



St Michael's C of E Nursery and Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 121027
Local Authority NORFOLK
Inspection number 291960
Inspection dates 10–11 October 2006
Reporting inspector Gulshanbir Kayembe

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	School House Lane
School category	Voluntary controlled		Bickling Road, Bickling Road
Age range of pupils	3–7		Norwich, Norfolk NR11 6EX
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01263 732260
Number on roll (school)	132	Fax number	01263 732260
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Jane Goodliffe
		Headteacher	Mrs Anne Jewers
Date of previous school inspection	13 June 2000		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3–7	10–11 October 2006	291960

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school, which includes a Nursery, is situated in a small market town in North Norfolk. Whilst the proportion eligible to free school meals is low, pupils come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds and this is more marked now than at the time of the last inspection. The proportion of pupils with a learning difficulty or disability is low. On the whole, attainment on entry to the Nursery is in line with national expectations but does vary and in some years attainment on entry has been below. There are very few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and none with English as an additional language. A second Reception Class was opened at the start of this academic year to accommodate a growth in numbers.

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 Infant School is a good school which nurtures pupils' personal and academic development enabling them to make good progress and achieve well in relation to their starting points. The quality of teaching is good and particularly strong in the Nursery. Teaching in the Reception is currently satisfactory but it is improving. Between 2003 and 2005 the school went through an unsettled period due to staffing changes in the Foundation Stage. Though the staffing has been stable for just over a year, Key Stage 1 pupils, especially those in the present Year 2, are still making up for some lost ground earlier in their education. As a result of this, and because a very high proportion of pupils in this year group have birthdays in the summer, their standards of work are just average. Pupils across the whole school develop strong speaking and listening skills. By the time they begin Year 2 they express ideas well, have a rich vocabulary and are able to think for themselves. However, writing skills across Key Stage 1 are weaker, and handwriting, spelling and punctuation less well developed than pupils' speaking and listening. Whilst the more able pupils make rapid progress in developing their writing, the middle and lower attaining pupils need more help and support. Overall, pupils in Key Stage 1 make good progress and achieve well due to the energetic and lively teaching. Children in the nursery get a cracking start to their schooling and enjoy immensely the stimulating and exciting range of learning experiences provided for them. Progress through the Reception Year has tended to be satisfactory but is improving due to measures put in place this year to address weaknesses identified through the school's self-evaluation. There has not been a strong enough focus on teaching early literacy and, to some extent, numeracy skills in Reception so that pupils begin the Key Stage 1 curriculum without being as fully prepared for it as they could be. The school is now focusing well on giving pupils a secure grounding, for example, of letters and letter sounds in Reception. Throughout the school, the strong and positive ethos nurtures pupils' personal development and well-being most effectively. They develop as rounded individuals able to express opinions and share their views. Pupils take care of one another and feel safe and happy at school. They have an excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles and actively adopt practices to keep themselves fit and eat beneficial foods. Most pupils know how to keep themselves safe effectively. Pupils' behaviour and attendance are good. The school takes good care of its pupils and provides a good quality curriculum to support their learning and personal development. The headteacher provides a good lead. She has a clear idea of the school's strengths and weaknesses and is actively working to address the few relative weaknesses in provision. The school has a good management structure and staff work well as a team. The school's self-evaluation is very accurate though some of the grades are overly harsh. Governors play an active role in the life of the school and work very well in partnership with staff especially the headteacher. The school has good capacity to continue to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the progress in Reception by ensuring that pupils are given a secure grounding in early literacy skills. - Improve pupils' skills in writing in Years 1 and 2 by tackling the weaknesses in handwriting, spelling and punctuation.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

