



# St Michael's CofE Primary School, Great Lever

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 105214  
**Local Authority** Bolton  
**Inspection number** 287159  
**Inspection dates** 12–13 February 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Marie Cordey

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 address</b>	Green Lane
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Bolton
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11		Lancashire BL3 2PL
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01204 333063
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	327	<b>Fax number</b>	01204 333064
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Margaret Brockie
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Alison Hart
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	8 May 2001		

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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

This is a larger than average school in Bolton. The vast majority of pupils are at an early stage of learning English and a third of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A quarter of the pupils are eligible for free school meals. A small minority of pupils arrive from overseas with little notice. There have been significant changes in staffing over the past two years and the headteacher took up post in September 2005.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

St Michael's school provides its pupils with a satisfactory and improving standard of education. Although standards are exceptionally low, they are gradually moving upwards following a long period of decline. The clear vision and rigour of the headteacher have made a significant contribution to this improvement. However, although improving, standards throughout the school are still not high enough. Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress from their starting points and their achievement is satisfactory.

The vast majority of pupils are at an early stage of learning English but they quickly become settled in the school. This is because of carefully planned support and lesson planning. The quality of the Foundation Stage is good because of good leadership and good teaching. Children settle in well and make good progress from their exceptionally low starting points. Satisfactory support is provided for the large numbers of pupils who join the school other than in the Nursery and Reception classes.

Pupils' personal development and well-being is satisfactory and includes some good features. Pupils have begun to take on more responsibilities and relish the increased opportunities to talk to adults and become involved in improving their school. Pupils behave satisfactorily and show respect for their teachers and each other, although a small number become restless when they are insufficiently involved and challenged in lessons. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. It is good at the Foundation Stage because of good planning that focuses closely on the children's learning needs. In the rest of the school, lesson planning overall now provides more challenge for the pupils and their different levels of ability. Nevertheless, there is still insufficient challenge in some lessons. Staff work skilfully to support and care for pupils from a very wide range of cultures and backgrounds. Positive relationships and the approachability of staff contribute much to pupils' enjoyment of school and to their sense of security. They say that behaviour is better since the introduction of the red and yellow card system and the work of the Year 6 mediators, 'who help to sort things out'. Parents value their friendship with the school and say that they are happy with the care provided. Whole-school tracking of pupils' progress is beginning to make a positive difference. Many pupils are aware of how they are performing but too many are not sure how to improve their work. Monitoring and evaluation by middle leaders and class teachers is beginning to improve standards but it is not consistently effective.

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory overall. The work of the supportive governing body is satisfactory and much appreciated by the school. The headteacher provides good leadership. She has emphatically identified and conveyed where the school needs to improve and put procedures in place that are taking the school forward. In partnership with her leadership team, she has established a strong and effective focus among all staff on raising standards. The school has good capacity to improve based on an accurate understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and the improvements already made under the leadership team. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection and the school provides satisfactory value for money.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning, and especially the level of challenge offered in some lessons, in order to raise standards throughout the school.
- Ensure that all pupils receive the advice they need in order to improve their work.
- Involve middle managers and classroom teachers consistently in the monitoring and evaluation of pupils' performance in order to raise standards and achievement.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Trends over time show a picture of declining standards and achievement. Standards in all core subjects are exceptionally low, as they have been since 2002. There have been long periods of staffing turbulence. New procedures, stable staffing and strong leadership are beginning to make a difference. So much so that pupils overall now show satisfactory achievement. There are a large number of pupils whose first language is not English and pupils who join school at other than the Reception class. These pupils are carefully supported so that they make satisfactory progress. Similar support for pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities ensures that they also make satisfactory progress. Although standards are still exceptionally low, they have improved from the pupils' starting points, especially in terms of use of language. Pupils' work indicates that they are making satisfactory progress.

