

St Michael's Church of England Primary School, Sandhurst

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109973
Local Authority	Bracknell Forest
Inspection number	288551
Inspection dates	6–7 June 2007
Reporting inspector	George Rayner

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	211
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Christopher Harris
Headteacher	Mrs Antoinette Flannigan
Date of previous school inspection	12 February 2001
School address	Lower Church Road Sandhurst GU47 8HN
Telephone number	01252 873360
Fax number	01252 878916

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	6–7 June 2007
Inspection number	288551

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school is a little smaller than most primary schools. Pupils' home circumstances are more favourable than usually found. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and very few are at an early stage of learning to speak English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average. The headteacher has been in post since September 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. It is committed to providing a Christian environment in which pupils grow up as happy, secure, successful and thoughtful young people. The success with which the school achieves these aims is demonstrated by pupils' good personal development and well-being. Pupils show their enjoyment through their above average attendance, good behaviour and willingness to be involved in all that the school has to offer. When asked how the school could be made better, one pupil said, 'We can think of a few little things, but the main things are all great'. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and are particularly aware of the need for safety and security whilst using the Internet. They know how to lead healthy lives by eating sensibly, taking exercise and caring for their teeth. Pupils show their consideration for others by caring for each other and willingly taking part in activities to help others less fortunate than themselves.

Good teaching and learning, supported by a good curriculum, lead to pupils achieving well to reach securely above average standards by the end of Year 6. The school has recently focused on improving literacy standards. This has resulted in very good achievement and well above average standards in English. Although some pupils make good progress in science, achievement is only satisfactory overall. This is because the most able pupils do not have enough opportunities to fully develop their potential to work independently in scientific investigations. Children are well provided for in the Foundation Stage. This results in good progress, so that they are secure and confident in all of their areas of learning and well prepared to build further as they enter Year 1.

A key challenge for the school in raising achievement further is to make the teaching consistently good. In many lessons, imaginative planning stimulates enthusiasm and provides challenge for all pupils, sometimes to an outstanding extent. In some lessons, activities develop more slowly and are less exciting and, although teachers usually plan for different needs, the provision is not so effective. For example, planning sometimes provides more work of a similar standard for pupils who finish early rather than genuinely increasing the challenge for the most able. In these lessons, pupils still work willingly, but not with such high enthusiasm.

The school is well led and managed. Since her fairly recent appointment the headteacher has quickly identified the strengths of the school and the ways in which it can be improved. She has given her colleagues a very clear direction and succeeded in forging a unified, committed staff team whose members share her goals. The school has succeeded well in improving since the last inspection. This is particularly evident in quality and standards in the Foundation Stage, which are significantly better than those reported previously and achievement is no longer inadequate in science. This track record and the school's continued well focused commitment shows that it has a good capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement in science by improving opportunities for the most able pupils to use their ability in independent investigation.
- Ensure that lessons are consistently effective in providing for and engaging all pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

In most years, pupils enter the Foundation Stage generally in line with expected levels, but above in personal and social development. Pupils achieve well and reach above average standards by the end of Year 6. In the Foundation Stage children show their good progress in their confident and proficient speech, good listening skills, understanding of how to behave and showing interest in the world about them. The standards of the pupils currently in Years 5 and 6 are well above average in English and above average in mathematics. Many pupils are able to write prose and poetry of high quality, which expresses their feelings in meaningful and interesting ways. They have good mathematical skills and many use these well to tackle problems. While generally above average, overall standards are lower in science and reflect pupils' satisfactory progress. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of scientific processes, but do not always use these well to find things out through independent investigation. The 2006 national tests for Year 6 pupils were lower than in previous years. The school has accurately analysed the reasons, which included a residential visit immediately before the tests, which disrupted pupils' preparation, and has addressed these. Because their needs are carefully identified and efficiently provided for, pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make as good progress as their classmates.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are polite, friendly and confident. They willingly do as they are asked, enabling time in lessons to be used well for learning. Pupils readily accept responsibilities and contribute to school life. They eagerly serve on the school council, as 'buddies' and 'peer mediators' taking care of others in the playground. 'School ambassadors' enjoy showing visitors around the school and telling them all about it. Year 6 pupils lead whole-school 'kick start' exercises in the playground and independently organise the school council meetings. Behaviour is generally very good, although a few pupils do not fully maintain their concentration throughout longer lesson activities. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They know and respect the fact that people in other places often live very different lives. They have recently held cake sales to provide funds for a school in Kenya. Such activities and the good progress they make in key subjects prepares pupils well for later life and learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is effective in promoting pupils' good progress and personal development. Teachers strongly encourage their pupils and enthusiastically praise their efforts. As a result, pupils are willing to work hard and are not afraid to attempt difficult tasks and share their ideas in discussions. Teaching is good in most lessons, and sometimes outstanding. Effective planning usually provides a brisk pace of learning, but in a few lessons, some pupils find it difficult to maintain their concentration when activities go on for too long. Marking is generally good and it is sometimes excellent. It clearly shows pupils how they can improve, pupils make good use of this and teachers praise the improvements that arise as a result. Teachers, teaching assistants and parent volunteers usually work efficiently as teams to ensure that all pupils receive effective

