



Inspection Report

**Better
education
and care**

Unique Reference Number 106478
LEA Wigan
Inspection number 277572
Inspection dates 5 July 2006 to 5 July 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Martin Bradley HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to inspect any school in England. The inspection is to be treated as a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary	School address	Leigh Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Atherton
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Manchester, Lancashire M46 OPA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01942 883118
Number on roll	203	Fax number	01942 891108
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr D Benson
Date of previous inspection	8 May 2000	Headteacher	Mrs J Woods

Age group 4 to 11	Inspection dates 5 July 2006 - 5 July 2006	Inspection number 277572
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, individual staff, pupils and the chair of governors, scrutinised a range of documentation and pupils' work and visited every classroom. Eighty nine questionnaires were returned by parents.

Description of the school

St Michaels is a Church of England voluntary aided primary school. It was opened in 1869 and the present building dates from 1888. It serves a former coal mining village. Pupils come from a variety of backgrounds and when they start school their attainment is generally in line with national expectations. At the time of the inspection there were 203 pupils in 7 classes. Just over 12% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is below the national average. Nearly 19% of pupils have been identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities, which is slightly below the national average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. The exceptional leadership has transformed the school since the last inspection. Working with the strong support of the governing body, the headteacher and staff have raised standards of achievement and improved resources and the premises as well as ensuring that the pupils are able to feel part of the developments. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive. Comments included 'it is like a family unit, everybody is very friendly and you are constantly updated with your child's progress'; 'I have noticed a marked improvement in every aspect of the school: not just the enthusiastic way the children are taught and enjoy their time at school, but in the school itself. The building and facilities provided for the children are vastly improved as are school meals and after school activities. all credit to the teaching and support staff'.

Pupils' achievement is particularly good. Whereas the school's self evaluation saw it as good, the consistently high levels of attainment over several years indicate that it is outstanding. Attainment on entry is in line with national expectations, however by the end of Key Stage 2 pupils are achieving above those expectations, in many cases well above these. This is clear evidence of their good progress in meeting challenging targets. In 2006, as in the previous 2 years, nearly all Year 6 pupils achieved level 4 or above, whilst a third achieved level 5 in English and mathematics, and over two thirds achieved this level in science. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection in 2000. In the Foundation Stage, achievement is satisfactory and, whilst the children settle well, at times their work lacks challenge to extend their learning and assessment is not sufficiently used to inform planning of future work on a day to day basis. However the school's overall use of assessment is particularly good: as a recent review by the Local Authority (LA) noted 'very effective procedures (are) used to review and evaluate progress (and to) inform future planning'. Whilst the children in Key Stages 1 and 2 have annual and end of key stage targets, these are better developed in Key Stage 2. The annual individual targets are expressed in terms of skills and knowledge to be gained rather than national curriculum levels. Although they are reviewed termly and most pupils have a broad idea of what they need to do to improve their work, the targets are not always brought to their awareness as a matter of course in their day to day work. Most lessons use clear objectives and teachers make what they are looking for in the pupils' work very clear. This helps to focus the pupils' learning very effectively, albeit at a class or group level rather than an individual level. A strong feature of the school is its desire to continue to improve and this is what makes it an exceptional school. Its success has been effectively supported through the Northway Partnership, linked to a Beacon School in Liverpool, whereby 13 primary schools from four local authorities in Merseyside have come together for management development over several years. Through such support, as well as that from the LA, the school has established very effective management procedures. The Partnership work has also led to termly 'theme weeks' to develop creativity in learning. These focus on key skills and thinking skills as means of extending the pupils' learning across the curriculum. Other links are being developed with local secondary schools, whereby one will provide French teaching next year and another has developed a physical education and sport