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

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils' views are particularly well expressed in a thriving and articulate school council. The school has been successful in raising pupils' self-esteem and their self-reliance. Attendance has improved so that it is broadly in line with the national average but despite the school's best efforts, a small number of families persist in keeping their children off school. Weaknesses in numeracy and literacy leave pupils short of some of the basic skills they need for later life and their future economic well-being. The breakfast club encourages good manners and healthy eating, contributing to pupils' good awareness of this aspect of their learning. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall and includes good features. For example, cultural links with Hong Kong through the Knowledge Community project enhance pupils' awareness of other cultures. The cultures of many of the pupils' minority ethnic groups are keenly celebrated, although the pupils would like to study more cultures and faiths.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

The school's new systems for tracking and target-setting are raising both pupils' and teachers' expectations. Good use of interactive whiteboards sustains the pupils' interest as well as giving them chances to demonstrate their learning and understanding in a practical way. Occasionally the pace of learning is slowed when the class teacher talks for too long or too much time is allocated to tasks. Pupils then lose their concentration and become restless. There are good examples of questions that develop the pupils' thinking but in some lessons, pupils are not provided with sufficient challenge for them to achieve well. In some of the pupils' work, the standards of presentation are too low and the pupils have not developed sufficient pride in their work. The best marking is very good. It reinforces strengths and points out how to improve but this high quality is not consistent throughout the school.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

The quality of the school's curriculum is satisfactory, enabling pupils to make satisfactory progress. It is enhanced by a good range of additional activities. Pupils enjoy school trips, visits and school based activities such as art, dance and music. Improvements in information and communication technology (ICT) since the previous inspection mean that the pupils are more skilled in using computer technology. New tracking systems enable the school to make changes to the curriculum to further challenge pupils who are meeting their targets. This is at an early stage, however, and is not consistent across the school. Effective planning supports the pupils' personal, social and health education. Plans to offer more opportunities for drama activities to support the pupils' speaking and listening skills are developing but not yet used for all pupils. The new learning walls are very popular with the pupils and help to create a talking point. The Foundation Stage curriculum is carefully planned to promote learning well.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 3

Provision for pupils' care, guidance and support is satisfactory overall. Staff are vigilant with pupils who arrive from overseas at short notice and are quick to notify outside agencies. Pupils at an early stage of learning English receive sensitive support from all staff including bilingual assistants. Members of staff with particular expertise in managing behaviour are having a positive effect. Pupils who have difficulties are helped to handle their emotions better. Pupils now have targets in English, mathematics and science, although these are generally class targets rather than being sharply focused to guide pupils individually and this limits their usefulness. However, pupils are motivated by their targets. One pupil summed it up with the comment, 'They help us

to concentrate on what we have to do to improve.' Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive effective support. Although pupils generally feel safe in school, some pupils and their parents are concerned about traffic on the drive into school. Governors are aware of this and the school is discussing possible actions. Health and safety and child protection procedures are in place and the school follows national guidelines on the recruitment of staff.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Leaders and managers have made a secure analysis of where improvements are needed. Standards are gradually improving and the school recognises that they need to improve further. A rigorous use of new assessment systems is raising expectations and ensuring progress is tracked more closely. The school is implementing a robust approach to monitoring and evaluation, including rigorous lesson observations. Although this is not yet being used consistently throughout the school, it is having some positive impact on the quality of teaching and pupils' performance. The school has a strong commitment to valuing and supporting each pupil. Pupils from minority ethnic groups, in particular, are improving their performance. Pupils from Eastern Europe quickly absorb English and settle down quickly into school life. The school is making thoughtful use of its funding in an effort to raise standards. Additional appointments have been made to allow smaller group sizes in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. The quality of leadership and management of the Foundation Stage is good because of well-planned strategies that help the pupils make good progress.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<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>	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	3

<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.

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

### **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. You were very friendly and clearly wanted to tell us all about the things you do in school. We think your school is satisfactory. The best things about it are how much it is improving and that your work is getting better. Your headteacher is determined to make the school improve even more and school staff are helping her to do that. You have a big part to play in this and we are convinced that you will be very involved in school improvement. The standards you reach are now beginning to improve and we think they will continue to get better. Children in the Nursery and Reception classes make a good start to their school life.

You have made a difference by helping to plan the changes to the playground and involving all the pupils in the school council's work. We think that you should work hard with the school to improve your work in mathematics, science and English; we have asked your teachers to give you more challenging work in some lessons and to check closely how well you are doing so that they can help you do even better. We also want your teachers to make sure you get just the right advice to help you improve your work. We are sure you will because you are good pupils and keen to do well in your subjects.