help when they need it. In a few lessons, teachers do not give assistants enough guidance on what they expect from them, so that they are not always fully involved in helping pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Over the past year the school has focused strongly on developing opportunities for speaking and listening in several subjects. The impact was seen in a Year 4 history lesson when pupils discussed the implications of archaeology on the lives of people who live in places that had ancient civilisations. This enhanced pupils' personal development as well as their history and literacy skills. Links between other subjects are less well developed, though. Pupils often have opportunities to use computers to enhance their learning in all subjects. The curriculum is very well enriched. In the Foundation Stage pupils enjoy fortnightly visits to the local woods, for example, where they learn to find out about the world around them. In other years residential visits have a very strong impact upon pupils' personal development and relationships with each other and with teachers. Participation in the wide range of clubs is high, especially in sports. Provision for music and drama is strong. Pupils often participate in local concerts.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. All pupils are well known and cared for. All staff are trained in child protection and procedures for keeping pupils healthy and safe are effective. As a result, pupils are secure and happy. They take an active part in caring for each other, for example as 'buddies' and mediators in the playground. The school carefully provides for vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and disabilities. It effectively uses the specialist support of outside agencies when necessary. The school is developing its systems for guiding and supporting pupils' academic performance. In English all pupils have targets showing their next steps for learning. They use these well to remind them what they need to achieve. One pupil emphasised the impact on motivation by saying, 'They make you want to try to reach them'. The school is aware that targets are not yet as effective in all subjects and it is working well towards improving this.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The capable senior leadership team works as a coherent, effective unit. The Foundation Stage and special needs departments are well led, resulting in good provision in these areas and good progress by the pupils. Subject leaders are well involved in the day-to-day running of their areas and analysing performance. Not all are fully involved in monitoring the teaching of their subjects, although they are developing this. The governors are committed to the school. Over the last year they have identified ways in which they could be more involved in strategic planning and the life of the school and are working together well to achieve these goals. Governors ensure that all requirements, including those for racial equality, are met. The school's systematic and rigorous procedures for self-evaluation have given it a good awareness of its strengths and areas that it needs to improve. It is using this effectively to plan for improvement.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
--	-----------------------

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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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	2
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	2
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	2
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

19 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Michael's Church of England Primary School, Sandhurst, Sandhurst, GU47 8HN

It was good to meet you recently when we visited your school. Thank you for making us feel so welcome and for helping us with our work by answering our questions and telling us about St Michael's.

We agree with you that you have a good school and can see why you enjoy being here. We know that you are all making good progress. We were particularly impressed by the standards of some of your poetry and the way you use mathematical skills to solve problems. We know that you are all well cared for and were pleased to see how well you look after each other too. You are polite, well behaved and considerate.

Your headteacher and the other adults know how to make the school even better and are working hard together to do this. We have asked them to make sure they do two things. Although you have a good understanding of science some of the more able pupils do not make as much progress as they could because they do not have enough opportunities to find things out for themselves. We have asked staff to improve this. Most lessons are good, helping you to make good progress in your learning. Not all are though, so we have asked staff to make all lessons as good as the best ones. Perhaps you could help by telling your teachers what you find particularly helpful and interesting for your learning.

Thank you again for your help. We wish you all the best for the future.

George Rayner

Lead inspector