



# St Michael's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Bishop's Stortford

Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 117426  
**LEA** HERTFORDSHIRE LEA  
**Inspection number** 280074  
**Inspection dates** 31 January 2006 to 1 February 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Mrs. Marianick Ellender-Gele LI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Apton Road
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		CM23 3SN
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01279652607
<b>Number on roll</b>	241	<b>Fax number</b>	01279654253
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr.Graham Willson
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	5 June 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr. Martin Willis

<b>Age group</b> 3 to 11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 31 January 2006 - 1 February 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 280074
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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

This average-sized primary school draws its pupils from the town of Bishop's Stortford. Children join Reception with above average levels of knowledge and understanding. There is a small proportion whose first language is not English and few children are from minority ethnic groups. The number of pupils with learning difficulties is below average although a few pupils suffer from severe disabilities. The school is very popular and over-subscribed.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 1**

St Michael's is an outstanding school giving particularly good value for money. It judges its own effectiveness accurately. The determination of the headteacher and the excellent team work ensure that pupils achieve as much as they can. The commitment from pupils and staff is especially high. The school's caring, family ethos makes it an extremely safe and welcoming place to be. Pupils achieve particularly well and reach standards that are well above average. Standards of behaviour are outstanding. The quality of teaching is of a consistently high standard with many outstanding features. Lessons are stimulating and, consequently, pupils are inquisitive and eager to learn. Teachers set clear objectives and challenging targets. Each pupil's progress is checked diligently and effective additional support is given to those who need it. The excellent curriculum is accessible to all pupils and the range of extra activities is exemplary. Effective provision for children in nursery and reception enables them to reach above average standards and they achieve extremely well. Pupils and parents are rightly very proud of the school. Leadership and management are outstanding at all levels. Subject leaders and governors rightly recognise that pupils could do even better in their writing and that strategies to develop mathematical and investigative skills need consistent reinforcement. Since the previous inspection the school has improved its provision for more able pupils and this is now good. The school has excellent capacity to improve further.

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

- Implement the priorities already identified in the school development plan which focus on the further development of writing and the reinforcement of mathematical and investigative skills.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

When pupils enter Reception their attainment is above average, particularly in their personal, social and emotional development. Pupils work up to their capabilities throughout the school so that by the time they are in Year 6 their attainment is high. Results in national tests are consistently above average and the school regularly exceeds its challenging targets. Standards in reading are particularly strong. There is no significant difference in the progress of boys and girls or for those whose first language is not English. Higher ability pupils do well at this school. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make extremely good progress because of the effective identification of their needs and the sensitive way in which support is provided in the classroom or in small groups. They achieve particularly well in relation to their starting points.

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

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils praise and love their school. They thoroughly enjoy school life and the many extra activities offered to them. Consequently, behaviour, both inside and outside the classroom, is exemplary. Pupils show excellent attitudes to each other and their teachers. All these attributes contribute significantly to their outstanding personal development and enthusiasm for learning. They are very confident, mature and courteous. They are willing to engage in sensible and responsible discussion. The attendance rate is well above average. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. This is underpinned by the Christian ethos that permeates school life. Pupils are offered good opportunities for prayerful reflection and to consider the needs of others. Pupils accept personal responsibility very well and the House Captain programme contributes greatly to this. For example, pupils explain clearly how they help younger pupils, how they should give support to friends who cannot access to internet at home and why some children are less fortunate than others. Pupils' social development and community awareness are high because of their involvement in supporting a range of charities. Pupils confidently contribute their views about the school through the recently established whole-school council. The importance of staying healthy and safe is well understood by pupils. The playground is an enjoyable place; pupils keep active, look out for each other and feel confident about telling adults or older pupils if they have a problem. They understand the importance of regular exercise and join willingly a variety of clubs during or after school. Pupils develop a good range of skills that they will eventually need in the work place. Year 6 pupils show the necessary knowledge and confidence to move to secondary education and understand what is important for their future.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 1**

