

St Michael's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100044
Local Authority	Camden
Inspection number	276242
Inspection dates	19–20 September 2006
Reporting inspector	Robert Lovett HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	191
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Francis Pra-Lopez
Headteacher	Mrs Lynn Trigg
Date of previous school inspection	4 December 2000
School address	88 Camden Street London NW1 0JA
Telephone number	02074858965
Fax number	02074850424

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

St Michael's is situated in a part of Camden which is less advantaged than most nationally. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is very high. A high proportion is from minority ethnic groups and a very high proportion speaks a first language other than English. A high and increasing number of pupils join or leave the school other than at normal times. The school is smaller than average and is spread over three storeys in a former secondary school. It shares the site and Nursery with Our Lady's Catholic Primary. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is slightly higher than average while the proportion with a statement of special educational needs, (SEN), is about average. From September 2006 the school has been part of the Intensifying Support Programme (ISP) intended to raise standards in English and mathematics through improving the quality of teaching and learning. The senior leadership team are relatively new; the deputy headteacher started in September 2005 and the headteacher in January 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Michael's is a satisfactory and improving school and this judgement matches that of the school. The leadership team provides a clear focus on raising standards and has embarked on an ambitious programme to improve the quality of teaching and learning. They are supported in this aim by the governing body and staff, who share a strong commitment to school improvement.

Pupils enter the Nursery with levels of attainment which are below average. While pupils' progress has fluctuated it has, over the past three years, been broadly satisfactory and this remains the case. Achievement is satisfactory. Standards across the school, including the Foundation Stage have been below average for a number of years. However, recent improvements in English and science mean that standards in these subjects are now broadly average by the end of Year 6, although they remain too low in mathematics. In addition, some more able pupils are not doing as well as they should because their work is not always sufficiently challenging.

The school is situated at the heart of a vibrant and culturally diverse community. While Christian in character it is fully inclusive of all pupils, whatever their faith or culture. This is well recognised by parents who express overwhelming support for the school and its work. While pupils say they enjoy school, attendance remains below average, despite the school's best efforts. Behaviour is satisfactory, and both pupils and adults say it is improving and that the school has a developing sense of community and mutual respect. Pupils' personal development and well-being is satisfactory.

While teaching and learning are satisfactory, the school is rightly ambitious to raise the quality to good and better in order to raise standards further. There is now a clear and consistent structure to lessons and most pupils know what they are to learn and how their work will be assessed. However, the whole class targets recently introduced by the ISP are sometimes too complicated and difficult for some pupils to understand. The school rightly places a high priority on the development of speaking and listening skills and pupils make good progress in this aspect of their learning.

Part of the reason the school is moving forward so well is that the headteacher and deputy headteacher have a clear focus on raising standards and ensuring pupils do as well as they can. There is now a need to ensure middle managers in the school, such as some subject leaders and other key members of staff are more fully involved in planning for and monitoring school improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- * Improve the quality of teaching so that a greater proportion is good or outstanding.
- * Raise standards in mathematics by ensuring pupils better understand what they are to learn.
- * Raise the attainment of more able pupils by ensuring that work is well matched to their needs.
- * Involve middle managers more in strategic planning and monitoring school improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. They enter the Nursery with standards that are below national expectations and attainment is below average by the time they leave the Reception class. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1 and while they do best in mathematics, by the end of Year 2 standards overall are below average.

During their time in Key Stage 2 the progress pupils make has varied considerably over the last few years. Early indications are that in 2006 standards rose and the progress pupils made was satisfactory. Standards rose most in English, where the number of pupils attaining the nationally expected level rose by 29%. While standards also rose in science and mathematics the increase was less spectacular and in mathematics performance remains below average. While standards overall are average, not enough pupils are reaching above average levels because some more able pupils are not doing as well as they should. The school has set suitably challenging targets for 2007, and its tracking systems suggest it is well placed to achieve them.

Pupils with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress because they receive appropriate support in the classroom and from the special educational needs co-ordinator. Pupils who speak a first language other than English also receive the support they need so that learning is well matched to their individual needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory; the schools behaviour policy is clearly understood by pupils and consistently administered by staff. Pupils are proud of their school, feel safe and use the school buildings sensibly. There is a sense of calm throughout the school. Pupils are polite, friendly and eager to enjoy all the school has to offer. Older pupil's self-esteem and sense of responsibility are enhanced through helping younger children, paired work and a reading buddy system. Pupils are confident that their views, expressed through the school council, are listened to and acted on.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils have good spiritual and social awareness through good links with local churches and an inclusive school ethos. Pupils work well together and respect each other, resulting in good relationships among pupils and between pupils and adults. Pupils know about healthy lifestyles, the importance of regular physical exercise such as walking to school and appreciate recent improvements in school dinners. Pupils say they enjoy the range of opportunities the school offers such as singing at the Royal Albert Hall and participating in community projects such as Rise Phoenix and working with a Bengali drama group.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and improving. The best teaching is in the Nursery, where well organised resources and a good range of learning activities ensure children make good progress. The Foundation Stage provides a wide range of learning opportunities.

