



# St Michael's C of E Primary School

Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 112246  
**Local Authority** Cumbria  
**Inspection number** 289215  
**Inspection date** 16 November 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Alastair Younger

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>	Carlisle Road
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled		Dalston, Carlisle
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4-11		Cumbria, CA5 7LN
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01228 607805
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	214	<b>Fax number</b>	01228 607806
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Janet Strong
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Stephen D G Fraser
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 September 2002		

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This is an average sized primary school. Socially and economically, the area is average and children's attainment when they start school is broadly typical for their age. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is similar to most other schools but more than average numbers have statements of special educational need. Most pupils are White British. The school has extensive links with the community and close ties with the church. St Michael's is a very popular school; more than half of all pupils come from out of the school's catchment area and there is a long waiting list of pupils seeking places.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 1**

This is an outstanding and hugely popular school. Over the last three years it has been in the top 5% of all schools nationally in the value it adds to pupils' attainment between Years 2 and 6. In 2005, it was in the top 3% of schools nationally. Standards are exceptionally high. Children in the Reception class make excellent progress, meeting virtually all of their early developmental and learning goals before transferring to Year 1, with overall attainment higher than that found in most schools nationally. In 2006, well over a half of Year 6 pupils exceeded national expectations in reading and science, and a half did so in mathematics. Nearly all others met them. The remainder made outstanding progress in overcoming their learning difficulties and disabilities and exceeded expectations because their needs are quickly identified and very successfully addressed. This is all made possible by outstanding teaching throughout the school.

Outstanding leadership and management have contributed enormously to the success of the school. For example, there have been consistently high standards over many years. The leaders of the school have also created a very popular and happy school where pupils' personal development and well-being are recognised as being every bit as important as their academic achievement. An outstanding, extensively enriched, curriculum ensures that pupils receive an exceptionally well-balanced education. This adds tremendously to pupils' enjoyment of school and ensures that attendance far outstrips national averages. A wonderful degree of care, support and guidance is extended to all pupils, keeping them safe, healthy and well advised whilst assuring bright prospects for their future well-being.

Very little goes unnoticed. Every aspect of the school's work and the progress pupils are making is exceptionally closely and accurately monitored and evaluated. This has very successfully allowed the school to prevent, rather than having to cure, problems. Monitoring of teaching, for instance, has identified that more learning opportunities could be packed into a few lessons and others would benefit from more careful summing up what pupils have learned and remembered. The effectiveness of self-evaluation is seen in the school's relentless, carefully considered and successful drive for improvement. It also inspires the accurate view that the school has an outstanding capacity to maintain its exceptional standard.

The pupils are keen to take advantage of all that the school has to offer. They work hard, develop enquiring minds and behave exceptionally well. Extensive ties and involvement with the church and village contribute enormously to the development of strong spiritual, moral and social consciences and put the school close to the heart of the community.

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

- Ensure that the quality of all teaching matches that of the best.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

Achievement is outstanding. Standards are exceptionally and consistently high. This is because excellent teaching systematically helps pupils to build on previous learning. Most pupils have received some form of pre-school education and attainment on entry to the Reception class is broadly average. By the end of their first year they have achieved all of their personal, social and creative goals and virtually all of their language and mathematical ones. In Key Stage 1, pupils continue to make excellent progress and attain well above average standards. In 2006, almost a third of them exceeded national expectations in English, mathematics and science. The picture of excellence continues throughout Key Stage 2. In 2005, every Year 6 pupil attained or exceeded the nationally expected level in English and science and all but three did so in mathematics. Progress has been significantly higher than average in all subjects for the past four years. In 2006, over a third of pupils exceeded the national average in English, half did so in mathematics and over three-quarters in science. Each year there are slight differences between the achievements of boys and girls. These often come down to the small number of pupils not attaining the national average because they have significant learning difficulties and disabilities. The achievement of these pupils is measured against individual targets and is every bit as outstanding as that of other pupils.

