



St Michael's Roman Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 118756
LEA Medway
Inspection number 280386
Inspection dates 30 November 2005 to 1 December 2005
Reporting inspector Alison Grainger RISP

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Hills Terrace
School category	Voluntary aided		Chatham
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Kent ME4 6PX
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01634 842922
Number on roll	360	Fax number	01634 407445
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Father Christopher Baker
Date of previous inspection	14 September 1998	Headteacher	Mr Patrick Reid

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Situated close to Chatham town centre, this large school serves the parish of St Michael's. About three-fifths of pupils are of White British heritage and the remainder are from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. Just over a quarter of pupils have English as an additional language. Nineteen pupils are currently at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is average. Although there is some variation from year to year, attainment on entry to the Reception Year is below the level expected overall.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school is satisfactory in its overall effectiveness and in the value for money it provides. The inspectors' view and the school's view of its effectiveness are the same. Parents are pleased with the school, particularly the warm family atmosphere.

Good provision in the Reception Year helps children to achieve well and this is built on well in Year 1. Satisfactory gains are made in other years, although pupils' progress and the standards they attain are not quite as good in mathematics as in English and science. The average and more capable pupils do not do well enough in mathematics in Year 2.

Teaching is satisfactory overall. Even so, improvements are needed to help pupils to make better progress. Teaching meets the large majority of pupils' needs. However, a tendency to 'teach to the middle' means that it is not closely enough matched to individual needs in the mixed ability classes. Although pupils with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress, they do not always have the right support and activities in lessons.

Pupils of all ages behave well, enjoy school, and form positive relationships. However, not enough is done to promote pupils' awareness of cultural diversity or to celebrate the range of cultural traditions of the pupils themselves.

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Although the school has a reasonable awareness of the main priorities for improvement, the checking of how well teaching contributes to pupils' learning is not always rigorous enough. Given the satisfactory improvement since the last inspection, the school has the necessary capacity to develop further.

What the school should do to improve further

- improve pupils' progress and raise standards in mathematics, particularly in Year 2
- ensure that teaching is matched to pupils' individual needs, including those of pupils with English as an additional language
- develop pupils' awareness of the diversity of traditions, values and beliefs in modern Britain
- ensure that the checking of how teaching contributes to learning is more rigorous.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils make satisfactory progress during their time in the school. The results in the end of Year 2 tests have been close to the national average in recent years. In 2005, however, they dipped in writing and mathematics to a level significantly below the national average.

The dip in the end of Year 2 results arose partly from natural variations in year groups of pupils. However, not all pupils did as well as they should and the school did not meet its targets. Currently, pupils in the Reception Year and Year 1 make some good

gains in reading, writing and work with numbers. This good start is being built on satisfactorily in reading and writing in Year 2 and standards are again at the level expected. However, too many pupils of average and above average capability are not doing well enough in Year 2 in mathematics.

Pupils' results at the end of Year 6 in 2005 were broadly in line with the national average and overall targets were met. These results represent satisfactory achievement in relation to pupils' starting points in Year 3 and are better than at the last inspection. In mathematics, however, the results and pupils' progress were not as good as in English and science.

Pupils with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress. There are examples of pupils starting Year 3 with low attainment and moving on well in English. Pupils with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress overall, particularly in communicating in English.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is satisfactory overall. Pupils behave well in lessons and want to learn. The significant majority enjoy school a good deal because the school is like a big family. Attendance is satisfactory.

Relationships are positive and pupils are courteous when talking with adults. Boys and girls and pupils from different cultural backgrounds mix well. However, they do not develop enough understanding about how each other's values and beliefs differ, or gain sufficient awareness of the diversity of modern multicultural society. Pupils make good gains in their moral and social development. Their spiritual development is supported through the Catholic ethos of the school.

Pupils develop a sound understanding of the importance of healthy eating and regular exercise. They adopt safe practices, for example, they move sensibly about the school and know how to keep safe in practical lessons. Skills important for pupils' future economic well-being, such as working in groups, making decisions, showing initiative, and taking responsibility, also develop adequately. Pupils make a satisfactory contribution to the school and wider community.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Satisfactory teaching ensures that pupils make sound progress. In the Reception Year and Year 1 basic skills in reading, writing and work with numbers are taught effectively. Teachers across the school provide good explanations during lessons so that pupils have a clear understanding of what they are expected to do. Often, they deploy support staff effectively to help pupils with learning difficulties.

