode: HR2 0PT

Telephone number: 01981 510208

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr C J Saville

Date of previous inspection: November 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is situated in one of the most remote rural areas of Herefordshire in the small village of Michaelchurch Escley, which is near to the market town of Hereford. There are currently fifty eight pupils on roll between the ages of four and eleven. Almost all pupils are of white ethnicity, and only one child has English as an additional language. Eleven pupils have special educational needs, including two who have statements. This represents 19% of the school population and is about average. No pupils have free school meals. This is very low in relation to the national average. The attainment of the children when they start school varies from year to year but is generally average. However, some children have limited spoken language skills when they start school and some have only a very limited range of 'life experiences'. Levels of pupil mobility are average. Because of the extreme rural isolation of the school, it was selected to be part of the Herefordshire Action Zone, the first rural Education Action Zone. This project is in its fifth and final year.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school that has significant strengths in some areas of its work, and no major weaknesses. Pupils of all ages achieve well in relation to their age and ability, and make good progress in English and mathematics, and very good progress in science, and in terms of their spoken language. Teaching is good throughout the school and some very good teaching was seen during the inspection. Pupils of all ages have very positive attitudes to learning, and their behaviour is good overall. The school is very well led by the headteacher, who enjoys the full support of a hard-working and committed staff, and a loyal Governing Body. The school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils of all ages and abilities make good progress from their very different starting points.
- Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. Pupils have very positive attitudes to work, and their behaviour is good.
- The school provides a good curriculum for pupils of all ages, and makes a good effort to enrich the pupils' learning. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- The school makes very good use of assessment to monitor and evaluate the pupils' progress and attainment.
- The quality of the headteacher's leadership and management is very good, and that of the Governing Body is good.

What could be improved

- The presentation of the work of some pupils is untidy. Too much use is made of worksheets as a means of recording.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in November 1997, and the rate of improvement since that time has been very good overall. Since the last inspection there has been an almost complete change in the teaching staff, and a new headteacher has been appointed. Almost all of the issues raised in the last report have been fully addressed. There has been very good improvement in the school's assessment procedures, and in the development of the

curriculum, and good improvement in monitoring and evaluating the school's work. The school now pays good attention to the teaching of spelling and handwriting, but there is more to be done to ensure that all pupils take pride in the presentation of their written work and transfer the skills they learn in handwriting lessons to their work in other areas. The school has responded very well to national and local initiatives, and has benefited greatly from its participation in the Education Action Zone, which is now in its fifth and final year. Because of the strong commitment of the staff, headteacher and Governing Body, the school is very well placed for further improvement.

STANDARDS

Because of the small number of pupils entered for the end of key stage national tests, it is unreliable and unhelpful to draw comparisons between the school's results and the national results, or to compare the school's performance with that of similar schools. The test results for both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 vary quite significantly from year to year depending on the natural ability of the pupils within the group. For example, of the 2002 Year 6 group, five of the nine pupils had special educational needs, and this naturally affected the overall results.

The attainment of the children when they join the Reception class is very variable, and for the current year is average overall. Reception children of all abilities make good progress overall, and very good progress in developing spoken language, personal, social and emotional skills, and in their knowledge and understanding of the world.

As they move through Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, pupils make good progress in English and mathematics, and very good progress in science. Pupils' progress is enhanced by good teaching, and the pupils' own very positive attitudes to learning. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good, enabling them to make similar progress to their classmates in class, and good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans. Higher attaining pupils are well catered for, and are appropriately challenged and stretched in their learning. This is very evident in mathematics, where a small number of pupils regularly attain the very high Level 6 in the national tests, and in science where the vast majority of pupils are working at the higher Level 5 by the end of Key Stage 2. Pupils with English as an additional language receive good levels of support enabling them to make good progress. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils of all ages have very positive attitudes to work and to school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. The vast majority of pupils are well behaved both in and out of the classroom. They are polite, friendly and helpful.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils have very good levels of confidence and independence, and are highly motivated. They get on very well with one another and with the adults with whom they come into daily contact.
Attendance	Very good. Well above the national average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	good	good	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.

