



# St Michael's Primary School

Inspection report

**Better  
education  
and care**

Unique Reference Number 114423  
LEA East Sussex

Inspection number 275900  
Inspection dates 15 June 2005  
Reporting inspector Christopher Green

Inspection deemed to have been carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996 according to section 12(3) of the same act.

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Type of School	Primary	School address	Station Road
School category	Community		Withyham
Age range of pupils	4 - 11		East Sussex
			TN7 4BP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01892 770307
Number on roll	90	Fax number	01892 771099
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs J Saunders
Date of previous inspection	21 - 23 June 1999	Headteacher	Mrs S Rogers

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<b>Age group</b>	<b>Published</b>	<b>Reference no.</b>
4 - 11	July 2005	275900

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## Introduction

The inspection was a pilot of the new arrangements for inspection announced by Ofsted in its consultation paper of February 2004. It was carried out with the support and co-operation of the St Michael's Primary School and of the local education authority.

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

This small primary school, in an area of social and economic advantage in rural East Sussex, serves a relatively wide area of town and village communities. Its 90 pupils are organised into four classes. The number of pupils with special educational needs, although varying from year to year, is close to the national average. The number taking free school meals is low. There are only a few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and no pupils speak English as an additional language.

The school has had Beacon status since 1999 because it has been identified as one able to share its good practice with other schools. It has also been awarded the Basic Skills Quality Mark. These achievements have a significant impact on raising the profile and reputation of the school. Plans for a much-needed new hall and extended teaching space are at an advanced stage. The school is popular and, as a result, pupil numbers have been steadily increasing.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

St Michael's is a good school and this view is shared by the headteacher, governors, staff and parents.

Children get off to a good start in the Foundation Stage and make good progress as they move on through the school because they receive a high-quality education. They learn to read well and gain a good understanding of mathematics by the time they leave. The standards they reach are generally above average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is high in some classes but those who experience difficulties with their learning achieve well. Pupils like school and they establish very good relationships amongst themselves and with adults. Because of this, and because of the good teaching they receive, pupils behave very well. They are polite, diligent in their work and enjoy their lessons, often showing a good sense of humour.

Pupils adopt good exercise habits and eat healthily. Staff and volunteers provide a high level of care and this sets an example that pupils follow. In turn this gives parents confidence in the school, a confidence which is well founded. The curriculum is broad, relevant and enriched by a wide range of activities and contributes significantly to the high level of interest pupils have in school and to their good achievement.

The school has a secure plan for its development, identifying those aspects most in need of improvement, notably raising the standards of pupils' writing in classes 2, 3 and 4. Also, the tracking of the progress made by particular groups of pupils is not always as effective as it might be in improving the planning and monitoring of teaching to the very highest levels. The school dealt swiftly and effectively with the issues that were raised for action at the time of its previous inspection and has made good progress since then. Resources are now carefully focused on providing effectively for the pupils' educational needs, whilst laying firm foundations for those of the future. Because of this, the school provides good value for money. The headteacher and governors have a good understanding of what needs to be done to achieve their ambitious priorities in the development plan and the school is well placed to succeed in doing this.

**Grade: 2**

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise standards in writing in Years 3 to 6 to the levels achieved in other subjects.
- Make more effective use of teachers' assessments of pupils' progress to help keep track of long-term targets and so help plan teaching.

### **Achievement and standards**

Standards are above those expected nationally for the pupils' ages overall and their achievement and progress are good, even though many pupils enter the school with skills that are better than those normally expected of children of this age. Results in national tests for pupils by Year 6, over recent years, have fluctuated because of the relatively small numbers of pupils in the different year groups and the varying numbers of pupils with learning difficulties. Another cause of the fluctuation is that a significant number of pupils join the school much later than at the usual entry point at the start of the Reception year. The trend of improvement in English and mathematics by age 11 has been below the national trend, and this is largely due to the impact of a decline in the achievement at the higher levels in writing. When planning the teaching of writing for those groups of pupils in Years 3 to 6 able to achieve the higher levels, teachers do not have the benefit of an analysis of data from the school's record keeping system to support them. Teachers have identified this weakness and improvements are already evident, using other information. However, the standards achieved by pupils at age seven are often well above the national average, including those in writing.

The inspection found that the school's analysis of the causes of lower-than-expected performance is accurate and that the corrective action being taken is beginning to be effective. The challenging targets set for 2005 and the teachers' assessments of pupils' progress in Year 6 indicate that the number of pupils gaining the higher Level 5 in writing should increase this year.

