



St Michael's Church of England Voluntary Aided Middle School, Colehill

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 113891
LEA Dorset
Inspection number 279275
Inspection dates 30 November 2005 to 1 December 2005
Reporting inspector Carol Worthington RISP

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

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|------------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Type of school | Middle deemed secondary | School address | Colehill Lane |
| School category | Voluntary aided | | Colehill |
| Age range of pupils | 9 to 13 | | Wimborne, Dorset BH21 7AB |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | Telephone number | 01202 883433 |
| Number on roll | 513 | Fax number | 01202 840145 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair of governors | Mrs Gill Lewington |
| Date of previous inspection | 4 October 1999 | Headteacher | Mr Paul Nation |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St. Michael's is an average sized middle school. There are slightly more girls than boys in most years. Pupils are mainly White British and a very small number are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The school serves an area which is socially advantaged. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. The number of pupils with special educational needs is average, but a lower than average proportion have statements of educational need. Attainment on entry to Year 5 is above average. The headteacher has been in post since just before the last inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St. Michael's is a good school with many outstanding features, rooted in its Christian foundation. Inspectors and the school agree on this judgement of the school's effectiveness. Teaching is good and pupils who join the school with mainly above average standards make good progress. The headteacher has shown some outstanding qualities of leadership in raising standards from average at the time of the last inspection to well above average now. Other issues raised at the last inspection have also been successfully tackled with the excellent support of the governors. The headteacher is very well supported by senior leaders and other managers and leadership and management are good overall. The school has the capacity to maintain its considerable improvement.

Leaders and managers have a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses but there are some things that could be done better. The school only has an incomplete picture of national test levels gained by pupils at their previous schools. In addition, although there are good examples of higher attainers being stretched in mixed ability classes that is not always the case.

Pupils are cared for exceptionally well. The school puts the highest priority on their personal development, and pupils' behaviour is excellent. They enjoy coming to school and want to learn. Many take part in the very wide range of extra-curricular activities provided. The vast majority of parents and pupils are very happy with the school and all it offers.

The school makes the best use of all its resources and provides excellent value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- improve records of pupils' attainment on entry to identify more accurately the progress made by individual pupils from the beginning of Year 5 to the end of Year 8
- use assessment more consistently to plan for the needs of individual pupils, particularly higher ability pupils in mixed ability classes.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils enter the school in Year 5 with above average standards. By the end of Year 6, standards achieved in English, mathematics and science are well above average and pupils therefore make good progress. A high proportion reach the higher Level 5 in all three subjects in national tests. Improvement in standards since the last inspection, when they were average, has been considerable. Pupils continue to make good progress up to the end of Year 8 in all subjects and particularly so in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT). Governors set challenging targets for pupils, which are met. Those who gain places at the local grammar school leave at the end of Year 7. Feedback from schools to which pupils move on to at the end of

Year 8, show that they do very well in national tests for 13-year-olds in English, Mathematics and Science. In recent years they have achieved results which were in the highest 5% nationally.

Although it is indisputable that pupils make good progress overall during their time at school the exact progress of individual pupils is not quite as clear. This is because the school does not receive all the records of pupils' National Curriculum levels from their previous schools, and therefore their exact starting points are not clear.

Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in all years. This is particularly marked in Year 6, when the very good use of assessment and support helps to make progress exceptionally rapid.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The school's strong Christian ethos gives excellent support to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are encouraged to think deeply and discuss serious issues, such as those associated with their enthusiastic involvement in charity work. Their attitudes to school are exemplary and they work well together in class and in other activities. Pupils take full advantage of the opportunities presented by the school council to suggest improvements. This has led to a new 'quiet area' and changes to the lunchtime menus. Year 8 pupils in particular take on many responsibilities such as welcoming new pupils into Year 5, helping younger pupils to read and leading house teams. They appreciate that taking on such responsibilities is a good preparation for their future education and working life.

Pupils' confident, articulate and excellent behaviour is a hallmark of the school. They treat each other with consideration, respect those from other cultures and conduct themselves safely. They enjoy school and their attendance is well above average.

Pupils take pride in their excellent contribution to the school and the outside community through high levels of involvement in extra-curricular activities, including links with the church, inter-school activities and public performances. The school play is a highlight of community life. Pupils realise the importance of a healthy lifestyle. They enjoy the much improved meals in the new 'munchbox' canteen, set up following the timely intervention of parents and governors. Many participate with commitment in extra-curricular sport.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. The inspectors' joint lesson observations with the senior leadership team and other lessons sampled during the inspection correlate well with the school's previous evaluations of teaching and learning.