Teaching is good throughout the school and this means that pupils of all ages and abilities make good progress. A positive feature of the teaching is the way in which all teachers cater for the wide mix of ages and abilities in each class. Very good use is made of classroom assistants and learning support assistants who work with individuals and groups of pupils, and who are very well directed by the classteachers. Pupils with special educational needs and higher attaining pupils are well supported and benefit from taking part in open-ended activities that enable them to work at their own level. Teachers manage pupils very well and make very good use of rewards and praise to promote good behaviour and positive attitudes to work. In lessons, there is a good mix of activities that are directed by the teacher and those that the pupils organise for themselves, and pupils are encouraged to be independent and to take responsibility for aspects of their own learning. Lessons usually move at a good pace, and where the best teaching occurs, pupils are encouraged to evaluate their own learning and that of their classmates.

Basic skills of literacy and numeracy are well taught throughout the school, although the use of worksheets as a means of recording reduces the pupils' opportunities for writing. The teaching of spoken language is a particular priority in the Reception class, where children often have only a limited vocabulary when they start school. The Reception teacher and classroom assistants are very effective in the way in which they promote speaking and listening skills, and they provide very good models of language. In Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 teachers effectively extend the pupils' spoken language through the introduction of subject specific vocabulary which pupils use well to express their ideas clearly. Science is very well taught in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. There is a strong emphasis on pupils learning through practical experience, and staff promote very high levels of independence when they set challenging tasks which enable the pupils to pursue their own lines of enquiry.

The quality of pupils' learning is good overall. Pupils of all ages work hard and productively and produce good amounts of work. They take a good interest in all that they do, and particularly enjoy taking part in practical activities. Pupils are often very highly motivated and show very good levels of co-operation when they work on shared tasks. However, they do not always take enough pride in the presentation of written work, especially when they are asked to complete worksheets.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The school provides a good curriculum for pupils of all ages that is effectively enhanced by a good range of visits and visiting speakers.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils with special educational needs receive good levels of additional support in class and this enables them to make good progress towards their individual targets.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. The school makes good provision for the very small number of pupils who have English as an additional language and this ensures that they can take a full and active part in all activities.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. The school caters well for the pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and promotes very positive values and attitudes. The school works hard to enhance the pupils' cultural awareness through visits, and to raise their awareness of the 'wider world'.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well. Child protection procedures are well understood by all staff and the headteacher and one other member of staff have had appropriate and recent training. The school is very effective in the way in which it promotes equality of opportunity, and has a racial equality policy which is fully reflected in practice. The school does not have disabled access, and this is an ongoing area of development. Very good use is made of assessment to track pupils' attainment and progress and to highlight strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The school is very well led and managed. The School Improvement Plan is an excellent vehicle for ensuring the school's continued development. There is an excellent team spirit, and staff amicably share responsibility for curriculum development.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors fulfil their statutory duties and support the school well. They are very well informed about life in the school through the headteacher's excellent termly reports.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The school is very effective in the way in which it monitors and evaluates its performance. The process of classroom monitoring is well established and is effective in moving the school forward. The school understands and applies the principles of best value when measuring its progress.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The school uses its available funding well to secure educational development. The school employs a generous number of classroom assistants, and they are very well deployed and have a very positive impact on the pupils' progress.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents agree that their children like coming to school. • Parents believe that the quality of teaching is good and that their children make good progress. • Parents of pupils with special educational needs are pleased with the support and guidance their children receive. • Parents are pleased with the quality of the leadership and management of the headteacher. • Parents agree that the school has an open-door policy and that they are welcomed by the school when they visit. • Parents agree that behaviour in the school is good, and understand the school's expectations of them and their children as outlined in the 'Charter of Values'. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A few parents would like more activities outside lessons.

