

# St Michael's Church of England Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	123160
<b>Local Authority</b>	Oxfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	292601
<b>Inspection dates</b>	10–11 July 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Steven Hill

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 category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	139
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Dr Hillary Otterburn
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Susan Brownless
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 October 2002
<b>School address</b>	The Causeway Steventon Abingdon OX13 6SQ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01235 831298
<b>Fax number</b>	01235 831298

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This is a small village primary school, where numbers mean many classes are mixed age. Pupils' social and economic circumstances vary considerably but overall are more favourable than those usually found. The vast majority of pupils are of White British origin, with about 5% who come from a range of other ethnic groups. Almost all pupils have English as a home language, and none are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average, although this varies from year to year.

## 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 is a good school where pupils enjoy learning, and grow in confidence and self-esteem as they get older. Their achievement is good because of good teaching.

Children get off to a good start in the Foundation Stage, settling in happily and making good progress. Pupils continue to make good progress through Key Stage 1, usually reaching above-average standards by the end of Year 2. Results of tests in 2005 and 2006 at the end of Year 6 showed that pupils made satisfactory progress across Key Stage 2. The most recent results, and the school's detailed tracking of individuals' progress, show that pupils are now making good progress throughout the school. Standards have risen at the end of Year 6 and are above average. Standards, at both key stages, are not as high in writing as in other subjects, particularly in the proportion of pupils gaining the higher levels.

Pupils' personal development is good. They behave well in class and around the school, an improvement since the last inspection. Year 6 pupils explained that they enjoy school because 'Teachers are really friendly and listen to your problems...you get support from your friends...' and '...lessons are really good!' Pupils are very knowledgeable about how to keep themselves and others safe, and participate enthusiastically in the wide range of physical activities on offer.

The care, support and guidance provided for pupils are good. Pupils are cared for well as individuals, so they feel safe, secure and happy in school. Very good tracking of their progress in English and mathematics enables extra support to be provided to those who need it. Teaching and learning are good, although there are some inconsistencies. Teachers organise classes well, and have good relationships with pupils, so that lessons are purposeful and orderly. Pupils work hard in response to teachers' high expectations, and take a pride in their achievements. Teachers make good use of tracking data to ensure that pupils who struggle with their work have tasks that they can cope with, or make sure they get extra help from the skilled teaching assistants. However, in a few lessons, teachers do not always provide sufficiently challenging work for more able pupils. The good curriculum is enhanced by links with schools abroad, work on the environment through the Eco Schools project, and a good range of after-school clubs, visits and visitors. There is now good provision for design and technology, a weakness at the last inspection.

The headteacher provides clear leadership to a staff team who work well together. She has monitored lessons regularly and given teachers clear feedback which has helped them to improve their practice. Subject leaders provide good support for colleagues, but do not have enough opportunities to monitor teaching and progress across the school, so they can target their help more accurately.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing, particularly for more able pupils.
- Give subject leaders more opportunities to monitor their colleagues' practice and so provide better support for them.
- Provide more consistently challenging work for higher attaining pupils.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Achievement is good and standards are above average. Achievement and standards have improved in the older classes recently. Children start in Reception with standards that vary from year to year, but which are broadly average. They make good progress and, by the time they start Year 1, achieve standards that are better than those usually found at this age. Good overall progress continues through the rest of the school, so standards are above average at the ends of Year 2 and Year 6, as is reflected in the results of the most recent national tests. Standards are generally higher in mathematics, reading and science than in writing. This is particularly so in the proportion of pupils getting to the higher levels in writing, which is just average. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress in the light of their difficulties.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They enjoy both the social and academic aspects of school, and their attendance is well above average. They behave well and are confident that any problems will be quickly sorted out by the teachers. Pupils have very positive relationships with each other and with staff, and work increasingly well collaboratively as they get older. Pupils take on responsibilities willingly and fulfil them conscientiously. They make a very good contribution to the school community through the school council, and the 'Green Leaf Gang' who are helping drive forward the Eco Schools approach. One of the few regrets of Year 6 pupils is that, often because of the separate playgrounds, they do not have enough chance to help or play with younger children. Pupils have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and are enthusiastic about the many opportunities for exercise, such as the whole school 'wake-up, shake-up' exercise sessions. They do well in a variety of sports, and the school won the local hockey tournament this year. A survey by the school council showed an increasing appreciation by pupils of healthy eating. By the time they leave, pupils have grown into caring and responsible young people, well prepared for their future lives in school and beyond.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good and have improved over the last two years. High expectations of work and behaviour are consistent. Teachers are making better use of tracking information to target work on pupils' individual needs, although higher attaining pupils sometimes need more challenge. A common approach to target setting ensures that pupils are much more aware of their own learning, and of what they need to do to improve. Teachers make some very good use of discussion in pairs for pupils to sort out their ideas before they write, or before they contribute to the group. This ensures all pupils are fully involved, as well as helping raise standards. However, in some lessons, opportunities for this kind of collaborative work are missed. Teachers make clear what pupils are to learn, so pupils have a sense of purpose in their learning. In some lessons, teachers make very clear to pupils what criteria will constitute success, but in other lessons criteria are not specific enough.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

