

# St Michaels Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	111393
<b>Local Authority</b>	Halton
<b>Inspection number</b>	288948
<b>Inspection date</b>	1 May 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Colin Smith

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

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	235
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr S Beech
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs T Gosney
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11 March 2002
<b>School address</b>	St Michael's Road Widnes Cheshire WA8 8TD
<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 4244468
<b>Fax number</b>	0151 4243063

---

<b>Age group</b>	4–11
<b>Inspection date</b>	1 May 2007
<b>Inspection number</b>	288948

---

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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 one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This is an average sized primary school situated in an area of social disadvantage. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well above average. The vast majority of children are of White British heritage. A very small number of children have mixed White and Asian heritage. All of these pupils speak English.

## 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 is a successful and effective school that provides good value for money. The level of care, guidance and support provided for pupils is outstanding. Every pupil is valued and treated as an individual. Wherever a need arises, whether educational or emotional, support staff and teachers work tirelessly, often in league with outside agencies, to find an answer. These factors are highly influential in removing the barriers to learning for the most vulnerable pupils and ensuring that all pupils are safeguarded. The school is very successful in helping pupils to become good citizens. The caring family atmosphere, in which pupils develop excellent relationships and acquire a sense of responsibility toward others, paves the way for their outstanding personal development. Parents are unanimous in their support and appreciation for the school. Comments such as, 'My children love coming to school because of the friendly atmosphere and approachable staff,' are typical of parents' views.

Children make a successful start in the Foundation Stage unit. This is because a highly stimulating curriculum is provided and teaching is good. Pupils achieve well throughout the rest of the school. Their achievement is within the top 10% nationally and close to the top 5% in mathematics and science. Standards are above average overall by the end of Year 6, although only average in English. This is largely because some of the more able pupils do not fulfil their potential in reaching the higher levels in writing. Concerted efforts are being made to raise standards in writing and with some success. This is evident in the written work in pupils' books. However, when planning lessons, teachers do not always provide sufficiently challenging activities to fully extend the learning of the more able pupils.

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers make their lessons interesting and move pupils' learning along at a good pace. As a result, pupils are attentive and diligent workers who learn successfully. There are examples of outstanding teaching in the Foundation Stage unit, which is buzzing with activity. A major strength of the school is its outstanding curriculum. The vast assortment of stimulating activities provided, in and out of school, caters very well for pupils' diverse needs and interests. This is the magnet that draws them into school. Despite this, although most pupils have good attendance, attendance overall is only satisfactory. This is largely because of the impact on attendance figures of a small number of families whose children are persistently absent.

The school benefits from good leadership and management. The example set by the headteacher is exemplary. Her enthusiasm, communication skills and concern for individual pupils are major factors in the school's success. Subject leaders make a good contribution to the overall leadership of the school by driving their subjects forward enthusiastically. The headteacher and senior staff keep the work of the school under constant review and are largely successful in eliminating weaknesses. This is why standards in mathematics and science have improved significantly since the previous inspection and the school's self-evaluation is very accurate. These factors illustrate the school's good capacity for improvement.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' achievement in writing, particularly of the more able.
- Improve the attendance of the small number of persistent absentees.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Children enter school with skills below those expected for their age and well below in spoken language. They achieve well in the Foundation Stage. By the end of the Reception year, the majority of children reach the learning goals expected for five-year-olds. However, in language and communication, almost a third of the children are still unable to reach them, despite good teaching. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 achieve well. By the end of Year 2, standards are average in reading and writing, and above average in mathematics. Given their starting points, pupils' achievement from Years 3 to 6 in mathematics and science is verging on exceptional. In these subjects, standards have been rising well in response to the challenging targets set. However, pupils' achievement in English, although satisfactory, is not as high as in the other core subjects. This is largely because in writing the more able pupils do not reach the same high levels as they do in mathematics and science. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well because of the very good support they receive. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve equally as well as their peers.

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

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. They experience a love of learning through art and physical education. By studying a variety of faiths and beliefs, they develop respect for cultural diversity and disapprove of any form of racism or bullying. In the pupils' own words, 'We are all treated the same and all made welcome'. Pupils are encouraged to express their views and influence the way the school operates, for example, in devising rules. As a result, they behave impeccably and work together extremely well. A strong Catholic family atmosphere pervades the school in which pupils develop a sense of responsibility towards others. The way in which older pupils, acting as prefects, playground leaders and school council members, represent and support younger ones is exemplary. Pupils acquire an excellent understanding of how to keep healthy and safe. They are well prepared for the future, particularly with regard to their competency in numeracy, their capacity to learn through enquiry and their information and communication technology (ICT) skills. Attendance is only satisfactory, largely because of the persistent absences of a small number of pupils. Attendance is improving. All but a small number of pupils enjoy school and attend regularly.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The atmosphere for learning in lessons is excellent. Teachers manage pupils extremely well and move lessons along at a good pace. As a result, pupils work with very good concentration and application and give of their best. Teachers are highly imaginative in making lessons exciting and purposeful. For example, in writing, teachers ask pupils to pretend to be journalists or involve them in topical issues such as writing a balanced argument about the use of mobile phones. Such approaches immediately capture pupils' interests and prompt them to describe learning as fun. During an outstanding lesson in the Foundation Stage unit, children were enthralled when the teacher used a puppet to encourage them to blend letters together to make words. Pupils' learning is carefully and accurately assessed. On the whole, the information