There are very high levels of parental satisfaction. The inspection findings fully reflect the parents' positive views of the school. Although the school offers few extra-curricular activities there are good reasons for this. The lunchtimes are very short, and there is not enough time for children to eat their lunch and to attend additional activities. The vast majority of pupils are transported to school by minibus and because the school is the first 'pick-up' point, it is difficult to arrange activities after school. The school does however provide a good range of educational visits for the pupils which enhances their learning and personal development.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Pupils of all ages and abilities make good progress from their very different starting points.

1. The assessments carried out soon after the children start school show that their attainment varies from year to year. The attainment of the current group of Reception children is at the expected level overall, but spans the full ability range. The Reception children benefit from good teaching which enables them to make good progress in the areas of learning of communication, language and literacy, mathematical, physical and creative development, and very good progress in terms of their personal, social and emotional development, and their knowledge and understanding of the world. The children make particularly good progress in developing their spoken language, which is often under-developed when they join the Reception class.
2. Although most children have had some pre-school experience, for many, the routines and social demands of the Reception classroom are taxing. The classteacher and classroom assistants are very effective in the way in which they introduce the 'Golden Rules' which guide the children's behaviour in school, and reinforce the expected patterns of behaviour. The school caters very well for individual children who have challenging behaviour, and adults are firm but pleasant in their dealings with them. Praise is used well to reinforce good behaviour and to celebrate achievement, and mostly the children respond very well and make very good progress in terms of their personal, social and emotional development.
3. The Reception children benefit from taking part in a wide range of relevant experiences, many of which are designed to enhance their understanding and knowledge of the world in which they live. Many children come to school with only a narrow range of experiences, and staff are very effective in the way in which they extend the children's learning by encouraging them to find things out for themselves, and to experiment and explore a range of materials.
4. Regular and frequent language and mathematics activities ensure that the Reception children make good progress in acquiring and refining early reading, writing and number skills, and much of this learning is appropriately reinforced through a good range of practical activities. The children benefit from the individual attention they receive from either the classteacher or the classroom assistant, and from taking part in some whole-class activities where the older Year 1 and Year 2 pupils set good role models in the way in which they join in discussions, for example, or answer questions.
5. Reception children make good progress in their creative development, and join in enthusiastically with action songs, listen well to music, and express their ideas thoughtfully and imaginatively through paint and modelling materials. The Reception children have daily access to a computer, and are quickly mastering skills such as controlling the mouse, opening menus, and printing their work.
6. As they move through Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, pupils continue to build on the good start they receive in the Reception class, and make good progress in English and mathematics, and very good progress in science. The teaching of these subjects is good, and ensures that pupils enjoy taking part in a wide and varied range of activities that systematically extends their skills, knowledge and understanding. The pupils themselves have very positive attitudes to learning, which in turn have a positive impact on their learning and on the progress they make.