### **Grade: 2**

### **Personal development and well-being**

Pupils' overall personal development is very good, a strength rightly identified through the school's self-evaluation. Pupils' attendance is in line with that in most primary schools and punctuality is good. Very good relationships are established amongst the pupils themselves and with adults. These contribute

significantly to the atmosphere in the school which is both friendly and purposeful and which in turn has a very positive impact on all aspects of the pupils' personal development. Invariably, pupils are polite, showing appropriate respect for themselves and each other and they enjoy their work and life in school. These good attitudes and the good teaching they receive mean that behaviour in lessons and around the school is excellent.

The extent to which pupils feel secure is sometimes shown by their sense of good humour. The older pupils share perceptive and amusing comments about liking school and being encouraged to adopt safe and healthy lifestyles, with just a touch of satire. The pupils' moral and social development is very good. The curriculum provides a wide range of experiences which, together with enrichment opportunities such as those within personal, social and health education, extend their appreciation of other cultures. This leads to pupils valuing the traditions that are common to many cultures and the wealth of diversity which exists amongst them. Occasions for reflection and celebrations of a spiritual nature, such as those in regular assemblies, are good.

The school's Beacon status means it works with other schools and this practice of positively contributing to the community is firmly within the ethos of the school. Pupils are aware that they will need to 'pay their way' in the world and that learning basic skills is a necessary requisite in being able to do this. They are also aware that making charitable efforts such as voluntary work and fundraising contribute to improving the economic well-being of groups who find themselves in less fortunate circumstances.

**Grade: 2**

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

Teaching is good and brings about effective learning. It is characterised by well-planned work presented in an atmosphere designed to foster the use of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills across all subjects. Pupils respond to this, work hard and, as a result, achieve well.

Good teaching and the support pupils receive is based on an understanding of how well they are doing, what they have learnt and how they can improve, although teachers recognise that the expectations in the teaching of writing for higher-attaining pupils has not been sufficiently challenging in the past, especially for those pupils in Years 3 to 6. Steps have been taken to rectify

weaknesses and there are clear signs of improvement in the writing seen during the inspection.

Assessments of pupils' progress are good. Teachers' marking gives pupils a clear idea of how well they have done and how they can improve. Detailed analysis of discrepancies between test results and assessments made by teachers enable the school to have a better understanding of where more improvements can be made. Target-setting is appropriately challenging and is effective in focusing pupils' attention on what they should learn. However, the record-keeping systems which track targets against the teachers' assessments of the progress of groups of pupils over the longer term, are not sufficiently accessible to guide the planning and monitoring of lessons routinely. More refinement in this is necessary in order to bring the good teaching up to an outstanding level.

Improving the quality of teaching and learning is identified in the school development plan as continuing priority, and inspectors agree that it should be. Lessons are regularly monitored by senior staff to identify areas for improvement and the quality of this monitoring is good.

## **Grade: 2**

### **Curriculum and other activities**

The school provides a relevant curriculum within school time. Pupils also have access to a wide range of interesting extra-curricular activities and a large proportion of them take up some of these opportunities. The curriculum is designed to meet the pupils' needs. Recent planning has incorporated more opportunities for greater creativity. Even so, the school has limited facilities for indoor physical education, and efforts to compensate for this have been made by using the Outdoor Explorers' Club, which helps pupils to understand their local environment, and by going off-site to a pool for swimming. These efforts have a positive impact on the quality of education provided.

The school's commitment to promoting healthy eating, exercise and safe living is a strength. The police and other agencies are invited to the school and provide specialist knowledge on aspects of the curriculum, such as the dangers of drugs, smoking and alcohol abuse, and sex and relationships education. The opportunities for personal, social and health education, music, Latin, French, and the use of information and communication technology across the curriculum, have helped pupils to develop their talents effectively in traditional and contemporary aspects of life.

## **Grade: 2**

## Care, guidance and support

The quality of care, guidance and support for pupils is good. The school is alert to pupils' educational and welfare needs and responds well through a range of actions, including good communication with parents that often lead to close working relationships with many families. The school's involvement in a network of partnerships across the community means that it readily uses the services of external agencies to meet particular needs. Staff are well trained in the essential policies and procedures that are required to keep pupils safe and in identifying particular individual needs.

In the Foundation Stage, new children to the school are carefully introduced to the routines of school life and the welcoming, secure and stimulating environment which they enter, contributes significantly to the success of their early learning and independence.