is used well to set tasks that are well matched to their different learning needs, particularly for those who find learning difficult. However, in writing, the level of challenge for the more able pupils is not always sufficient to move their learning on to higher levels.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 1**

The curriculum provided is inspiring, motivating and very effective in promoting pupils' good achievement and appreciation of healthy lifestyles. This is reflected in the school gaining several awards and in pupils' enthusiasm for learning. The excellent selection of additional activities, ranging from educational visits and visitors, to the many well-attended out-of-school activities, make a significant contribution to pupils' enjoyment of school and to their personal development. The pronounced emphasis on problem solving in mathematics and investigating in science encourages pupils to explore and learn for themselves. Independence in learning is fostered exceptionally well from the Foundation Stage. The curriculum is very successfully adapted to meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The needs of gifted and talented pupils are well catered for in several subjects, although less so in writing. Pupils are increasingly using ICT as a tool for learning.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

The exceptional levels of care, guidance and support provided have a profound impact on pupils' self-esteem and their appetite for learning. Staff are highly successful in identifying how well pupils are progressing, personally and academically. They are swift to intervene to boost achievement when it falters and restore confidence when it wanes. Consequently, pupils develop excellent trusting relationships with adults as they move through school. Pupils' safety and well-being are a very high priority, which is why a family liaison officer has been appointed. In a highly productive partnership with health and social professionals, any barriers to learning, particularly for the most vulnerable pupils, are dismantled successfully. Pupils speak knowledgeably about their targets for improvement and strive to achieve them.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher's contribution to leadership and management is excellent. The pride in the school, infectious enthusiasm and sensitivity towards pupils' personal and learning needs provide a strong impetus for future development. Other members of staff share this vision and work very well together to achieve it. This is largely why the school provides outstanding levels of care and an excellent curriculum through which pupils achieve well. Governors provide good support, particularly in using their professional skills, for example, in finance and education, to ensure that the excellent facilities and resources are used well and equal opportunity is strongly promoted. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have a good overview of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Lessons are observed, pupils' progress is carefully tracked, their work is examined and their views considered. The information is used to good effect to assess teachers' performance and to provide additional support for pupils. Subject leaders play an important part in making curriculum improvements and supporting other members of staff. However, in English, because the quality of teaching and outcomes of

assessment are mainly checked by senior staff, the subject leader's impact is restricted to some extent.

**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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**



## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

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

### 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>	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

<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	3
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	2

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2
<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>	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

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

Inspection of St Michael's Catholic Primary School, Widnes, WA8 8TD

Thank you for welcoming me to your school and answering my questions so politely and helpfully. I thoroughly enjoyed my visit and would like to share my findings with you.

Yours is a good school, just as you said it was and in some respects it is excellent. I was very impressed by the way teachers, support staff and the family liaison officer look after you. When you find learning difficult, they are willing and very ready to help you. On occasions when you are unhappy or anxious because something has upset you out of school, they help you to feel better. Adults in school treat you with respect and kindness and do their best to keep you safe. I can tell that you appreciate these things and do your best in return by behaving excellently and trying your hardest.

The school is successful in helping you to achieve well and reach good standards. Your progress in mathematics and science is extremely good and I can see that your writing is improving. Your school provides much more than the basic curriculum. There is also an excellent range of school visits and extra-curricular activities. Teaching is good and teachers try their best to make your lessons interesting. I am sure that this is why you work so hard and enjoy school.

The school building is beautifully cared for, attractively displayed and the facilities are first-class. Your headteacher, staff and governors take pride in your school, just as you do and try to make your time there an enjoyable and very worthwhile experience. This shows that your school is well led and managed.

Although your school is successful, my job is to help it to improve even more. This is how I judge it can be done.

- Although most pupils make very good progress in mathematics and science, some of the more able ones do not reach the higher levels that they should in writing. I have asked teachers to give more consideration to the needs of the more able pupils, particularly when planning English lessons.
- Most of you are punctual and attend school regularly but not all. I have asked your headteacher to raise attendance further. You can help by attending every day and helping your class to win the prize.