

St Michael's Woolmer Green CofE VA Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117461
Local Authority	HERTFORDSHIRE
Inspection number	290844
Inspection dates	26–27 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Nichola Perry

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	93
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Eunice Reddish
Headteacher	Mrs Mary Westley
Date of previous school inspection	17 June 2002
School address	London Road Woolmer Green Knebworth Hertfordshire SG3 6JP
Telephone number	01438 813267
Fax number	01438 815623

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small village school. Most pupils come from the local area and from relatively advantaged families. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is low. Proportions of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities, whilst broadly average, is relatively high in some year groups. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. A few are from minority ethnic backgrounds but none is at the early stages of learning English. Attainment on entry to the school, although variable, is broadly in line with nationally expected levels.

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 has some outstanding features and a few which are not yet fully developed. The headteacher gives excellent leadership and this is a key factor in the school's success. Standards are above average but there is no complacency in the school's drive to continually improve the quality of education provided and increase pupils' achievement. Personal development is excellent. Pupils enjoy school very much and attendance is good. Behaviour is exemplary and pupils are bursting with enthusiasm for learning in all aspects of the curriculum. Very good foundations are laid for their future learning and working lives. Care guidance and support are outstanding. Pupils say they feel safe and secure and that they have complete trust in their teachers. They demonstrate an extremely clear understanding of how to stay healthy, keep fit and eat sensibly.

Teaching and learning are good. Pupils settle very quickly and happily into the Reception class because of the exceptionally good liaison and close working partnership with the pre-school provision. The good and sometimes outstanding teaching helps pupils to achieve particularly well. Rigorous teaching of early reading, writing and number skills leads to standards which are above expected levels by the end of the Reception year. Teaching is consistently good in Years 1 to 6 and pupils achieve well. Teachers' planning is thorough, with good emphasis on developing basic skills in all subjects, and shows high expectations of pupils' performance. This, along with strong support for learning by parents, is a key factor in pupils' good achievement. National assessments at the end of Year 2 in 2006 showed that pupils reached exceptionally high standards in reading and well above average standards in writing and mathematics. National test results for pupils in Year 6 were above average in English and science and average in mathematics.

Leadership and management of the school are good. The curriculum is rich and extremely relevant. It is supplemented particularly well by a wide range of additional activities. The headteacher and assistant headteacher work closely together to ensure the curriculum addresses the needs of the whole child. Technology has been introduced to improve the quality of teaching and learning. There are good management systems established. The school's leadership has a wealth of information with which to monitor pupils' performance but this does not yet fully address the performance of the school against national standards. There is a good computer suite and classrooms are equipped with interactive whiteboards which are used effectively by both staff and pupils to enhance learning. Parents are united in their positive views of the school and are delighted with the education provided for their children. Governors work closely with staff and monitor the school's performance. Finances are managed well to provide good value for money. The school's self-evaluation is mostly accurate. It has good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Refine the school's tracking systems so that pupils achieve as well as possible year on year and the school's leadership is able to judge its performance against national standards.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

All groups of pupils achieve well. In the Foundation Stage, pupils make good progress and learn rapidly so that their achievement is very good. Most are on course to exceed the early goals

before the end of the Reception year. In Years 1 and 2 pupils continue to make good progress. Their achievement in reading, writing and mathematics is good and they attain high standards. In 2006, standards in reading were exceptionally high because of the emphasis the school has placed on developing reading, which is strong across the school. Results have shown an improving trend in recent years. With such small year groups standards vary considerably from year to year. The present Year 6 pupils entered Year 3 with broadly average levels of knowledge. They have made good progress to attain above average standards. Pupils develop a good range of skills in physical education (PE), art, music and information and communication technology (ICT), and standards are above expectations.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils are rightly proud of their school and their contribution to running it. Attendance is good because they thoroughly enjoy coming to school. Pupils are shown great respect by all adults, reflected in the confidence shown when pupils speak to each other, their teachers and support staff. They are sensitive to the feelings of others and share ideas readily. Behaviour is excellent and pupils are always ready for fun, in the knowledge of where the boundaries are. They are acquiring many skills useful to them in later life: pupils are very involved in the local community, including working with the parish council; the school council has a high profile in the school and ensures that pupils' views are heard; a working party drew up plans and costed the building of a new gazebo in the school grounds; healthy eating is very well supported by fruit snacks and well balanced meals; the strong emphasis on PE and sporting activities promotes healthy living very effectively. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is developed extremely well through a stunning range of activities and experiences. They visit places of worship, participate in village events and support many charities. These aspects, along with the strong Christian ethos, are central to the work of the school. Pupils are very well aware of how to look after themselves and stay safe.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall and are sometimes outstanding. Teachers plan lessons meticulously, assess pupils' progress regularly and ensure a productive and focused learning environment which is evident from Reception to Year 6. Relationships are excellent and appropriately relaxed so that pupils are happy to ask for help, offer opinions and contribute to class discussions. Pupils are highly motivated to learn because teachers work very hard to make lessons interesting and fun. Creative use of interactive whiteboards contributes well to this. Pupils quickly gain high levels of self-confidence and independence as they are encouraged to think about what they are doing. They are beginning to understand how to use success criteria through good opportunities to contribute to the assessment of their own learning in lessons. Effective support from highly skilled teaching assistants contributes to the good progress made by pupils of all abilities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school provides a broad and excellent curriculum that gives pupils a rounded education. The impact of this is evident throughout the Foundation Stage and Years 1, 2 and 3. It has yet to have a full impact on pupils' progress in subsequent year groups. The curriculum is exceptionally well balanced and enriched by a wide range of additional activities, such as termly themed weeks where pupils work in mixed age groups across the school to study aspects of science or mathematics. There is strong emphasis on the key skills of literacy and numeracy. The school has made the curriculum more meaningful and stimulating by ensuring equally strong emphasis on subjects such as art, music, PE and ICT, the introduction of French and by making sensible links across subjects. Pupils learn about their own culture and other countries, their faiths and customs so that they are being very well prepared for life in a multi-cultural society. In the Foundation Stage the curriculum is excellent and underpins pupils' very good achievement. A wealth of purposeful and imaginative learning opportunities are organised, both indoors and outdoors and imaginative play is very well developed.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

