



St Michael's Church of England Controlled Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 116332
Local Authority Hampshire
Inspection number 290504
Inspection dates 12–13 February 2007
Reporting inspector Graham Lee

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	Park Road
School category	Voluntary controlled		Aldershot
Age range of pupils	4–7		GU11 3PU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01252324300
Number on roll (school)	249	Fax number	01252311012
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Victoria Rogers
		Headteacher	Mrs Susan Bright
Date of previous school inspection	18 June 2001		

Age group 4–7	Inspection dates 12–13 February 2007	Inspection number 290504
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized infant school which serves a mixed community, with some elements of social and economic deprivation. Most pupils are of White British origin and the remainder are from a variety of, mainly Asian, backgrounds. About one in ten speak English as an additional language but very few are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is much higher than average, including a significant minority with delayed speech and language.

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 which is outstanding in some respects. At the heart of its work is a nurturing Christian ethos where every child is made to feel that they really do matter. The care, guidance and support provided for children and their families are outstanding. This is widely recognised by parents who hold the school in high regard. One, representing the views of many, commented 'The atmosphere is happy and caring and teachers always have time to discuss the needs of the child.' Pupils thrive in this supportive environment and their personal development is outstanding. They are proud of their school and are bubbling with enthusiasm for all that it offers. They feel safe and secure and quickly become confident and eager learners. Consequently, pupils of all abilities achieve well.

Outstanding leadership by the headteacher, with the very able support of her deputy has ensured that the school has continued to improve from its positive previous inspection. Issues from the last inspection have been fully addressed and standards have risen. Determined action has been taken to improve the curriculum, teaching and learning. With the effective backing of the governing body, the school is well placed to improve still further. Middle managers have a great deal of enthusiasm and many ideas to bring about further improvements. However, they do not play a big enough part in monitoring teaching and learning, and so helping these to improve. Despite this, self-evaluation is excellent, giving a very clear and accurate picture of strengths and weaknesses, and leading to continual improvement.

From broadly average starting points pupils make good progress and reach standards that are significantly above average by the time they leave. They have done better in reading and writing than they have in mathematics. The school is addressing this through a more challenging mathematics curriculum, which is resulting in improved progress in the current year. The number of computers in the school is limited. As a result, whilst most pupils acquire the skills expected for their age in information and communication technology (ICT), they have limited opportunities to develop them further. Children make a very good start to their learning journey in the Foundation Stage where provision has been changed radically this year to provide an extremely stimulating learning environment which encourages children to explore the world around them and develops their independence.

Pupils of all abilities do well because of good teaching and a good and interesting curriculum. Teachers plan very effectively together to meet the needs of all learners. As a result, 'You learn a lot.' as one pupil put it. However, teaching is not consistent in Key Stage 1 and sometimes teachers talk for too long and do not give pupils sufficient opportunities to contribute to lessons or to develop their own ideas. Their progress slows as a result. Extremely effective systems for tracking pupils' progress allow additional support to be provided for those who are in danger of falling behind or who are in need of further challenges. The curriculum is also enriched in different ways which enhance pupils' enjoyment and creativity and contribute very well to their personal development. The school has just received its enhanced 'Healthy Schools'

award, for example, which is reflected in pupils' exceptionally mature awareness of the need to adopt a healthy lifestyle.

What the school should do to improve further

- ensure that teaching is consistently good in Key Stage 1 and enables pupils to achieve as well as they can
- improve provision in ICT to give pupils more opportunities to develop their skills
- develop the role of middle managers in improving teaching and learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well. When they join the school children have skills and understanding that fluctuate from year to year but are average in most respects. In previous years their progress has been broadly satisfactory. However, in the current year as a result of improvements to provision they are making better progress in all areas of their learning which enables them to get off to a good start. Good progress during Key Stage 1 results in pupils reaching standards which are significantly above average before they leave. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels has been broadly average in recent years but more able pupils in the current Year 2 are making even better progress, particularly in mathematics. Their good basic skills, together with positive attitudes to learning, ensure that pupils are well prepared for junior school and the world beyond. The few pupils who are learning English and those with a variety of learning difficulties and disabilities make equally good progress because of the very good support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development, including the social, moral, spiritual and cultural dimensions, is outstanding. Pupils' enthusiasm for school is evident in their very positive attitudes to learning, their good attendance and their exemplary behaviour. They look after one another extremely well and are very aware of the need to adopt safe practices in their daily routines. Pupils are proud of their roles as 'playground buddies' when they help those children who do not have anyone to play with. As one explained 'If someone falls over you go to help,' and inspectors saw examples of that happening. The relatively new school council takes its role very seriously and members are pleased with the contribution they have made to improvements in the school environment and toilet facilities. They develop a view of the wider world through their involvement with the church and local communities and they also raise money for a variety of charities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well because teaching and learning are good. They are particularly strong in the Foundation Stage and Year 2. Teachers have excellent relationships with their classes and high expectations of their work and behaviour. As a result, pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and always try to do their best. Teachers plan effectively in teams to meet the needs of all pupils. They generally make good use of the interactive technology which engages and motivates pupils. They often use good questions to probe pupils' thinking and to deepen their understanding. For example, in a Year 2 literacy lesson, pupils were constantly challenged to give their opinions about characters in a story based on evidence from the text. Occasionally, lessons are too dominated by the teachers and pupils have insufficient opportunities to develop their ideas and to be actively engaged. In these lessons they lose some motivation and their progress slows. Teaching assistants work in very close partnership with teachers and make an important contribution to the quality of pupils' learning. Teachers assess pupils' learning carefully to identify the progress they have made and to plan the next steps they need to take.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