7. Throughout the school, the development of spoken language is given high priority, and by the time pupils leave school at the age of eleven, the vast majority are keen to talk about their work and experiences, and to join in with discussions. As they move through the school, pupils successfully master and use subject specific language, enabling them to explain their ideas clearly, and to give precise answers to questions. Pupils of all ages and abilities have very positive attitudes to reading, and regular practice, both at home and at school, contributes to the good progress they make. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils talk with animation about their favourite books, characters and authors, and higher attainers use the higher order skills of skimming and scanning to quickly summarise pieces of text. From an early age, pupils are encouraged to review the books they have read, and to describe the parts that most and least please them. Pupils read a wide variety of books, and have good and accurate recall of the sequence of events in stories. Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 pupils make good progress in their writing, and make effective use of given strategies that help them to organise and develop their ideas. They write in a range of styles, and by the end of Key Stage 2, the highest attaining pupils produce lengthy pieces that are well structured, carefully organised, and which hold the attention of the reader.
8. In mathematics, pupils of all ages and abilities make good progress, and this is demonstrated by the fact that a small number of pupils regularly achieve the very high Level 6 in the end of Key Stage 2 national tests. Mathematics teaching is well supported by a good commercial scheme of work which enables teachers to cater well for the individual needs of pupils within the mixed age classes. Coverage of the National Curriculum programmes of study is good, and well balanced, enabling pupils to make good progress in all elements of the mathematics curriculum. In numeracy lessons, introductory mental mathematics sessions are used well to promote skills of mental agility, and the pupils respond well to the element of competition as they try to be the first to give answers to questions. Teachers encourage pupils to explain their methods of working, and this helps them to clarify their thinking and to practise using subject specific vocabulary. Very good use is made of classroom assistants who work with small groups of pupils, or individuals, giving more intense practice to lower attainers, or stretching the higher attainers through the use of more challenging activities. Information and communication technology is used well to support the pupils' learning in mathematics, especially in the Year 3/Year 4 class where an interactive 'Smartboard' is used particularly well by the teacher to demonstrate new teaching points, or to illustrate methods of working. Most pupils have positive attitudes to mathematics, which contribute to the good progress they make. Pupils feel confident in their learning, and are not frightened of making mistakes, or taking risks.
9. In science, pupils in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 make very good progress, and most pupils are working at the higher Level 5 by the time they leave school at the age of eleven. Almost without exception, pupils have very positive attitudes to learning science, and they are extremely keen to find things out for themselves and to pursue new lines of enquiry. Science is very well taught, and pupils are encouraged to develop independent learning skills, and to learn through practical experience. Coverage of the National Curriculum programmes of study is very good, and most science activities are taught through a topic approach which provides a real and meaningful context for the pupils' learning. Learning resources are used very well to enhance and extend teaching and learning, and there is a plentiful supply of equipment which enables pupils to have some choice when carrying out investigations. For example, in a Year 3/Year 4 lesson seen during the inspection, pupils used a wide range of resources imaginatively when they made simple circuits which effectively combined buzzers and bulbs. Because there were plenty of resources, they were able to investigate whether the use of more than one bulb, buzzer or battery in a circuit had

an impact on the outcomes. This extension work led the higher attainers to making sensible generalisations about the link between input and the output.

10. The school caters well for pupils with special educational needs, enabling them to make similar progress to their classmates in lessons, and good progress towards their own individual targets as specified on their individual education plans. Likewise, higher attainers are fully stretched in lessons, and teachers provide a good variety of open-ended activities that provide good levels of challenge for all ability groups. The school has a policy for ensuring that the needs of pupils who are deemed to be 'gifted and talented' are fully met, and wherever possible and appropriate, encourages these pupils to take part in additional activities, such as the 'Summer Schools', which are run by the Education Action Zone, or activities that are led within the 'Cluster' of schools. From time to time the school has pupils who have English as an additional language, and teachers and learning support assistants provide additional support for these pupils to ensure that they are fully included in all activities.

Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. Pupils have very positive attitudes to work, and their behaviour is good.

11. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, and during the inspection, teaching was very good in one third of the lessons seen. There are particular strengths in the teaching of science in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, and in the teaching of personal, social and emotional development, spoken language, and knowledge and understanding of the world in the Foundation Stage. The quality of teaching and learning is better than it was at the time of the last inspection.
12. All pupils are taught in mixed age classes, and a positive feature of teaching is the way in which teachers cater for the individual needs of all age and ability groups. Classroom assistants are used very effectively to support individual pupils and groups of pupils and they are well directed by classteachers so that their input is purposeful and appropriate. Activities are often open-ended and this means that the needs of the highest and lowest attaining pupils can be fully met. Teachers make higher demands of the oldest and ablest pupils in small but significant ways. For example, during a Year 1/Year 2 science lesson, the teacher asked the pupils to measure the distance that their toy cars had travelled down a ramp. She encouraged the higher attaining pupils from both year groups to use a tape measure to record their findings, whilst the lower attaining and youngest pupils used non-standard units of measurement such as drinking straws. Likewise in a Year 5/Year 6 physical education lesson, higher attaining pupils were expected to throw and catch over greater distances than the pupils who were less adept.
13. Teachers use questions well both to check the pupils' understanding and to extend their learning. Because the development of spoken language is an ongoing priority throughout the school, teachers insist that pupils give increasingly complex answers to questions, and use open-ended questions very well to promote extended answers. Drama activities are also used effectively to promote spoken language, especially in the Reception class where the children are encouraged to take part in a wide range of role play activities. Teachers are very effective in the way in which they promote and encourage pupils to use subject specific vocabulary. This is most evident in science and mathematics where the pupils confidently use a range of appropriate and accurate terminology when discussing their work. The good teaching of subject vocabulary helps the pupils to explain their ideas clearly, and prepares the older pupils well for working under test conditions where questions are sometimes phrased in quite complex ways.

