



St Michael's Church of England C Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 104227
LEA Walsall
Inspection number 277106
Inspection dates 24 May 2006 to 25 May 2006
Reporting inspector Edward Wheatley AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Maple Road
School category	Voluntary controlled		Pelsall
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		Walsall, West Midlands WS3 4JJ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01922 682309
Number on roll	349	Fax number	01922 683676
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Simon Merckel
Date of previous inspection	4 December 2000	Headteacher	Mr Anthony Orlick

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Michael's Church of England Primary School is average sized. Pupils are almost all White British and no pupils are in the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well below average. The proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and with statements of special educational needs are also well below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school with some good features. Under the outstanding leadership of the recently appointed headteacher, and with considerable support from senior staff, the school has evaluated its overall effectiveness accurately and set about planning improvements. Some of the plans have been implemented and are leading to improved standards and achievement. Governance is good and there is a high level of commitment from staff to the planned improvements. The school gives satisfactory value for money and has good capacity for improvement.

Good provision in the Nursery and Reception ensures that children make a good start. They achieve well and reach above-average standards by the time they start Year 1. The good standards and achievement continue in Years 1 and 2. In Years 3 to 6 standards are broadly average and achievement is satisfactory. Standards of writing are not as good as in speaking and listening and there are weaknesses in punctuation, spelling, handwriting and presentation among middle- and lower-attaining older pupils. The school's efforts to improve standards by addressing the needs of individual pupils are having a positive effect; standards are rising and achievement is improving.

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are good. Their attendance is good and they enjoy being in school. In the great majority of lessons they work hard. Their personal development is good and their preparation for future life is satisfactory.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. They are good in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2. The strengths are in setting learning objectives which are explained to the pupils and reviewed at the end of lessons, the challenging level of the work and the good development of speaking and listening skills. However, in Years 3 to 6 there are too few opportunities for pupils to work together or to carry out their own research, and this limits their learning. Throughout the school, efforts to improve writing skills are starting to be effective. Despite this, not enough marking informs pupils about what they need to do to improve.

The curriculum is satisfactory but in Years 1 to 6 there are too few opportunities for reading, writing, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT) to be used in different subjects. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities.

The quality of care, support and guidance is satisfactory. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties is satisfactory and improving.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the standard of writing by addressing weaknesses in punctuation, spelling, handwriting and presentation.
- Provide more opportunities for reading, writing, numeracy and ICT across the curriculum.
- Make sure that marking consistently informs pupils of what they need to do to improve further.
- Increase opportunities for independent and investigative work and for pupils to work together.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are broadly average and achievement is satisfactory. In the Foundation Stage, standards exceed expectations in all areas and children achieve well. In Year 2, standards are above average and pupils achieve well, particularly as this group of pupils entered Year 1 with average literacy skills. Speaking and listening skills are particularly good. Writing is weaker but improving as a result of the school's focus on this area.

By Year 6, standards are average and achievement is satisfactory and improving as a result of the school's efforts to raise standards. Standards in English vary. In speaking and listening, standards are above average, but writing is broadly average. This is because a significant minority of average and lower-attaining pupils have poor spelling, punctuation, handwriting and presentation skills. In Years 3 to 6, standards are rising, although there is a backlog of underachievement to overcome in writing. The school's drive to make sure that work is closely matched to pupils' learning needs is starting to push up standards. However, research skills are underdeveloped and pupils do not use ICT enough.

Pupils with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress. Recent efforts to ensure pupils' specific learning needs are addressed in lessons are having a positive impact, and progress is improving.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good. Good relationships promote a culture of trust that reflects the school's strong Anglican ethos. Pupils behave well in lessons and around school. Bullying is rare and when it occurs, both pupils and parents feel it is dealt with effectively. The majority of pupils have good attitudes in lessons but occasionally a few pupils are inattentive.

Attendance is good. Pupils enjoy lessons because teachers make them interesting. For example, the use of football league tables in a mathematics lesson about data handling grabbed pupils' attention and ensured they worked hard. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to work independently or to carry out their own investigations. All pupils show good awareness of being healthy: they drink water and eat plenty of fresh fruit.

