



St Michael's C of E Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 112332
Local Authority Cumbria
Inspection number 289249
Inspection dates 19–20 September 2006
Reporting inspector John Heap

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Bothel
School category	Voluntary aided		Wigton, Cumbria
Age range of pupils	3–11		CA7 2HN
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01697 320632
Number on roll (school)	88	Fax number	01697 320632
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Jan Dickins
		Headteacher	Mr David Salmon
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3–11	19–20 September 2006	289249

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average sized school with part-time Nursery provision. There are three mixed-age classes. There is little evidence of disadvantage in the local area and a small proportion of pupils are entitled to free school meals. All pupils are from a White British background, including a very small number who are in the care of the local authority. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. Attainment on entry to the Nursery covers a wide range, but is broadly average overall. The management of the school has been disrupted through the long term illness and absence of the headteacher and major changes to the staffing of the school. The headteacher is now back in post.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school rightly judges itself to be satisfactory and it provides sound value for money. Although this is a similar judgement to the previous inspection, there have been satisfactory improvements, particularly in the management of the school. Overall, progress although satisfactory has slowed over the last two years because of the long term illness and absence of the headteacher and major changes to the staffing of the school.

Through all of this, the school has maintained a good curriculum that is strongly supported by the locality and its community. The school successfully enriches the learning of pupils and makes their time in and out of the classroom as interesting as possible. Pupils make a strong contribution to local life, particularly on environmental issues. The outcome is the good personal development of pupils. In particular, pupils enjoy school, behave very well and have good attitudes to their work. They are keenly aware that good diet, exercise and playing safely are vitally important to the development of a healthy and safe lifestyle.

Standards are average. Pupils make satisfactory progress and they have the basic skills to steadily progress in their future education and wider life. The Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception) gives the children an adequate start to their education. In most respects, pupils make expected gains throughout the school, but there has been some underachievement in mathematics, particularly in 2006. Managers have analysed the problem well and remedial actions are already under way. This indicates that the school has a sound capacity to improve further. It is clear that two issues require attention. Firstly, the satisfactory quality of teaching does not show a consistent approach in linking the information gained on pupils' levels of attainment to the setting of individual learning targets and then marking work to these targets. Secondly, school improvement planning lacks sharpness and clear outcomes.

Pupils and parents say that the youngsters are well supported and safe in school. Sound developments in the tracking of pupils' academic achievements mean that an increasingly clear picture of individual pupils is emerging. Vulnerable pupils are well known to staff and there are good links with outside agencies. These pupils appreciate the family atmosphere in the school and they progress well both academically and socially.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics.
- Make sure that information gathered from academic tracking leads to effective lesson planning and that the marking of pupils' work relates directly to pupils' individual learning targets.
- Improve development planning so that improvements in standards are clear and measurable.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement and progress are satisfactory. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. The school's records show Foundation Stage children typically reach nationally expected standards. In the 2005 national tests for Year 2 pupils, the broadly average standards were strongest in mathematics, but weaker in writing. In the 2005 Year 6 national tests, standards were average. Science was the strongest subject because it had been a particularly successful focus for development. Mathematics was the weakest subject and this is showing again in the provisional results for 2006 where around 15% of the pupils did not reach their target in mathematics. The school is rightly concerned about this declining trend and mathematics has become the main priority for urgent development. The school has set challenging and realistic targets by using their good analysis of pupils' answers in the 2006 tests. Across the school, standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are average. The few pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They are unfailingly courteous and behave very well. Pupils enjoy school and say that bullying is not a problem. Attendance is good. Pupils contribute well to the school and wider community. They are committed when carrying out a range of responsibilities and the school council has a good input to initiatives, such as playground arrangements. Pupils understand well the benefits of eating healthily and engaging in exercise and sport. They play safely and show sensitivity to those who do not wish to be involved in the 'hurly-burly' of playtime. Pupils have a good awareness of the cultural diversity of society and this is an improvement since the last inspection. They develop a good range of personal and basic academic skills. All of this prepares them adequately for the next stages of education and later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Recent departures of long-serving and experienced staff mean that there is a period of adjustment taking place. Nevertheless, the typical strengths of teaching include:

- very strong relationships between staff and pupils; as a result, pupils enjoy their lessons and are keen to work hard and do their best
- good management of lessons means that there are few disruptions and pupils are very well behaved, courteous and respectful

- pupils with extra learning needs are supported well and they make good progress, particularly in spelling and reading.

There are early signs that teaching is benefiting from improved target-setting for individual pupils. This means that work is more closely matched to the differing needs of pupils. This is a better picture than at the time of the previous inspection. Alongside this, there is the better marking that provides improved guidance on how well pupils are doing, but is less clear about what they need to do to improve further. These developments are not consistently applied across the whole school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The good curriculum has breadth, balance and relevance for all of the pupils. Primarily, it supports pupils' personal development well. As a result, pupils are confident and knowledgeable about a range of matters, from environmental issues to health and safety. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to use literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across the curriculum, particularly the individual topic work in Years 5 and 6. This is further enhanced by the introduction of people with specialist skills, such as a visiting artist and sports coaches. The good and well stocked grounds are a rich learning resource. Enrichment of the curriculum is good and pupils particularly look forward to the residential visits.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Measures to safeguard pupils are in place. Child protection procedures and practices are effective, well known and strengthened by good links with outside agencies. The monitoring of attendance, behaviour and general well-being is robust and the impact is high attendance and low levels of disruptive behaviour. Satisfactory procedures and practices to track pupils' achievements have been in use for several years. The impact of the information they hold is lessened because the use of the information is inconsistent and there are too few links with target-setting and marking.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Satisfactory leadership and management have had a mixed impact on what the school provides and the outcomes achieved. This is partly due to the turbulent period the school has been through. Clearly, there are significant strengths that are appreciated by the pupils, parents and the wider community, such as pupils' personal development, strong links with many partners and the very powerful 'family' ethos. As one parent wrote: 'The school has a very friendly, warm and welcoming atmosphere.' School self-evaluation is satisfactory. The school continues to press forward and there has been prompt action to improve provision and standards in mathematics, for instance. Nevertheless, there has been too much emphasis on using informal structures in

improvement planning and lesson observations. This does not ensure the consistency in practice that the school needs after this difficult period. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are highly supportive of the school, rightly proud of its achievements and do much valuable work in the community. However, their procedures and practices to acquire the information they need to be fully involved in improvement planning are not rigorous enough. Financial management is sound and benefits from specific expertise on the governing body.

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?	3
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	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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	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	3

The quality of provision

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

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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
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

St Michael's CofE Primary School

Bothel

Wigton

Cumbria

CA7 2HN

19 September 2006

Dear Children

It was a privilege and pleasure being in your school this week. Thank you for the warm welcome, courtesy and help you provided. Please accept special thanks for those who gave up their time to talk with me.

What I really liked about your school

- The very good relationships between children and staff.
- Your very good behaviour and good attitudes to school and work.
- The supportive family atmosphere in the school.
- The way that you all contribute to a safe and caring ethos in the school.
- The wide range of activities that enrich your curriculum, such as the residential visits and particularly your work in the community.

I have asked your teachers to improve

- The standard of your mathematics work. You can be a great help by always doing your best work.
- The way that teachers set targets for each of you and mark your work. You can join in by following the advice and guidance your teachers give you.
- The way that teachers plan for future improvements for the school. The School Council can continue to play a key role in bringing matters to the attention of your teachers and by making suggestions.

The inspection team wishes you well and good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

John Heap

Lead inspector