

St Michael's RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108511
Local Authority	Newcastle upon Tyne
Inspection number	288124
Inspection date	4 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Rosemary Rodger

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	221
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Jean Miller
Headteacher	Mrs Margaret Kerridge
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2003
School address	Clumber Street North Elswick Newcastle upon Tyne Tyne and Wear NE4 7RE
Telephone number	0191 2739383
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This average sized Roman Catholic primary school is situated in the west end of the city. It serves an area of high social and economic deprivation. This is reflected in the well above average proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. About one third of pupils are of Asian heritage of which a third are in the early stages of learning to speak English. An average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are no pupils with a statement of special educational need. The school has recently achieved Activemark Gold and a re-accreditation of the Healthy School award.

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 RC Primary lives up to its mission statement to, 'Respect and care for ourselves and each other ... and to work hard and try our best.' This is a good school in which pupils achieve consistently well from their very low starting points in the Nursery. By the time pupils leave the school, although standards are below average, this represents good progress overall. Pupils reach their realistic targets. There have been good improvements in the results of the national tests this year because of the impact of more innovative teaching, particularly to help improve pupils' writing. Progress in Key Stages 1 and 2 is good. Pupils with English as an additional language achieve particularly well. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well. Quality and standards in the Foundation Stage are satisfactory. Currently the Nursery children are working in a temporary classroom with limited access to outdoors until a newly refurbished unit is ready.

The pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils know it is important to eat healthily and keep fit. They behave well and are well motivated to do so because of the weekly awards given in celebration assemblies. Their care and safety are given a high priority. The school council are involved in identifying potential risks from the recently introduced playground games. Pupils enjoy school. As they commented, 'There's lots of fun – French days, open days, gardening club and we love golden time.' Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education through the high priority given to promoting basic skills through the good curriculum. Parents are very happy with all the school offers and value the personal invitations they receive to attend their children's class assemblies.

Teaching is good. Lessons are well planned and take full account of the wide range of ability in each class. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported by a team of highly skilled teaching assistants. Information and communication technology (ICT) enriches pupils' learning effectively. There are a range of methods used to track the progress of individual pupils in each class; some are better than others. Therefore, in some cases the tracking system does not flag up those pupils making less than expected progress.

Leadership and management are good. The school operates well on a day-to-day basis. Staffing absences in the past year have necessitated staff changes which have been managed without any adverse impact on pupils' progress. The headteacher is well supported by an experienced assistant headteacher and knowledgeable governors. Self-evaluation accurately reflects the current position of the school. School development planning is accurate and gives a high priority to the outcomes that ensure pupils are healthy, safe, enjoy learning, achieve well and contribute to the local community. However, there is little formal monitoring of teaching and learning by senior staff and this limits their understanding of how consistently whole-school systems are being applied. However, a rigorous evaluation of the actions to improve reading in Key Stage 1 by a teacher funded by Excellence in Cities, has clearly highlighted actions that need to be taken. The school has a good capacity to improve based on the good involvement of the leadership team in driving forward new ideas to continue to raise standards. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that staff adopt a consistent approach to recording pupils' progress in order to identify potential underachievement.

- Develop a more rigorous monitoring and evaluation programme to enable senior leaders to gain a thorough understanding of how well whole-school systems are being applied.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are below average but achievement is good. Children start school with very low standards, particularly in communication and language skills. They make steady progress in the Foundation Stage, but standards remain below nationally expected levels in all areas of learning by the time they start in Year 1. Despite the good progress by the end of Year 6, standards remain below average, although there is an improvement this year, particularly in mathematics, because of the focus on improving teaching and learning in the past year. Standards reached in the 2006 national tests by Year 2 and 6 were below average in English, mathematics and science. Pupils generally make the same rate of progress, although an analysis of national test results shows that pupils of Asian heritage make particularly good progress and reach above average standards by the end of Year 6. This is confirmed by the progress they make in lessons as a result of actions to improve teaching in the past year. The unvalidated results of the most recent national tests confirm good progress in the past year, particularly in mathematics for the more able pupils.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Pupils show good levels of respect, develop their confidence and show complete tolerance of each other. They successfully raised funds for a local hospice, and work and play together in harmony. The attendance of Year 6 pupils has improved recently, with some able to boast of a 100% record. However, the school's overall attendance is below average but improving because of a raft of actions such as contacting parents on the first day of absence and the involvement of outside agencies to work with the families of persistent absentees. Healthy lifestyles are fostered effectively and well captured in the recent Gold Activemark and Healthy School awards. Pupils know they must eat vegetables and are fit because of all the sport they enjoy. They feel safe and are very safety conscious regarding the car park. They show care for others and themselves at playtimes. There is a racially harmonious atmosphere in the school. The pupils on the school council demonstrated leadership qualities that will enable them to contribute effectively to the community and their future roles.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Pupils make good progress and become more confident in their learning. Good subject knowledge, particularly in how to teach writing, is leading to improvements in pupils' work and raised standards. Discipline is good. Pupils work hard in lessons and mostly enjoy what they do. Strengths of teaching include innovative, practical activities to engage pupils. For example, teachers use everyday objects effectively to illustrate the teaching of English language skills to younger pupils. Work is planned to meet the wide range of needs in each class. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are