For most pupils currently in the school, attainment on entry to the Nursery is average and slightly above in the Reception year. However, attainment on entry for current Year 2 pupils was below expectations. Standards are just average by Year 2 but slightly above in Year 1. Pupils achieve well. Achievement is consistently good in the Nursery and in Years 1 and 2. It is satisfactory in Reception though improving as a result of an improved focus on the teaching of early skills in literacy. The new initiatives have yet to have full impact on pupils' standards. Able pupils make rapid progress across the school. They pick up new ideas fast. For example, in an English lesson in Year 2, able pupils were quick to adopt the use of capital letters and full stops after being shown how and when to use these by their teacher. However, whilst pupils in Years 1 and 2 use interesting and descriptive vocabulary, their handwriting, spelling and punctuation skills are relatively weaker. This is especially so for middle and lower attaining pupils and is an issue the school is currently addressing. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are well supported and make good progress. The very small number from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve well and are often amongst the highest attainers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They are very personable youngsters who readily engage in conversation with adults and one another. Pupils express their views with conviction and are thoughtful when responding to others. It is clear that they relish their time at school and participate with enthusiasm and enjoyment in the activities provided for them. The care and individual attention pupils receive means they feel safe. They understand that it is important to be kind to others and to look after one another. Pupils represent their classes well on the school council and willingly take responsibility. Through these and other activities such as the eco-committee, fund-raising events and the harvest festival, pupils make a good contribution to their school and wider community. Attendance and behaviour are good, though there are a few pupils with behaviour difficulties. Pupils show an outstanding understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and do their best to live up to this. They are well prepared for the next stage in education and future life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan their lessons well and share learning outcomes with pupils so that they know what they should learn. Most teachers use questioning well to draw out pupils' ideas and make them think for themselves. On occasion, however, questioning in the Reception Year is not sufficiently probing and pupils are not given enough time to respond. Relationships between staff and pupils are good and behaviour is very well managed. Support staff make a good contribution to pupils' learning and behaviour. Teachers do not always give pupils enough opportunities to write in subjects across the curriculum though they make good use of computers to support learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Curricular provision is good and meets the full range of needs in the school. Topic based approaches are used well to develop a broad based curriculum which includes good opportunities for pupils' personal development. As a result, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. This is further enhanced by a good range of after-school clubs and activities, visits away and visitors to the school. The Nursery and Reception Classes provide a well planned curriculum based on the nationally designated areas for learning. The opportunities for creative development and learning through role-play and exploration are particularly exciting in the Nursery. There are lively displays around the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Pupils are looked after well and good attention given to health and safety and child protection. There is a strong focus on treating pupils as individuals and support is well tailored to meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. Pupils' progress is rigorously tracked and monitored. A new system in the Foundation Stage is proving very useful, especially in identifying gaps in pupils' development and what they need to learn next. Work in Key Stage 1 is marked frequently, though comments on how pupils can improve their work are not always detailed enough. Hence, pupils are not always clear as to how they can do better next time. The school sets challenging targets and works hard to support all pupils in meeting these. Targets are usually met, especially those set for higher attainers.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is astute in her evaluations of how the school is performing. She uses information from her observations around the school effectively to choose the right priorities for development. Where her grading of performance has been harsh it is due to her very high expectations of the school and her desire to achieve the very best for pupils in her care. The headteacher is rated highly by parents who find her approachable and supportive. The assistant headteacher supports the headteacher well and works effectively with her to develop the school. The roles of subject coordinators, which were an issue at the time of the last inspection, are developing well and coordinators provide good support to their colleagues. They are effectively involved in monitoring and evaluating provision in their areas. The Foundation Stage coordinator, who has been in post for just over a year, has established strong provision in the Nursery and this is highly praised by parents. She is now turning her attention to monitoring work across the whole Foundation Stage and establishing consistency of practice. Governors are actively involved in the work and the life of the school. They take a proactive approach to their roles and have established strong systems for overseeing the school's work. The governors and the headteacher work very effectively to steer the school in the right direction for its future development and ensure that it provides good value for money. The school is now making good progress in improving since the last inspection having tackled effectively the issues identified at that time. It is well placed to secure further improvement.

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?	2
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	3
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?	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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
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?	2

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?	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

12 October 2006 St Michael's C of E Infant School, School House Lane, Bickling Road, Aylsham, Norfolk, NR11 6EX Dear Children I would like to thank you very much for making me feel welcome when I visited your school recently. I enjoyed visiting your school very much, and most of all I enjoyed coming into your classrooms and talking to you. I was very impressed with how polite and helpful you were. There are a lot of good things about the school and these are listed below: - the nursery provides interesting and exciting things for children to do - you enjoy school very much, are willing to work hard and, as a result, you do well - you use interesting words and are good at picking up new ones, being imaginative and talking about your ideas with others - you have a very good idea of how to stay fit and healthy; you take regular exercise and eat a balanced diet - you are taught well and your teachers are always ready to help you when you need it - your headteacher is good at her job and is keen to make sure you do really well - your parents like the school a lot - the governors make sure the school is working well and doing its job properly. In every school there are things that could be better. What would really improve your school is if: - you could learn a bit more about reading and writing in Reception - you could make your writing better in Years 1 and 2 by learning your spellings, practising handwriting and using punctuation. Your teachers should help you do these by making sure they give you the right kind of work to do. With best wishes, Gulshan Kayembe Lead Inspector