

# St Michael's CofE Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	102135
<b>Local Authority</b>	Haringey
<b>Inspection number</b>	286284
<b>Inspection dates</b>	25–26 April 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Carmen Rodney HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	464
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr William Nathan
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Barbara Smith
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	21 May 2002
<b>School address</b>	North Road Highgate London N6 4BG
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8340 7441
<b>Fax number</b>	020 8340 9452

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

St Michael's is oversubscribed and much larger than most primary schools. The school serves a prosperous ward, but over the past eight years there has been a slight shift in the social circumstances of the intake. More pupils are now entering the school with a special need and from less prosperous backgrounds. The school has a Nursery with 26 children. Most pupils are of White British heritage though a wide range of other minority ethnic groups are represented. A well below average proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The number of pupils with a learning difficulty is just below average and the percentage of pupils speaking English as a second language is slightly above average. The school is housed in a well cared for Grade 2 listed building.

## 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 school provides its pupils with an outstanding quality of education. An overwhelming majority of parents share this view. The positive response to the parents' questionnaire demonstrates that parents support the school's code for the pupils: the three Cs of care, courtesy and consideration. As a church school, the Christian faith underpins the ethos and its work and extends to using the school even on Sundays. For example, the comment of one parent, 'St Michael's provides a caring and stimulating environment', typifies the distinct regard that so many parents have for the school. The school enjoys a unique relationship with the parents' association which actively supports it with very generous donations, extensive fund raising and a wide range of voluntary activities. In turn, the school recognises the excellent support of the majority of parents. Nevertheless, a small minority of parents rightly wish to see some improvements in the level of communication with the school.

The school provides excellent value for money and its judgement of its overall effectiveness as good was far too modest. The school is very mindful that children enter the Nursery with skills that are above those expected for three-year-olds. It therefore builds very well on children's starting point so that all can reach their full potential. Children receive a very good start in the Foundation Stage and make very good progress in developing basic literacy and numeracy skills. By the time they enter Year 1, most are exceeding their expected goals. Pupils make excellent progress academically because learning is personalised and based on the use of assessment information to track their progress and take remedial action to reflect individual needs. As a result, standards are exceptionally high in the national tests in Years 2 and 6. Although results vary from year to year, high standards have been sustained since the last inspection.

Pupils achieve high standards because the school has very high expectations of what they can achieve and teachers and support staff work very closely with parents to extend pupils' learning. However, staff and governors are not complacent about the school's performance. There is commitment and dedication to identifying the next steps needed to broaden pupils' knowledge and understanding of learning. The school therefore uses assessment data and test results exceptionally well to critically assess achievements in order to maintain the expected high standards. There is drive for further improvement through developing provision and wider professional development.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher, senior staff at all levels and governors work very well together as a team so that pupils can benefit from further improvements. Governors fulfil their roles very well and make a major contribution to school improvement through the way they challenge and support the school. The capacity for further improvement is outstanding.

The quality of care, guidance and support is outstandingly good. The school enables pupils to enjoy their learning in a safe and secure environment which provides them with opportunities to become confident learners able to take on responsibilities such as mentoring their peers from as early as Year 1. Character building is central to the pupils' personal development and well being which is outstanding, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The pupils' attitudes and behaviour are excellent and their attendance is mostly good, all of which contribute to their high achievement.

An outstanding curriculum and rich range of enrichment activities when combined with the excellent teaching overall contribute to pupils being exposed to a wide range of learning experiences. These provide pupils with great opportunities to gain knowledge about other cultures, experience specialist teaching and various study options which stimulate their thinking and propel them to love learning and achieve highly.

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

The school development plan and self-evaluation rightly identifies minor issues for further improvement. As at the last inspection, there are no major areas for improvement.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

The school is in the top 5% of schools in the country in terms of standards achieved and progress made by its pupils. Standards at the end of Years 2 and 6 are consistently well above national averages. All pupils including those with learning difficulties and disabilities and those from minority ethnic groups make excellent progress. Expectations are very high and even the lower ability pupils constantly strive upwards to meet the level of the best. The more able and the gifted and talented pupils have their needs met through targeted specialist classes so that their abilities are extended further. The school's very thorough tracking system and personalised learning approach ensure that targets are set appropriately so that all pupils are challenged to do well. School interventions are used very well to support and challenge pupils. The very effective deployment of individualised support from the teaching assistants enables all supported pupils to meet their targets and make excellent progress in line with their peers. The excellent provision in the Foundation Stage ensures that even the youngest make very good progress from their above average attainment on entry to the school.

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

### **Grade: 1**

Outstanding personal development and well-being, and excellent behaviour, assist pupils well in making rapid progress. Pupils enjoy coming to school. They are confident that if anything does go wrong the adults around them will take care of it. Attendance is improving as a result of stringent school action and is now good.

Awareness of spirituality and morality develop well in assemblies and religious studies lessons, so pupils, for example, understand right and wrong and demonstrate care and consideration for others. Emphasis on social and moral education has resulted in well mannered and polite pupils who take responsibility well, for instance by being buddies and mediators, showing a social maturity beyond their years. Pupils also behave responsibly when discussing targets with their teachers. They have a very good understanding of healthy lifestyles. The democratically elected school council use their position well to bring about changes, for example, school lunches have improved. All these matters enhance pupils' life skills.