Teaching and learning are first rate, with some outstanding features. This highly effective teaching, combined with pupils' positive attitudes towards their work, underpins the brisk progress that is made. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. They plan carefully to challenge and extend the pupils' knowledge and understanding. The support staff offer outstanding support to the teaching team. Relationships are positive at all levels. Teachers use effective strategies to encourage and reward good behaviour and pupils respond positively. Another feature of the excellent teaching is the teachers' secure subject knowledge, which is reflected in the interesting work that is provided for pupils. For example, in a design and technology lesson the teacher expertly used a visit to a park to enthuse pupils. The rigorous planning and the precise balance between support and independence encouraged pupils to be creative and work things out for themselves. By the end of the lesson pupils demonstrated exemplary standards and progress. There are clear and well understood procedures for assessing pupils' work. This includes the use of regular

assessment opportunities to ensure that the next stage of the work meets the specific needs of all pupils. Parents are particularly well informed about their child's progress. Pupils who have learning difficulties are taught skilfully. Their individual education plans identify clearly where help is needed. Consequently they do especially well.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 1**

Frequent comments made by pupils about their teachers were: 'they make the topics so much fun', 'they teach us even outside lessons', 'the visits are so interesting' and 'the science week was brilliant'. These comments accurately depict the broad, stimulating and exceptionally well planned curriculum. Pupils' creativity is further developed by the stimulating provision in sports, music and the arts. The skills gained in one subject are used well by pupils to extend their learning in other subjects and information and communication technology skills are increasingly used to good effect in a range of subjects. The personal and social development programme provides excellent opportunity for raising awareness of broader issues such as personal safety, relationships and the dangers of drugs and smoking. The range of educational visits and extra-curricular activities is impressive. These broaden the pupils' horizons and contribute significantly to enabling them to become responsible, mature young people.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

This aspect of the school's work is outstanding. The school believes that every child is of the utmost importance and this is successfully reflected in its provision to ensure pupils' welfare and safety. Teachers and support staff know each pupil personally. Personal development and academic needs are regularly tracked and monitored. Targets set for individuals and groups are used extremely effectively to support learning. As relationships in the school are so strong, pupils feel able to discuss any problems with an appropriate adult. Child protection procedures are fully in place and there is regular training on such issues. Pupils with learning difficulties are given excellent support and those with particular talents, for example in art, music and physical education are well provided for.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

Leadership and management are outstanding and are highly effective in maintaining the special ethos of the school, whilst striving to raise standards further. The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide excellent leadership and have been instrumental in creating and maintaining a stimulating learning environment for all pupils. They are extremely well supported by other members of the senior management team, curriculum co-ordinators and governors. Staff, parents and governors have a secure understanding of the school and rigorously check the effectiveness of its work and impact of any changes made. As a result, staff, parents and governors have a very

clear idea of the school's many strengths and areas for improvement. The school development plan uses the findings of self-evaluation and external reviews highly effectively to identify key priorities and to ensure the continuing success of the school. Everyone involved in the management of the school have successfully created a positive family ethos where staff, governors, parents and pupils work well together. This helps ensure that all pupils do their best and are cared for to the best of the school's ability. Improvement since the previous inspection has been brisk and there is excellent capacity for improvement.

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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>	<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>	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	1	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	1	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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	1	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	1	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	1	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	1	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1	NA

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
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**

Thank you very much for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school. We very much enjoyed coming into your lessons and looking at your work. We especially enjoyed talking to many of you, and seeing you participate so well in your lessons and the many lunch time and after school activities. You are working very hard and show great interest in your work. You learn very well and make very good progress. It is obvious that you enjoy school and look forward to coming each day. We thought that you were extremely well behaved, very polite and very helpful to each other and visitors. We saw that you enjoy the interesting work your teachers give you, and the support that they provide in lessons to help you to do well. All the adults in school look after you very well and help you to feel safe and keep healthy. You really appreciate all the extra opportunities the school gives you, especially visits and clubs. We have seen the excellent way in which your headteacher, staff and school governors run the school. We enjoyed looking at the colourful displays around the school and we learned a lot from them about what you do in school and on visits. Your headteacher and teachers already know what they need to do in order to make your school even better. They know that they need to make sure you improve your writing even more and that you practise your mathematical and investigative skills. Good luck to you all in the future.