An interesting curriculum contributes effectively to pupils' academic and personal progress. Changes to the curriculum in the Foundation Stage have increased children's enjoyment significantly and provide a range of imaginative opportunities to develop their skills and understanding in all areas of learning. Provision for basic skills is good and pupils who find things a little more difficult, including those with learning difficulties and difficulties, are given good support which enables them to achieve well. The school is successfully focussing on challenging the more able and this is resulting in improved progress for these pupils. Good links are made between different subjects, which help pupils to see the relevance of their learning. ICT is used to some extent to support pupils' learning in other subjects although this is inhibited by the limited resources. The curriculum is enriched through focussed weeks on themes such as 'Around the World', visits, visitors and a range of clubs which enhance pupils' skills and their enjoyment of education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Everybody at the school looks after pupils extremely well and parents are confident that their children are safe and well cared for. Many parents commented on how they feel valued by the school and that they are listened to when they have concerns. Hence, there is a fruitful partnership between home and school. Vulnerable pupils, including those with a variety of learning difficulties and disabilities, are extremely

well supported and the school works effectively in partnership with a range of agencies to meet their needs. In particular, the school has a very strong commitment to pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties and enables them to make the best of their education. Academic guidance is very strong. The detailed tracking of pupils' progress ensures that any potential underachievement is identified early. It is also used to set challenging targets for improvement. As a result, pupils achieve well.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are good and based on strong Christian principles which welcome and include everybody. This results in a high quality of care and education for pupils. The leadership team know the strengths of the school well and are relentless in their pursuit of improvement when weaknesses are identified. This is illustrated very well by the imaginative and far reaching changes to approaches to teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage, which are leading to improved motivation and accelerated progress for the children. Relatively new teams have added strength to curriculum leadership in the school. However, responsibility for the monitoring of teaching and learning has been largely concentrated in the hands of the headteacher. The skills of other leaders have been underdeveloped in this respect. This needs to be addressed in order to build further the current good capacity for improvement. Governors are knowledgeable and committed and offer school leaders a good blend of support and challenge.

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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?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
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	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?	1

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?	1
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

You may remember that I visited your school a little while ago with another inspector to look at the things you do and to talk to you and your teachers. I am writing to thank you all for being so friendly and helpful. We really enjoyed our two days at your school. I thought you might like to know what we found out.

You and your parents are right to be proud of St Michael's because it is a good school and in some ways it is outstanding. You told us how you love being at school and how much you like to learn. Teachers plan lots of interesting things for you to do. We thought you all worked hard in your lessons and always tried to do your best. You were all very polite and extremely well behaved. Well done! You all feel safe in school because the staff look after you so well. We were very impressed by the way you look after one another and saw you helping children who had fallen over. You also know how important it is for you to eat well and take lots of exercise.

You are doing well because teachers give you work which helps you to get better. Those of you who find things a bit harder are given lots of help. Some of you who need harder work are now being given chances to do even better. You are doing well in reading, writing and maths by the time you leave. This means that you are ready to go on to junior school and do well.

Your headteacher and deputy headteacher work well together and run the school very well. They get lots of help from the staff who work well together as a team. They are always looking to make things even better. Changes to the school grounds make it a lovely place for you to be. We have asked them to do a few things which we think might help. Firstly we have asked them to get more computers to help you develop your skills. I know there are plans to do this. Secondly we have asked teachers to share their ideas to make sure that all your lessons are good and that you have lots of chances talk to each other about your learning. With the best of luck to you all.

Yours truly

Graham LeeLead inspector