Extensive participation in charitable fund-raising activities locally and globally helps to develop pupils' awareness of the richness of cultural diversity in Britain today. High standards of useful basic skills complete the strong picture of excellent preparation for the next stage and life beyond.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 1

The quality of teaching and learning, including the Foundation Stage, is outstanding. It has improved since the last inspection and is a major factor leading to the very high standards achieved. Teachers use their subject knowledge well to plan well-structured lessons, with due regard to including all learners. 'The teachers are great!' a pupil said, on being asked, 'What is special about your school?' Relationships between adults and pupils are very good. Teachers know their pupils and their needs particularly well. They are adept at giving praise and challenge. As a result, pupils are motivated and confident learners who strive to meet their teachers' high expectations. Teachers extend pupils' learning through effective questioning and encouraging pupils to explain their answers. This contributes well to their development of excellent speaking and listening skills and making rapid progress, including those learning English as an additional language.

Classroom assistants are expertly deployed, supporting pupils very well. Teaching for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is exemplary. A range of targeted intervention ensures gaps in pupils' learning are suitably addressed. Marking of work is regular, positive and clear, and includes helpful comments that show pupils how to improve their work.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 1

The school provides an extensive and rich curriculum which reflects its vision for excellence. The diversity of the outstanding curriculum provision, including the Foundation Stage curriculum, prepares pupils well for life in a multi-racial society. The model of subject specialism adopted by the school helps with transition to secondary school. One parent commented that 'the specialist teaching is an asset so that the move to secondary school is not so drastic'. The enrichment activities, including information and communication technology (ICT) web building are excellent and well attended by all children in the school. They include a wide range of high quality experiences for pupils to enjoy including sport, instrumental and vocal lessons, French, Italian, craft, and drama. The curriculum is enhanced by visits to places of interest, visitors to the school and residential trips. The school has excellent links in the community and church. They play an active part in school life; the local vicar taking assembly and teaching religious education. The school helps pupils to understand the principles endorsed in their Christian faith through, for example, religious education and donations and gifts to charities and their elderly neighbours.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 1

Improving on the good quality noted at the last inspection, care, guidance and support are all outstanding, mainly because of the values promoted by all adults in the school. The school motto is held dear by all members of the school community so that the staff are excellent role models for the pupils. Assessment and academic guidance are real strengths, particularly for the 5-11 year olds, contributing to the exceptional progress pupils make. Individual targets are appropriately set for all, and progress is carefully tracked. The school is rigorous in identifying those who are at risk of underachieving and they are supported very well indeed. Risk

assessments, and all statutory checks, are robust and ensure that pupils are safe. The school works well with outside agencies, the local community, and particularly with the church, to promote the well-being of pupils, so that they are safe, healthy, and enjoy their educational experience very much.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

The headteacher's leadership, ably supported by the senior team and governors has been a key factor in ensuring that the school maintains its reputation as a high achieving school within the local community and diocese. She has ensured that all staff and governors are working together towards a common goal, putting pupils first and seeking opportunities to raise standards even further irrespective of their ability, need or ethnicity.

Strong team work and the emphasis on professional development ensure that benefits are shared widely among the staff. The school also works with other partner schools to spread and develop good practice. There is commitment to reviewing practice; hence, lessons are carefully monitored to identify strengths and areas for improvement. Procedures for analysing and using assessment data to identify the achievements of different groups of pupils are highly effective. However, there is scope for developing the analysis to make more specific reference to the performance of minority ethnic pupils. Governance of the school is excellent. Governors, while supporting the school very well, are unrelenting in asking searching questions about performance, initiatives and spending. Planning for the future is secure.

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## Annex A

## 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>
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

### The quality of provision

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

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

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

4 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Michael's CofE Voluntary Aided Primary School, North Road, Highgate, London, N6 4BG

Thank you all for being so welcoming when we visited your school. We are writing to give you some feedback on the fantastic things we found out about your school.

Your school is excellent. Your teachers give you terrific opportunities to learn so many different things. For example, they use their good subject expertise to help all of you in Years 3–6 to begin developing skills in a range of subjects and topics. The school curriculum is excellent. It is imaginative and allows you to receive fantastic tips and instructions from specialists who help you to develop an even wider range of skills and knowledge about lots of fun subjects and topics. For instance, you learn different crafts and languages such as Italian and French. This is really exciting stuff. Your curriculum is also wonderful because of the fantastic opportunities you are given to take part in lots of clubs, go away on field trips and learn about other cultures and people.

You are set challenging targets and the test results are always among some of the best in the country. Brilliant! You all make excellent progress. You really enjoy your school. In fact, one of you was bursting to tell us, 'this school is wonderful'. We agree with you and your parents that your school is a very good place to be.

The adults look after you very well and they know exactly how to keep you safe and secure. They are also very good at making sure that you understand how to learn well and they are going to do even more work on checking your learning.

You are very well prepared for when you go on to secondary school and we agree with your parents that the school gives you all the right skills in reading, writing and numeracy that will last for a very, very long time. The school also works very closely with your parents and the church to give to you a first class start in life. This helps you to work confidently and not give up. Your behaviour is extremely good and you follow the school's 3Cs very well. All of this helps you to recognise how you can share and give your time and help to others in the school, the church, local community and schools abroad.

Your achievements are excellent because of the brilliant work of the headteacher and governors. So, we left your school believing that it will continue to improve. We wish you the very best in the future.

Carmen Rodney

Lead inspector HMI