effectively supported by teaching assistants. Pupils learning to speak English as an additional language are usually well integrated with their peers in lessons, but sometimes their specific needs are met in well planned small group activities; as a result, they make good progress. In a minority of lessons, pupils sit and listen for too long and what pupils are expected to learn is too general. Pupils know their targets, which are displayed in classrooms and this helps them to know what they have to do to reach higher standards. Marking has improved recently and pupils are given clear pointers to help improve their work. Teaching in the Nursery is satisfactory. It is good in the Reception class where pupils are provided with a good balance between well planned adult-led learning and time to choose for themselves where they want to learn.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum provides pupils with a wealth of interesting activities in and out of school. Basic skills are given a high priority. The curriculum is effectively enriched by visits and visitors. For example, a Harry Potter project over two days involved all pupils in school and provided an opportunity for pupils to apply their basic literacy skills by writing to say what they enjoyed about it. A wide range of after-school clubs, sometimes led by specialist sports coaches, contributes well to pupils' good level of health and fitness. As well as this, pupils perform concerts in the local community; for example, the choir sang in Eldon Square at Christmas. All pupils are well provided for; they achieve and enjoy the range of interesting and worthwhile topics they study. The Year 5 class assembly effectively provided parents with a glimpse of their children's understanding of the Victorian period and what they learned on a trip to Beamish.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support that the school provides for its pupils are good. Pupils say their school is safe. Arrangements to safeguard pupils meet requirements. Risk assessments are completed with the involvement of pupils. The school works in close partnership with a range of outside agencies, particularly those who support pupils learning English as their second language. Arrangements to support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities ensure that they are provided with the help and support they need. The school's system to track the academic progress of pupils has only recently been put in place. Currently, some teachers are unfamiliar with the system to track the progress of pupils throughout the year and this has led to inconsistencies in approach. Relationships with parents are good and they express positive views about the school's work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher maintains a high priority on raising standards and is very knowledgeable about how this can happen. For example, as a result of introducing new approaches to teaching writing, standards in this subject have improved. With the able support of the assistant headteacher, the headteacher has resolutely maintained the school priority to raise standards in writing. They have ensured that staff have attended training and are encouraged to adopt new teaching styles to support and extend pupils' learning. The headteacher instils enthusiasm and drive in the staff and is very well supported by well informed governors. Much of the monitoring of teaching and learning is informal and not recorded. The

lack of rigour in this aspect of management is reflected in the inconsistencies in the assessment systems used in each class. Year by year results are discussed and targets set for following years are based on this thorough analysis and this helps to maintain teachers' high expectations. The accommodation is well used. Improvements to the provision for the Foundation Stage are almost complete, which will enhance children's learning. Improvements since the last inspection are good. The governors play an active part in the school, are very supportive and help school leaders to explore issues by providing challenge. They assure the school provides good value for money in the good quality of recent staff appointments.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
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

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ 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**

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
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	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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 July 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Michael's RC Primary School, Tyne and Wear, NE4 7RE

Thank you for helping me when I visited your school recently. You all enjoy the wide range of activities provided for you and keep very fit and eat healthily. You work hard and make good progress in your work as you go through school. I enjoyed talking to the school council and hearing about the games they make sure you play safely with at playtimes. Your teachers and headteacher work hard to make your time in school fun as well as having to work hard. Did you enjoy the Harry Potter project you took part in? I hope some of you can go and see the films too. You are learning to write interesting stories in a different way this year. I hope you are finding this is helping you to improve your writing.

It is very important that you come to school every day, unless of course you are ill. Your teachers have been asked to keep good records of your progress through school and to check what you are learning in lessons. The headteacher, governors and other staff introduce lots of things to help you learn faster. I have asked that they check how well all the new systems work.

Enjoy your long summer holiday and good luck to you all for next year in your new classes or new schools.

Best wishes

Rosemary Rodger

Lead inspector