The main factor that prevents teaching from being better than satisfactory is that there is a tendency, in many classes, to 'teach to the middle' in introductions to lessons and in the activities set. This is why pupils' progress in mathematics is only just satisfactory overall and why the average and more capable pupils do not do well enough in this subject in Year 2. It is also a shortcoming that is evident in teaching in other subjects.

Support staff work successfully with small groups of pupils at an early stage of learning English to develop their skills in English communication. However, class teachers do not consistently ensure that pupils with English as an additional language are given precisely the right activities and support.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets pupils' needs and external requirements satisfactorily. In the Reception Year there is good attention to children's personal, social and emotional development, as well as to the basics of literacy and numeracy. Reading sessions matched to pupils' needs assist their progress in reading as they move up through the school. There are not enough opportunities for pupils to use and develop their skills in writing and mathematics in work in other subjects in Years 1 to 6. However, there is some good practice for the school to draw on, such as when Year 5 pupils write in the role of people in Victorian times in history.

Not enough attention is given to developing pupils' awareness of cultural diversity, including the range of cultural backgrounds of the pupils themselves, such as through literature and the arts. The enrichment of day-by-day lessons through visits, visitors who talk to pupils, and sporting activities is satisfactory.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The care for pupils gives satisfactory support to their progress and enjoyment of school. Pupils appreciate the warm family atmosphere. Almost all feel that they have an adult to turn to should the need arise. Staff are good at supporting pupils who start school other than at the usual time of admission. The school council helps pupils to have a say in matters such as the provision of play equipment. Staff provide satisfactory encouragement to pupils to help make them aware of the need to eat healthily and take regular exercise.

Child protection arrangements are satisfactory. The number of adults supervising outdoor play is adequate and the school building is free of major hazards. Some issues about the site have been brought to the attention of senior staff.

Pupils are given helpful feedback about how well they are doing with their school work. Good opportunities in some classes help pupils to identify how they might do better, but this is not done consistently well across the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The leadership and management of the school ensure that pupils receive a satisfactory standard of education. Self-evaluation is satisfactory and ensures that, for the most part, the right priorities are identified for improvement. Since the last inspection, for example, developments in tracking pupils' progress have helped the school to identify strengths and weaknesses in pupils' performance.

The headteacher in particular recognises that the school is accountable for the standards pupils attain. However, the checking of how teaching contributes to learning is not always as rigorous as it should be. It does not always identify how teaching contributes to pupils' progress, such as in mathematics. As a result, teaching is sometimes seen as being better than it is.

The member of staff responsible for developing the provision for pupils with English as an additional language is clear about the improvements needed. She has already taken some good action, for example, in introducing small group sessions to develop skills in English communication.

Governance is satisfactory, as is the involvement of pupils and parents in improving the school. Given the rate of development since the last inspection, particularly in tackling weaknesses in leadership and management at a senior level, the school is satisfactorily placed to improve further.

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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?	3	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	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?	3	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	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	3	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	3	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 Roman Catholic Primary School Hills Terrace Chatham Kent ME4 6PX

2 December 2005

Dear Pupils

Thank you for helping us when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking with you and think that you are very friendly and polite. We found that most of you enjoy school a lot and that you behave well. You get on well together and with the adults in school.

We found that the school is like a big family. We are pleased that you feel that you have an adult to talk to if you are worried. You are sensible when you move about the school.

Children starting school settle in well. They get off to a good start in the Reception Year and Year 1. As you move up through the school to the end of Year 6 your progress is satisfactory.

We found that there are some areas in which your school could improve. We have asked your teachers to help you to do better in mathematics in particular. We have also asked them to make sure that all of you have work and support that is at the right level for you. To ensure that this happens, your headteacher and other staff will look carefully at how what they do helps you to make progress.

We saw that the children in your school come from different backgrounds, and some of you are new to this country. It would be interesting for you to find out more about the wide range of backgrounds of people living in Britain today.

Thank you again for helping us and for giving us such a warm welcome.

With best wishes
Yours sincerely Alison Grainger (Lead inspector)