The youngest to the oldest pupils are involved in creating the targets that have been set for them and usually, although not always, they are aware of what they should do to improve. Arrangements for setting homework were not consistently accepted by parents at the time of the previous inspection but the subsequent policy that has been implemented is well supported and has a positive impact on the pupils' learning and achievement. Teaching assistants set good role models; an important way of helping to establish the very good behaviour of pupils.

### Grade: 2

## Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the school are very good. The headteacher has led the school well; she has a perceptive understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The values that shape the life of the school stem from the good work that the governors, headteacher and key staff have accomplished. They ensure that all stakeholders, and particularly parents, carers and pupils have a chance to contribute to the school's development plan, which is carefully constructed, implemented and rigorously monitored. It contains a clear vision for the direction of the school. The school community has a strong commitment to the school's aims and long-term priorities because of its close involvement.

The school's self-evaluation systems are well developed and effective in driving the school forward. Action is based on an accurate assessment of its current



position by teachers, who each carry a wide range of leadership and management responsibilities. They know the main strengths and areas which need to be improved and are energetic in attempting to move the school forward wherever they can. The quality of their leadership and management lifts the standards that the pupils achieve.

The headteacher and governors maintain a firm sense of direction for the school as a whole and have a good understanding of what now needs to be done to achieve their ambitious priorities. A sharp focus on well-evaluated future initiatives means that they have a good understanding of where further development is needed. The school has the capacity to improve on those areas in need of most attention and to build further on its accomplished good practice.

**Grade: 2**

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## INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<b>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate.</b>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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**OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS**

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	<b>2</b>	
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	<b>2</b>	
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	<b>2</b>	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	<b>2</b>	
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	<b>Yes</b>	
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	<b>Yes</b>	

**ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS**

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	<b>2</b>	
The <i>standards</i> reached by learners	<b>2</b>	
How well learners' make <i>progress</i> , taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	<b>2</b>	
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	<b>2</b>	

**PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND WELL-BEING**

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	<b>2</b>	
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	<b>2</b>	
The behaviour of learners	<b>1</b>	
How well learners enjoy their education	<b>1</b>	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	<b>1</b>	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	<b>1</b>	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community.	<b>2</b>	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	<b>2</b>	

**THE QUALITY OF PROVISION**

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	<b>2</b>	
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	<b>2</b>	
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	<b>2</b>	

**LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	<b>2</b>	
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	<b>2</b>	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	<b>2</b>	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	<b>2</b>	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	<b>2</b>	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	<b>2</b>	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	<b>Yes</b>	

<b>The school enables learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily.	<b>Yes</b>
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise.	<b>Yes</b>
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse.	<b>Yes</b>
Learners are educated about sexual health.	<b>Yes</b>
<b>The providers ensure that learners stay safe.</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements.	<b>Yes</b>
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place.	<b>Yes</b>
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism.	<b>Yes</b>
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them.	<b>Yes</b>
<b>The learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships.	<b>Yes</b>
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them.	<b>Yes</b>
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	<b>Yes</b>
<b>The school enables learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills.	<b>Yes</b>
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams.	<b>Yes</b>
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in Key Stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form.	<b>NA</b>
Education for all learners aged 14-19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy.	<b>NA</b>

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St Michael's Primary School  
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Withyham  
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20 June 2005

Dear Children

Thank you for the welcome you gave me and the team of inspectors when we visited your school on the 15<sup>th</sup> of June 2005. We really appreciated the help you gave us and especially in sharing your work and your ideas about the school. You made us feel that we were a part of the school and helped us to settle in quickly so that we could do our work well.

We saw that you work hard and because of this you do well in most subjects. We enjoyed talking to you and were impressed by your politeness, your sense of good humour and your very good behaviour in lessons and around the school. We were pleased to be there on the day when you did so well in the swimming gala. Your healthy eating and good exercise habits obviously paid off!

We think that those of you higher up the school could improve your writing more. Your writing is not as good as your reading or your work in other subjects. We are sure that, with the help of your teachers and friends you can improve your writing a lot. It will be helpful if you try to remember what you have already learned about the good features of your writing. Your teachers and teaching assistants already guide you carefully in setting your targets. These targets should be in your mind when you are writing at home and at school, whether on your own or with the help of your parents and teachers.

Do continue to enjoy being at St Michael Primary School and make the most of whatever the future holds for you.

Yours sincerely,

Christopher Green  
Lead inspector