From the Reception class onwards, excellent emphasis is placed on developing pupils' self-esteem and independence. There are many opportunities for pupils to exercise responsibility, for example, running the school stationery shop and as Year 5 and 6 peer mediators. Academic guidance is extremely good so that pupils have an increasingly clear understanding of how to reach the next stage of learning. Marking is thorough, particularly in literacy and numeracy, pupils know their targets and are keen to achieve them. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 are involved in an annual parent consultation meeting where current National Curriculum levels are shared and both parties' roles in achieving target levels are discussed. The school ensures that the care of pupils is paramount. Child protection procedures, police checks on adults and other health and safety procedures are all robust. Staff are appropriately trained and kept well informed. Teachers and support staff are sensitive to the needs of each individual pupil. Staff are accessible and encourage pupils to talk to them about any worries. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the high level of care provided for their children.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher cares deeply about every pupil and has succeeded in establishing a learning ethos in which every pupil can flourish. Regular monitoring of teaching and learning has brought about improvements in planning, presentation of work as well as the overall quality of teaching. The headteacher has successfully addressed recent staffing issues and now has a committed team who are keen to further improve the school. Subject leadership is good overall although leadership skills in some subjects are still developing with the help of effective coaching from the headteacher. Leadership of the Foundation Stage is excellent. The school analyses its performance carefully to identify any areas of weakness and takes action to improve things. An example of this is the creative use of teachers' skills which enables pupils to receive specialist teaching in music, PE and French, and enhances their learning outside core subjects. The school has systems to monitor pupils' progress, however, these do not provide necessary fine detail

of progress against national standards year on year. Use of percentages, where such small numbers are concerned, does not give effective information. Governors make regular visits to the school and this helps the governing body to monitor the work of the school.

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Annex A

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	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?	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	1
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?	1
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.

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

28 March 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Michael's Woolmer Green C of E VA Primary School, London Road, Woolmer Green, Knebworth, Hertfordshire, SG3 6JP.

What a lovely school! I thoroughly enjoyed my visit to your school. Thank you for being so friendly and welcoming - and answering all my questions so well.

You clearly love your school and are very proud of it. Your headteacher and all the staff are very proud of you, and I agree with them. You certainly play a very important part in the running of your school. I was very impressed with the way you were involved in the design and costing of your new gazebo and I couldn't believe how quickly it was put up on the first day of the inspection. You enjoy your lunches and know how to be healthy and fit. I'm not surprised that you are so fit with all the sporting activities you are involved in. It was great that the tag rugby team won the tournament on Monday afternoon - what an achievement that was against so many other larger schools. The report you wrote about that was very well written.

You all behave very well, play well together, work hard and attain good standards. You are polite and full of fun. The teachers work very hard to help you learn as much as possible and you said how much you enjoy all the other activities which help you learn. You like taking on responsibilities and think the peer mediators are successful and help everyone to get on well together. You think you are very well prepared for going on to secondary school.

I think there is one important thing that needs to be done to make the school even better. I have asked your headteacher to make an even bigger spreadsheet so that she, and your teachers, can see all of your assessment results from when you start school in Reception up to Year 6. This will help them to check you are all making the right progress each year.

I know the school is going to get even better and I wish you all good luck in the future.

Nichola Perry

Lead inspector