14. Basic skills of literacy and numeracy are well taught in all classes, and there are good opportunities for pupils to use these skills in their work in other subjects. Literacy and numeracy lessons are generally well paced, and activities are carefully matched to different ability levels. Higher attaining pupils are often very well challenged, especially in mathematics where they sometimes attain the very high Level 6 in the end of Key Stage 2 national tests. In English, teachers support pupils well in their writing by providing a range of strategies which help the pupils to organise and develop their ideas, and this practice is effective in helping pupils of all abilities to make good progress. Good use is made of homework to enhance pupils' learning in English and mathematics, and pupils understand that there is an expectation that they will practise reading regularly at home as well as in school. Information and communication technology is often effectively used to support pupils' learning, and pupils with complex special educational needs benefit from regular use of the computer, with individual support from a classroom assistant.
15. The teaching of science is very good in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 and enables pupils to make very good progress. The main strengths of science teaching are the way in which teachers encourage pupils to go beyond the set boundaries to find things out for themselves, and the very good emphasis that is placed on the pupils learning through practical experience. Pupils respond very well to their teachers and have exceptionally high levels of interest and motivation and work very well when carrying out investigations in small groups. Their very high levels of confidence in their own learning mean that they confidently explore new avenues and tackle problems with enthusiasm.
16. Throughout the school teachers manage the pupils well, and try hard to match organisational strategies and methods to the different learning styles of groups and individuals. Pupils enjoy taking part in a wide variety of practical activities that very effectively promote independent learning and encourage them to solve problems and reach their own conclusions. Teachers present activities in a lively and stimulating way, and there is a good balance between direction from the teacher and opportunities for the pupils to take responsibility for aspects of their own learning. Teachers combine pupils in different groups, which change according to the subject or nature of the task. This regular regrouping means that pupils get used to working with different classmates, and is very effective in promoting the pupils' social and personal development.
17. Teachers make good use of a range of rewards to promote good behaviour, and to celebrate achievement and effort. Pupils respond very well to praise and encouragement, and by the time they leave school at the age of eleven most have very good levels of confidence and self-esteem. Pupils of all ages and abilities are very well motivated, and tackle their learning with very good levels of interest and enthusiasm. They respond quickly to the teachers' requests and instructions, and the vast majority put very good levels of effort into their work. Although teachers provide very good levels of support for those pupils who are genuinely struggling, they are very perceptive, and encourage able but less confident pupils to persist in working things out for themselves. A good example of this was seen in a Year 1/Year 2 science lesson when pupils had to find their own ways of recording the distance their cars had travelled down a ramp. Because of the teacher's insistence that the pupils work out their own methods, a variety of outcomes emerged with some pupils using a colour coded key, and others inventing their own signs and symbols.
18. Relationships between pupils and adults are very good, and help to create a very positive working and learning environment. The pupils are encouraged to value the views and opinions of others, and know that their own contributions to lessons and

discussions will be treated with respect. Where the best teaching occurs, pupils are invited to evaluate their own work and that of their classmates, and they do so with good levels of sensitivity. All adults provide excellent role models for the pupils, and they set a very high standard in their own relationships which the pupils model. Positive values and attitudes are actively promoted throughout the school day, and the 'Charter of Values', to which the pupils and parents contributed, provides clear parameters of behaviour and sets out the school's expectations.