A wide and interesting curriculum contributes greatly to pupils' enjoyment of school. English and mathematics are taught thoroughly and often imaginatively, with good use of links to other subjects, particularly in literacy. Although an increasing focus on drama, speaking and listening is helping to raise standards, this is not consistent between classes. The curriculum is enhanced by a number of 'extras' including extensive provision for swimming, and opportunities to learn French for older pupils that they describe as 'really fun'. Some excellent work has been done on local history focusing on the life of this village school since its establishment. Year 2 pupils report that they get lots of chances to go 'out and about' to help their learning, such as the tennis coaching course they attended during the inspection. The programme to support pupils' personal development is strong. The use of 'circle time', where pupils discuss social issues or help each other with their problems, is particularly praised by Year 6. They say it has helped them to settle arguments, reduced bullying so that it is very seldom an issue, and has given them confidence, particularly in preparing for secondary school.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school provides good pastoral support for pupils, helping them to deal with emotional and social problems, and to support each other. Pupils are confident that they can turn to their teachers for help if they need it. Provisions for safeguarding pupils, including risk assessments, are in place and meet national requirements. The academic support for pupils is good. Their progress is tracked carefully in English and mathematics, and a wide range of effective intervention programmes is used to help any pupils who are falling behind or who have specific needs. Pupils are given targets to aim for which are 'ticked off' as they achieve them. They find this helpful in seeing how they are progressing, and are motivated to work hard and analyse their own accomplishments.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The school is well led and managed. Clear direction from the headteacher and good teamwork from staff have established a common approach to teaching and learning which is helping raise standards. This is backed up by regular monitoring of lessons, principally by the headteacher. Teachers are given clear feedback on strengths and weaknesses in their lessons, helping them to improve their practice. Teaching is now good throughout the school, an improvement since the last inspection. Subject leaders have not yet had enough opportunities to participate in this process, to help raise standards in their areas of responsibility. The management of the mixed age classes, particularly for Foundation Stage children, is good and supports good progress.

The analysis of pupils' progress is thorough and is based on a range of assessments as well as systematic scrutiny of samples of their work. This has enabled the school to address issues which arise, improving the curriculum and pupils' progress. The provision of a good range of support to help individuals who fall behind has also raised achievement. The organisation of support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is good. Their clear individual

education plans, targeted on their specific needs, provide a good basis for support by skilled teaching assistants.

The school has made good progress since the last inspection, and is well placed to improve further. Governors play a full part in the school's management. They understand its strengths and weaknesses, contribute to the school's direction, and give staff good support.

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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	<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>	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
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	2

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

<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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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

19 July 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Michael's Church of England Primary School, Abingdon, OX13 6SQ

Thank you for all your help when I visited your school. I enjoyed talking to you and watching you at work. You told me that St Michael's is a good school, and I agree with you. This is why.

I thought that your behaviour was good and I was very impressed by how well you get on with each other and with the staff. You work hard in class and you contribute a lot to the community, especially through the school council and the green leaf gang. I could see that you enjoy school and your attendance is very good. Keep it up! The adults are good at looking after you and making sure you are happy in school.

You make good progress because your teachers give you lots of interesting things to do, and explain things to you carefully. They are particularly good at keeping track of how everyone is getting on, so they can give you extra help if you need it. Just occasionally, they give some of you work that is a bit too easy, and we have agreed they will try to make sure you all get challenging work in future. You are reaching good standards in your work, particularly in reading. You are not quite as good at writing, and the school is planning to help you improve this.

The adults organise the school well, and the headteacher is good at helping the other teachers to get even better. Some of your teachers are experts at particular subjects, and try to help each other with these. I have suggested that they should spend more time in each other's classrooms next year, so that they can give each other tips about helping you learn even more.

I hope that you carry on working hard and enjoying school.

Best wishes,

Steven Hill.

(Lead Inspector)