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

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding and so is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The combination of excellent achievement and personal development creates an ideal mix of success that points to pupils being able to look forward to very bright economic and personal futures. Pupils are fully aware that they are getting a good deal. Attendance is much higher than in most other schools. Parents are almost unanimous in saying their children enjoy school and pupils confirm this through their enthusiasm in work and play. It was wonderful to see pupils energetically running around the playground, often going nowhere in particular, but clearly enjoying the thrill of exercise and the benefits of good health. Pupils' awareness of others makes a notable contribution to safety in school. Doors are held open for each other, not just for adults. Sensible behaviour means that accidents are rare. Helping to organise and run public events combined with frequent participation in environmental projects gives pupils a strong sense of community spirit. Pupils have listened and learned from the experiences of elders in the community, especially their memories of previous times of conflict. This has helped them to appreciate what their community has done for them and encourages them to return the compliment. As a result, the school is much appreciated as a valued part of the Dalston community.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 1**

Teaching and learning are outstanding. There are no weak links. In every class, pupils are helped to build fruitfully on previous learning. They value learning because they know that what they learn one day will probably help them make further, faster progress the next. This is because teachers are meticulous in their preparation of tasks very carefully matched to individual need. All teachers show tremendous skill in promoting the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. Pupils become accustomed to working hard and behaving well so classrooms are industrious and calm. They know that sloppy work will not be accepted and take great care with presentation. Teachers set an excellent example by making sure that their writing is meticulous on whiteboards and when marking pupils' books. Success is widely celebrated. Classroom walls are filled with examples of pupils' best work, especially their writing. With many good resources to hand, the effective deployment of skilled classroom assistants and extensive and imaginative use of computers, teachers have created classrooms in which it is a joy to learn. The school's own monitoring of teaching has identified that, very occasionally, the pace of lessons could be lifted and better use made of time at the end of lessons to check what pupils had learned and remembered. During the inspection teachers demonstrated that they had amply addressed these points.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

The curriculum is outstanding. All statutory requirements are met. The wonderful success pupils achieve in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology is not at the cost of progress in other subjects. By recognising that pupils' personal development is considered every bit as important as their academic progress, the school ensures that all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, thrive and have equal opportunities to guarantee their future well-being. There is very smooth progression from Reception through Key Stage 1 and into Key Stage 2 and pupils are exceptionally well prepared for moving on to other schools. A wide range of relevant additional activities, involving visits and visitors, enriches learning, adds enormously to pupils' enjoyment of school and involves pupils in many initiatives which benefit the community.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 1**

Care, guidance and support for pupils are outstanding. Health and safety are regarded as being of the utmost importance. Pupils are safeguarded through rigorous attention and by ensuring that potential risk in all activities is identified and minimised. Learning difficulties and/or disabilities are quickly spotted and extremely successful measures put in place to help pupils overcome them. This is helping these pupils to achieve

remarkable success in meeting their personal targets. In 2005, for instance, all pupils who had not been able to attain Level 2 in assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 made up ground to meet the nationally expected level by the end of Year 6. All work is carefully marked and assessed so pupils know how to improve. Teachers take great care to use the information they gather to offer educational guidance and support of the highest quality.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

Leadership, management and governance are outstanding. Systems for promoting excellence are well-established and highly effective. The dedication of staff and their determination to bring out the best in all pupils stem directly from many years of stable, thoughtful and inspirational leadership. This is a hugely popular school. Dalston would normally be able to support a school half this size but its reputation is such that over a half of all pupils come from further afield. Thorough, honest, self-evaluation helps leaders and managers prevent any slippage in standards. In recent years this has helped the school to maintain its place in the top 5% of all schools in terms of the value it adds to pupils' progress. The school is fully committed to all learners. It welcomes pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, confident in the knowledge that it can help all pupils equally. Governors are immensely proud of their school. They are particularly adept at offering excellent support to the headteacher without interfering with the smooth day-to-day running of the school. The school offers excellent value for money.

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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>	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	1
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.

## 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

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

St Michael's C of E Primary School

Carlisle Road

Dalston

Carlisle

Cumbria

CA5 7LN

18 November 2006

Dear Pupils

I've just written about 1,500 words about you and your school. To save you reading it for yourselves I've just run a word-search and counted 13 uses of outstanding, six of excellent, four of wonderful and two of tremendous. I hope that suggests that I thoroughly enjoyed my brief visit and was mightily impressed by what I saw. Thank you for making me so welcome.

I don't often get the opportunity, or privilege, to visit schools as good as yours. It's my job to look at everything and talk to as many people as possible to find out the best and worst things about each school I visit. Here are the best:

- stunningly effective teaching helps you to enjoy learning and make exceptional progress
- you are delightful children; you behave exceptionally well, work very hard and come to school whenever you can
- you get the best possible help and support from staff
- your timetable is full of exciting activities which help you to learn about a very wide range of subjects and topics
- exceptionally good leadership and management keep this a happy, popular and outstandingly successful school.

The only thing I have asked your school to improve is:

- Make sure that the quality of all teaching matches that of the best.
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Thank you once again for making my visit so pleasurable and memorable!

Alastair Younger

(Lead inspector)