19. Teachers make good use of ongoing assessment to enhance the pupils' learning. In the most effective lessons, suggestions for improvement are given by teachers and quickly seized and acted upon by the pupils. For example, in a Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 physical education lesson seen during the inspection, the teacher helped the pupils to improve their performance by giving constructive advice and by demonstrating how more challenging and interesting movements could be achieved. Teachers regularly give pupils verbal feedback about their written work, and this helps them to make continued improvement. Teachers conscientiously note down significant achievements of individual pupils throughout the course of the day, and collate this information and use it to inform the next stage of pupils' learning.

The school provides a good curriculum for pupils of all ages, and makes a good effort to enrich the pupils' learning. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.

20. The curriculum for the children in the Foundation Stage is well planned and reflects the nationally recommended guidelines for this age group. Although the Reception children are taught in the same class as the Year 1 and Year 2 pupils, they enjoy very different learning experiences, which fully meet their needs. The curriculum for Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 pupils fully meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and the Locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education. The National Literacy Strategy and the National Numeracy Strategy have been successfully implemented, and the practice of teaching some of the other National Curriculum subjects through a topic approach is very effective.
21. The school works hard to address the gaps in the pupils' knowledge and understanding which arise from their sometimes limited experience of life, and their knowledge of the world in which they live. For example, in the past year, Key Stage 2 pupils have been to Weston Super Mare, and on a residential trip to London. The pupils talk with tremendous enthusiasm about both of these visits, which for some, represented the furthest they had ever travelled. The school also makes very good use of trips into the local town of Hereford. In the past, Key Stage 1 pupils have looked at the park, the River Wye and important buildings, such as the cathedral, art galleries and museums. In addition to extending the pupils' knowledge of places outside their immediate locality, teachers draw very well on the pupils' own experiences to give a real and meaningful context to their learning. For example, in a movement and music lesson seen during the inspection, the Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 pupils very successfully portrayed the movements of combine harvesters and potato digging machines.
22. Over the past few years, the school has very deliberately and systematically extended the range of resources in the school to raise the pupils' cultural awareness. Books, artefacts and resources reflect a wide range of different traditions and cultures, and the school celebrates important occasions in as many of the main world faiths as possible. The school has built up a good bank of video resources to enhance teaching and

learning, and these are used well when pupils are studying contrasting localities in geography, or different customs and traditions in history.

23. The school's links with other local primary schools which belong to the same 'Cluster' have a very positive impact on the pupils' learning, especially in terms of their social development. Shared educational visits, linked to ongoing topics, provide very good opportunities for pupils from the different schools to mix together on a regular basis, and ensure that the Year 6 pupils have already made new friends before they transfer to the main receiving high school. Because of the small number of pupils in each year group, shared activities with other primary schools enable the pupils to take part in inter-school sports and music activities, and to gain a good appreciation of how their individual performance compares to that of other pupils of the same age in different schools.
24. The school makes good provision for pupils who have special educational needs. The special educational needs co-ordinator, who is well qualified and experienced is employed by the 'Cluster' of schools, and works in the school for a half day per week. This 'Cluster' arrangement allows a good degree of flexibility and efficiency in terms of the resources the co-ordinator can provide, and her links with the main receiving high school are crucial in ensuring the smooth transfer of pupils whose special educational needs are complex or severe. The special educational needs co-ordinator works closely with classteachers in the writing of individual education plans, and maintains a good overview of the pupils with statements, to ensure that their needs are fully met. Links with parents of pupils with special educational needs are well established, and parents and pupils are involved in the drawing up and reviewing of targets in individual education plans. The very good input of learning support assistants in class enables pupils with special educational needs to make good progress and to take an active and full part in all activities.

The school makes very good use of assessment to monitor and evaluate the pupils' progress and attainment.