strategic plan for 4 to 19 year olds for the area. There are also close links with the local church. The school has also developed outstanding provision for lunchtime activities in the playground. Coordinated by a very experienced lunchtime supervisor and led by the PE coordinator, a wide variety of activities are enjoyed by the pupils who take care to set out zones in the playground to demark play areas. A 'buddy' system is in place enabling older pupils to support younger ones. The School Council spoke warmly of these opportunities as well as of their overall enjoyment of school. They also appreciate the wide range of clubs held before and after school. These are mainly for Year 2 and above and include philosophy and Spanish as well as sports activities. One boy commented that he had been able to use his Spanish whilst on holiday. Provision for pupils' personal development and well-being is good. Their spiritual development is promoted not only through assemblies, but also through good work on themes such as caring and consideration for others. Pupils feel safe and are well aware of how they can approach adults when problems arise. As one parent observed 'St Michael's provides a sound, safe environment for all the children and the result is happy children'. Links with the church include years 5 and 6 helping at the autumn fair, thereby promoting their economic awareness as well as social education. Attendance is above average. The pupils' behaviour is particularly good, both in class and outside. Opportunities to take responsibility include a variety of monitor tasks as well as roles within the house system. When asked about any bullying, the pupils were able to recall an incident about three years ago, but firmly asserted that there had been no incidents since - 'the headteacher dealt with it'. The school meals provide an excellent choice, carefully planned for healthy eating and encouraging the pupils to sample new foods. They enjoy their meals and are well aware of healthy eating. The provision of toast during the mid morning break is greatly enjoyed. As one parent noted 'You know your children are being taught about respect and healthy living as well as the set curriculum'. The School Council also spoke knowledgeably about the recent Travel Plan encouraging walking to school and addressing car parking issues. The quality of teaching is good and the pupils' behaviour in lessons is particularly good. They are appropriately challenged in most lessons, although some commented that whole class work took too much time in some classes - they preferred to get on with their own work. Lesson observations during the inspection showed that the pace of teaching was generally at least satisfactory and in several cases good, maintaining the pupils' interest. Senior staff undertake lesson observations and provide staff with good feedback on their work. Teaching assistants are exceptionally well deployed, particularly in support of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This work, which is ably coordinated by the deputy headteacher, is based on a careful analysis of individual pupils' needs, matched to teaching assistants' skills and training, and in turn linked to a good variety of forms of support. These include emotional well-being groups withdrawn from classes. A homework club for the oldest pupils enables them to extend their learning. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and is responsive to local needs. Literacy and numeracy are carefully developed and when writing was identified as an issue, a well devised programme improved pupils' attainment in this area. Similarly speaking and vocabulary skills rightly remain a focus for the school's attention. The school has identified handwriting as requiring further attention. Members of the School Council correctly noted that computers are now being used across most

subjects, and good use is made of them to support work on topics as well as to produce PowerPoint presentations. The staff are highly committed to the school. They promote health and safety effectively and arrangements for safeguarding the children are regularly reviewed. Parents are kept well informed through the weekly newsletter and several commented on the good Key Stage 2 results which had featured in the newsletter prior to the inspection. Care, guidance and support are central to the work of the school and form the basis for its academic success. The school evaluated this as good, however the firm foundation which the care, guidance and support provides for the rest of the school's work and the extent to which they are promoted by all staff, makes it exceptional. The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The school's self analysis is clear and accurate, although it underestimates its success in this and some other areas. Issues have been appropriately identified and addressed, with priorities being established to good effect. The highly effective headteacher delegates well and staff at all levels promote the children's well-being and learning. The high quality analysis of data is effectively used to identify areas for development and in turn practical ways of promoting these. Planning at all levels is good and is carefully monitored by the deputy headteacher and senior management. Equality of opportunity is promoted at all times, including in the playground activities. In recent years the school has extended its resources through careful planning. Similarly improvements to the premises are well thought through as part of the good overall school improvement plan. This work, along with the academic work, is well supported by the governing body. The governors maintain a particularly good oversight of the work of the school, including its finances. Again, parents acknowledged the development of the premises and resources as major factors in the recent success of the school. The leadership and management provide the school with an excellent capacity to improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

n/a

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

n/a

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

n/a

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

n/a

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

n/a

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

n/a

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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?	1	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	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?	1	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	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	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	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	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	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?	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	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

As you know I visited St Michael's school recently. I really appreciated the help you gave me and especially in sharing your work and ideas about the school.

I saw that you work very hard and get on very well with each other. I was impressed by your politeness and your very good behaviour in lessons and around the school. You help each other both in lessons and during playtimes, and it was very nice to see how the older children helped the younger ones.

We think that your school is exceptionally good. Your hard work and that of the teachers and other staff helps you to make excellent progress in every class and to reach very good standards by the end of Year 6. You also have many opportunities to have wider experiences through clubs, to join in sports and other activities.

The staff and the governors have worked very hard to develop the school over several years, improving the school buildings and getting more resources. The staff also try to listen to what you say through the School Council, and we hope that you continue to enjoy the good school meals.

Thank you for making my visit so enjoyable. I wish you every success in the future.