Most lessons are good, and a significant proportion is outstanding. A feature of all lessons is pupils' excellent behaviour and attitudes. Most teachers motivate pupils well through their high expectations and the challenging and interesting tasks. For example, a Year 7 class was highly involved in using ICT to devise an automatic watering system to care for a plant. In English, pupils' attention is often captured when writing stories, by teachers first presenting an extract with an exciting beginning which the class then finishes enthusiastically. Skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT develop well in lessons, because of the importance teachers attach to them in ensuring pupils can cope with their work and are well prepared for their next school. Most teachers use assessment well. However, despite examples of good practice, the use of assessment particularly to set challenging targets for higher attainers in mixed ability classes varies too much.

Teachers are well qualified, and non-specialist teaching in science has improved tremendously since the previous inspection, when it was an issue.

Teaching assistants mostly support pupils with special educational needs well and this contributes positively to the good progress they make.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum is enriched by the teaching of French in Year 6, and the high proportion of pupils who learn to play musical instruments. Planning is good and the curriculum is linked well to work done in local first schools. The programme in personal, social and health education promotes a good awareness of healthy living. The good allocation of time for physical education, an excellent range of sporting activities, and the availability of healthy food complements it well. Specialist lessons in literacy, numeracy and ICT are supported well by what happens in other lessons. Opportunities are profitably used in religious education, music and art to develop pupils' awareness of other cultures. Very good use of video-conferencing widens perspectives and allows for example, direct communication with a school in France.

Teachers provide an outstanding range of extra-curricular activities especially in performing arts, sports activities and in supporting local charities. School teams gain much success at county, regional and National level.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school takes very good care of its pupils. All are well known by a very committed staff, who work successfully to ensure that pupils are happy and that most achieve to the best of their ability. This was confirmed by pupils who told the inspection team that they feel safe and secure, enjoy coming to school and appreciate having a say in what goes on. Support for vulnerable pupils is very effective. Imaginative strategies involving a range of external agencies are used to ensure that these pupils make good progress and are also happy at school.

Parents recognise and appreciate the quality of the school's care, guidance and support. The school listens to their concerns and responds. It has, for example, set up a very good website to help deal with any questions or concerns which parents may have. There is a very effective system for ensuring the health and safety of pupils and that is especially necessary in some of the school's practical areas where space is very limited. Child protection procedures are firmly in place.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good overall; taking into consideration all levels of responsibility in the school. The headteacher's outstanding leadership has been the main catalyst for change and improvement, with excellent support from the governors. As well as the striking improvement in standards since the last inspection, there have been other significant improvements. The monitoring of teaching and health and safety matters, which were heavily criticised at the last inspection, are now rigorous. Leaders and management at all levels put the welfare of pupils and the improvement of the school at the heart of their decision-making. The impact of the school's intent to nurture all aspects of pupils' learning is seen in pupils' outstanding personal development and the equally impressive quality of care, guidance and support.

Leaders and managers have a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses through the outstanding quality of their self-evaluation. This a major factor in sustaining a very good capacity to improve. The school has already identified the need to improve the use of assessment to ensure higher attainers are always challenged and that is in line with its total commitment to equality of opportunity. The school is well capable of plugging the gaps which exist in some pupils' records on entry to the school. The quality of teaching and support staff is given a high priority, helped by the very good arrangements for the professional development of all staff. All staff, governors, pupils and parents are fully involved in reviewing the school's progress and performance through consultation and questionnaires. Financial planning maximises the use of resources.

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Inspection judgements

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| <i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i> | School Overall | 16-19 |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|

Overall effectiveness

| | | |
|--|-----|----|
| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 2 | 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 | NA | NA |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 1 | 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? | 2 | NA |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 2 | NA |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 2 | 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? | 1 | NA |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 1 | NA |
| The behaviour of learners | 1 | NA |
| The attendance of learners | 1 | NA |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 1 | NA |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 1 | NA |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 1 | NA |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 1 | 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? | 2 | NA |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 2 | 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

St Michael's Church of England VA Middle School Colehill Lane Colehill Wimborne BH21 7AB

2 December 2005

Dear Pupils,

Thank you for being welcoming and helpful when we came to inspect your school recently. We very much enjoyed talking to you, watching you working with your teachers and speaking to them about your progress at school.

We agree with you that your school is good and there are many things that are excellent. A large number of you could not think of anything you could do to improve the school and we agree that there is very little.

You praised your headteacher and he does give excellent leadership. Staff care about you and do their best to keep you safe. Many of you said that you enjoy coming to school. We agree that it is a happy place and that you are receiving a good education. Your school council does a good job. Your teachers listen to what you say, often acting upon it, as with your ideas for your quiet area and your 'munchbox' menus.

We believe that although most of you have work which challenges you well, there are a few lessons where that does not happen, particularly for those of you who are already very good at your work. We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Carol Worthington Lead inspector