25. In the Foundation Stage, the Reception teacher and the classroom assistants make regular ongoing assessments of the children's progress and attainment across each of the areas of learning. The results of the baseline assessments, which are carried out soon after the children start school, provide very useful general information about the children, which the teacher makes very good use of when planning activities. Assessment information is also used very well in the Reception class to highlight children who may have special educational needs, and to highlight specific issues which the school needs to address with the entire group. For example, having highlighted that speaking and listening skills were often under-developed when children joined the Reception class, the school has now introduced a rigorous remedial programme, which involves regular assessments of the children's progress in this area of development. This focused assessment and regular intervention over a period of time has had a significant impact on the children's progress and attainment, and has given the classteacher a very clear indication as to which children need further, more intensive support.
26. In Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, the school has implemented a very good system for tracking the progress and attainment of individual pupils and groups of pupils as they move through the school. In English, mathematics and science, the careful, regular and thorough analysis of end of key stage national test results and other standardised test scores, enables the staff to draw meaningful conclusions about aspects of the work which the pupils find easy or relatively difficult. As a result of the information that

is gathered, appropriate adjustments are made to the curriculum, and any shortcomings in teaching and learning are quickly addressed. Pupils throughout the school have individual assessment folders which contain samples of work, most of which are annotated, levelled and dated, which are added to on a termly basis. Teachers make ongoing assessments of this work, and use the information well to produce comprehensive end of year progress reports for the pupils. For subjects such as art and design, design and technology, music and physical education where it is more difficult to keep samples of work, teachers make very good use of record sheets where they record the pupils' strengths and weaknesses following focused observations in these areas.

27. The way in which assessment is managed is a strength. The whole-school approach means that assessments are consistently and regularly carried out, and information about individual children is passed on from year to year, making it easy to track and monitor their progress. Assessment information is used very effectively to raise standards, and is planned well so that teachers and pupils do not become over-faced.

The quality of the headteacher's leadership and management is very good, and that of the Governing Body is good.

28. The headteacher provides very clear and strong leadership, and enjoys the full support of a hard-working and committed staff, and a loyal Governing Body. The headteacher has a very good understanding of the particular needs of a small, rural school, but this does not mean that there is any compromise in terms of the quality of education provided. She very successfully combines her teaching commitment with her management duties, and the Governing Body maintains a good overview of this balance to ensure that she does not become over-burdened. There is an excellent team spirit amongst the staff and this promotes a very positive learning environment. Management responsibilities are effectively and sensibly shared amongst the teaching staff, and there is a great deal of flexibility which enables the school to run smoothly.
29. The headteacher, staff and Governing Body have produced an excellent School Improvement Plan which sets out clearly the main priorities for development over the next three years. A detailed review is carried out each year, and progress against the agreed targets is assessed. Outstanding targets are evaluated, and some are included in the plan for the following year whilst others are discarded. The plan is an extremely manageable document which gives a very good outline of how the school will continue to improve. All targets are costed and linked to the budget, and success criteria are included so that the headteacher, staff and Governing Body can easily monitor the extent to which targets have been achieved.
30. The headteacher's termly reports to the Governing Body are excellent, and provide excellent information about all aspects of the school's work. The reports are extremely evaluative, and this means that areas of strength and weakness in the school's work can be quickly identified. In addition, the reports paint a lively picture of the pupils' learning, as they describe activities the pupils have taken part in, and visits they have made to places of interest. These reports proved to be invaluable as a means of communication between the school and the Governing Body during the Foot and Mouth Crisis, when movement within the local area was very limited.
31. The school is very effective in the way in which it monitors its performance. The headteacher has devised and implemented a very good system for tracking the progress and attainment of individual pupils and groups of pupils as they move through the school, in English, mathematics and science. This information is used very well to

ensure that pupils are making the progress of which they are capable, and to highlight relative strengths and weaknesses in teaching, learning and standards. The school regularly compares its performance on the basis of the end of key stage national test results with that of other schools, both nationally and locally, but recognises the limits of this exercise because of the small size of the groups of pupils entered for the tests. The school's programme of performance management is used well to highlight areas for individual professional development, and for whole-school staff development, and additional monitoring of classroom practice is carried out by all teaching staff. The monitoring of literacy and numeracy takes place on a termly basis, and one other subject each year is also closely monitored through classroom observation and the sampling of pupils' work.