Because classroom routines are well established and teachers explain tasks clearly children begin to develop good independence.

Teaching elsewhere is satisfactory. In most lessons there is appropriate planning which supports teaching and learning. Pupils generally contribute well to lessons and enjoy learning. They listen to adults and each other with care and respect. Where questioning is used well to help pupils clarify their thinking it makes a valuable contribution to learning but in some lessons questioning is too limited and elicits only 'yes' or 'no' answers which fails to help pupils sufficiently in their learning. The newly introduced interactive whiteboards are being used well to enliven lessons, as in a mathematics lesson on money where coins and notes were displayed and methods of calculation demonstrated.

Work is well displayed in classrooms and other areas of the school to celebrate success, support learning and provide an attractive environment.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. Planning meets the needs of pupils although improvements are needed to assessment to ensure the needs of some more able pupils are better met. In the Foundation Stage a range of well planned activities engages all pupils effectively and encourages the development of early language skills well.

Pupils with learning difficulties as well as those speaking a first language other than English receive sound support and guidance. Information and communication technology (ICT) provision has much improved with new networked computers and interactive whiteboards in every class. Frequent trips and visitors do much to enrich the curriculum. Local sports facilities and extra curricular activities are used to extend physical development and to develop a sense of team work. The recent Year 6 residential visit to Isle of Wight was well received by the children after an absence of many years. They also very much enjoy kayaking at a local centre each week.

The personal, social and health education programme, (PSHE) circle time and Healthy Schools initiative provide good opportunities to learn about healthy lifestyles and keeping safe. There are good links with the community and adjoining school with shared assemblies, joint planning in the Foundation Stage and a shared Nursery. The school also hosts a weekly coffee morning for Bengali speakers and benefits from reading partners for pupils from the nearby British Library.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory with some good features. Child protection, health and safety and risk assessment procedures are very clear and all staff receive appropriate training. The school provides a secure environment with particular care at the end of the school day when all pupils are escorted to the school gates to meet their parents or carers. Movement around the site and buildings is well supervised. Pupils talk positively about the help they get and the efforts to involve them in the life of the school. The school works well with external agencies to meet the needs of more vulnerable pupils.

Academic guidance for pupils through target setting is inconsistent so that not all pupils know what they need to do to improve their work. Teachers and the learning mentor in particular, provide effective support and advice for pupils who are facing a range of emotional and

behavioural problems. Good pastoral guidance, encouragement and parental contacts help pupils make a smooth transition to secondary education.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The recently appointed headteacher provides good leadership. She has a clear focus on raising standards and in a short time has had a real impact on how well pupils are doing, particularly in English. She is well supported by the deputy headteacher who shares her vision for school improvement. The leadership team has implemented a rigorous programme of lesson observations and these are having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning. The effectiveness of subject leaders is inconsistent and this is in part a reflection of their limited role in the management of the school so that they do not have a sufficiently clear view of standards or contribute sufficiently to strategic planning. The chair of governors provides committed and increasingly well informed leadership and governance is satisfactory.

There was a high response rate from parents to the inspection questionnaire and they were overwhelmingly supportive of the work of the school. One rightly wrote that the headteacher 'inspires confidence'. Among suggestions from parents was that the school should consider the provision of a homework club and inspectors agree this could provide a valuable additional learning resource for pupils.

The school knows its strengths and weaknesses well. It has produced a good plan to raise achievement with a clear focus on raising standards but it is too early to see the impact of this on some important aspects of the school's work. The school has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

I'd like to begin by thanking you all for making the other inspector and me so welcome when we came to visit your school. Your comments and answers to questions were really useful in helping us get to know your school better and to write our report.

We found that yours is a satisfactory and improving school. Standards are rising, particularly in English but standards in mathematics are still too low. During your time in the school you make satisfactory progress. You said you were happy in school and enjoy being there, and your parents and carers think this too. We think you get on well with each other and with the adults who work there. We also think you care for each other well and that the pastoral care you receive is good, and these are strengths of the school.

One of the main reasons your school is improving is that your headteacher and deputy headteacher, supported by the teachers and governors, are determined to make sure the school does better and that standards are higher. One of the main ways you can help them do this is by coming to school regularly because the rate of absence is too high.

We have suggested a number of things the school can do to improve;

- * Make sure the quality of teaching improves so that more of it is good or outstanding.
- * Raise standards in mathematics by making sure you all understand what you are supposed to learn and what your class targets are.
- * Match the work more closely to what you are able to learn so that those of you who are more able have the opportunity to do better.
- * Involve other teachers more in managing the school and making sure things are going well.

I hope you work hard and enjoy the coming year.

Yours sincerely

Robert Lovett HMI