There are good opportunities for pupils to take on responsibility, experience of which will be useful in later life. The school council, running the school shop and organising charity fund-raising events, helps pupils to contribute to the school and wider community and their future economic well-being. The 'buddy system' allows older pupils to act as good role models for their fellow pupils. There is a good emphasis on being safe and pupils learn from a very early age that their actions have consequences for themselves and others.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. There is a distinct spiritual dimension to many aspects of the school's work. Collective acts of worship

and lessons impart spirituality. Pupil achievement is celebrated and rewarded effectively. There is a strong moral code which is understood and followed by pupils. There is good knowledge and understanding of other cultures and pupils have satisfactory knowledge of the possible issues involved in living in a multi-cultural society.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teaching is consistently good in the Nursery and Reception and in Years 1 and 2. In these year groups, lessons have clear objectives and, as a result, pupils confidently evaluate the progress they make. The pace is brisk, ensuring that pupils are interested and work hard. Teachers develop pupils' speaking and listening skills well in whole-class lessons.

Teaching is satisfactory in Years 3 to 6. In these year groups there are too few opportunities for group work, independent research and investigative work, which sometimes limits pupils' progress. Assessment is not used consistently enough to help learning. For example, pupils refer to their individual targets in all writing lessons in order to understand how to improve their work, but they do not have targets in any other subjects. This diminishes the potential impact of the targets. Marking, whilst satisfactory, does not consistently provide guidance on how to improve work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. It is good in the Nursery and Reception. The programme of work in the Reception class leads smoothly into the work in Year 1. The curriculum in Years 1 to 6 is satisfactory and matched to the needs of all pupils, including those with learning difficulties. Grouping pupils according to ability has contributed to better standards in writing. The curriculum is based on activities that interest and motivate pupils and is enhanced by focus weeks on art, geography and history. However, pupils are not given enough opportunity to use their reading, writing, numeracy and ICT skills in other subjects. There are too few opportunities for pupils to develop independence. The curriculum includes many aspects of personal, social and health education, including a healthy lifestyle. It is enriched with a good range of contributions from external speakers and experts, including a dance coach and a range of educational visits. There is a good range of well-attended after-school activities, including sports, the arts, reading and computers.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. The school takes good care of its pupils within a welcoming Christian environment. Pupils feel safe and respected. They know that they can discuss problems with a skilled, sympathetic adult. Child protection

arrangements are good and effective risk assessments are carried out regularly. The school takes into account the views of parents and pupils and addresses them. For example, when parents had concerns about how well their children learned in mixed-age classes, the school arranged a meeting to explain how well their children were making progress. Pupils with learning difficulties are well cared for by supportive staff. Outside agencies have a positive impact on learning. The school has successfully started to improve arrangements for tracking pupils' progress and setting targets for them. This is beginning to have a positive impact.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher provides an excellent sense of direction and purpose. Working closely with senior staff, he has established very good procedures to evaluate the school's performance and plan improvements. Other teachers are having a growing impact on standards. The plans for improvement are good and are being implemented effectively. However, while there have been improvements in achievement through improved teaching and target setting for pupils, implementation of improvement plans is not complete and it is too early to judge the impact of other initiatives. Parents are very supportive of the school. They are consulted and the school responds to their concerns rapidly and sympathetically.

Governors are well informed and support the school effectively. They play a major part in planning improvements and are fully aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school has dealt satisfactorily with the issues from the previous inspection and is well placed to make further improvements.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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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	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

We very much enjoyed our time at your school. You made us feel very welcome and many of you spoke to us in meetings, lessons and around school and helped us to gain a clear impression of your school.

The best things about your school are:

- Children make good progress in the Nursery and Reception and Years 1 and 2.
- The headteacher is giving excellent guidance on how to improve the school and the rest of the staff give him a lot of support.
- Your behaviour and attitudes are good, you work hard, enjoy being at school and your attendance is good.

To improve things further we have asked the school to:

- Improve your spelling, punctuation, handwriting and neatness.
- Increase the opportunities for you to read and write and to use mathematical skills and ICT in all subjects.
- Make sure that marking tells you what you need to do to make your work better.
- Give you opportunities to work independently, in groups with other pupils and to do investigations.