32. The school's finances are well managed and monitored. The school secretary plays a crucial role in the day to day management of the finances and this reduces the pressure on the headteacher. The Governing Body finance committee meets regularly to maintain a good overview of income and expenditure, and financial decisions are linked closely to agreed educational priorities. For example, the school is currently holding a high reserve of funds. This is to ensure that the current arrangement of teaching pupils in three classes can be sustained for at least one more year.
33. The school is part of an Education Action Zone which was set up to support schools in areas of 'rural and social deprivation'. The scheme is coming to the end of its five year period, and the school has benefited greatly from its involvement. Because of the very prudent way in which the budget has been managed in recent years, the school will be able to carry on with some of the initiatives even when the Education Action Zone no longer exists. For example, the increase in learning support hours can be sustained.
34. Very good links have been established with three other local primary schools and one high school, and together, these five schools form the 'Cluster'. The links between Michaelchurch Escley and the 'Cluster' schools ensure that the school is not isolated, and maximise resources, expertise and experience. The practice of sharing the special educational needs co-ordinator and the music teacher amongst the schools involved in the 'Cluster' is very efficient and cost-effective, and brings additional expertise into the school, thereby taking some pressure off the existing staff.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The presentation of the work of some pupils is untidy. Too much use is made of worksheets as a means of recording.

35. Although all pupils make good progress, and often attain good standards, some pupils do not take enough pride in the presentation of their written work. Handwriting is taught regularly in all classes, but this input is often not transferred when the pupils carry out writing tasks in other subjects. There is no consistency throughout the school in the use of pens and pencils, and when pupils use pens for making diagrams the outcomes are often untidy and inaccurate.
36. Writing has been highlighted as an ongoing area of development of the school, but there are times when worksheets are used too much as a means of recording and this reduces the opportunities for pupils to write in their own words. Pupils throughout the school do not take enough care when completing worksheets.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

To improve the presentation of pupils' work the school should:-

- agree a whole-school policy to ensure a consistent approach throughout the school;
- ensure that pupils transfer their handwriting skills to all pieces of written work;
- ensure consistency in the use of pens or pencils for given tasks.

The school should reduce the number of worksheets used for recording work so that there are more opportunities for pupils to write in their own words.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	9
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	8

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number		3	5	1			
Percentage		33	56	11			

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than eleven percentage points.

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)	N/A	58
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/A	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR– Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	N/A	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	N/A	11

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	4
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	1

Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	2.7	School data	0
National comparative data	5.4	National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)

This table has been omitted as the number of pupils taking the tests in this cohort was fewer than 10

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

This table has been omitted as the number of pupils taking the tests in this cohort was fewer than 10

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	57		
White – Irish			
White – any other White background	1		
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean			
Mixed – White and Black African			
Mixed – White and Asian			
Mixed – any other mixed background			
Asian or Asian British - Indian			
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani			
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi			
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background			
Black or Black British – Caribbean			
Black or Black British – African			
Black or Black British – any other Black background			
Chinese			
Any other ethnic group			
No ethnic group recorded			

The table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only. It gives the number of exclusions, 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)	3.44
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17
Average class size	19

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	94

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	N/A
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	N/A
Total number of education support staff	N/A
Total aggregate hours worked per week	N/A
Number of pupils per FTE adult	N/A

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
	£
Total income	180404
Total expenditure	180804
Expenditure per pupil	3411
Balance brought forward from previous year	53025
Balance carried forward to next year	52625

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	0.5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	1.2
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	58
Number of questionnaires returned	47

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	76	24	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	62	36	0	2	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	40	58	2	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	34	55	7	2	2
The teaching is good.	48	48	2	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	48	48	2	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	69	24	7	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	62	31	2	0	5
The school works closely with parents.	57	32	7	2	2
The school is well led and managed.	64	29	5	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	60	38	2	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	38	50	10	0	2