

St Michael's CofE (C) First School

Inspection report - amended

Unique Reference Number	124275
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	292940
Inspection dates	11–12 September 2006
Reporting inspector	Doris Bell

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	349
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Harry Brunt
Headteacher	R M Gale
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2001
School address	Weavers Lane off Lichfield Road Stone ST15 8QB
Telephone number	01785 354111
Fax number	01785 354116

Age group	3–9
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Amended Report Addendum

Report amended due to Ofsted notification

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large first school caters for pupils from a very wide range of backgrounds. Its intake has changed in recent years. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities has risen. The range of those difficulties has increased, as has the proportion of pupils joining the school at different times. There have also been several changes of staff, including a new deputy headteacher. The school has its own nursery, and children's attainment on entry is as expected for their age. The school has received several awards in recognition of the success of different aspects of its work.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

School effectiveness is good and in some respects, outstanding. The pupils' good achievement starts in the Foundation Stage. Standards are above, and this continues throughout the school. The very rigorous checking of teaching and learning is a significant feature of the effective leadership and management evident in the school. This results in good teaching, some of which is outstanding, and has succeeded in getting progress in Years 3 and 4 back on track after a period during which it stalled. The school's assessment systems, including the tracking of pupils' individual progress in each year group, are accurate and in many respects, exemplary. However, missing from them is a simplified whole-school overview of the progress of individual pupils over time. A system is currently being set up to do this. Standards are above average in Year 2 and above expectation in Year 4, but they have declined overall since 2003 owing to a number of factors with which the school has coped well. Achievement is good and all groups of pupils make equally good progress. The school provides particularly well for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. Aspects of this provision, such as the inclusion of these pupils in all that the school offers, are outstanding and are highly praised by parents. Pupils' personal development and the care, guidance and support they receive are outstanding. As a result, pupils' behaviour is excellent and the care and respect they show for each other, for adults, and for the environment are second to none. Pupils have an exceptionally good understanding of the principles of healthy living, and of how to keep themselves safe. An excellent range of activities in and outside the normal school day very successfully involves pupils in the community. They have a very secure understanding of their place in the world and are particularly well prepared for the future. These principles, which inform the well-planned curriculum, are at the heart of the new school improvement plan. The plan itself has some shortcomings and is limited in its usefulness as a tool to drive up achievement. There are too many areas for development and the targets to reach them are not precise enough. Nevertheless, the school knows what it has to do to improve and its own evaluation of its effectiveness is accurate. The new senior management team share the headteacher's vision for an outstanding school. This and the teamwork evident throughout the school give the school good capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Streamline assessment data to give a simple, straightforward overview of each pupil's progress over time.
- Sharpen the school improvement plan by stating clearly what the main priorities are, focusing them more closely on what is needed to improve achievement and therefore the value added for pupils in Year 4.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good throughout the school. Standards overall are above average, including at the end of Reception. However, they have declined in Year 2 since 2003 because of the changing nature of the school's intake. Early indications from the Year 2 results for 2006 are that standards have declined slightly again this year. However, pupils' work and teachers' records show that standards are higher than the data suggests and that the school is somewhat conservative in assessing pupils at the higher level. Problem solving in mathematics and science remains a relative weakness and was picked up by management through the meticulous checks it makes on how well teachers track pupils' progress in each year group. The actions taken so far have

led to improvement. Nevertheless, the school does not yet have a simplified wholeschool overview of the progress of individual pupils over time. This limits the usefulness of the otherwise exemplary assessment procedures when it comes to setting clear and precise whole-school targets. The management recognises this and systems have been set up to do it from this year.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

There is a shared enjoyment of learning throughout this school. The pupils' enthusiasm for all aspects of school life is striking and their attendance is good. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, nurtured by the school's very strong Christian ethos, is outstanding. Behaviour is exemplary. Pupils of all ages display excellent self-awareness and high levels of care and concern for each other and the wider world. They play a major part in shaping their own environment, for example, through the school council. They greatly appreciate the beauty of nature and the well-planned use of the woodland area. There was great excitement as they looked for their (model) barn owl in the woods. They talk animatedly about this, the real barn owl they have adopted, and the frogs they saw earlier in the year. Their horticultural work successfully promotes healthy eating and they learn skills for the future through running their own plant company. All of this greatly contributes to their good literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. Participation in the life of the community is very strong. Pupils and their parents are rightly proud of what they do.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The teachers' determination to help pupils achieve well results in teaching that is good overall and sometimes outstanding. Lessons are always well planned and teachers evaluate them thoroughly to make sure they improve learning. The constant references made to targets in lessons help pupils to check their own progress, and teachers to check their competence, at all times. Wellbriefed teaching assistants help pupils of all levels of ability to take a full part in all lesson activities. Teachers teach pupils in many different ways, conscious of their different learning styles. More recently, the school has worked hard to include a strong emphasis on practical problem solving and the greater use of ICT, all of which has improved achievement. Discussions with staff show that this was not always the case and, in some of the lessons observed, pupils' concentration wandered when the range of activities was more limited. The quality of teaching has been better in Key Stage 1 than in Key Stage 2 in recent years. However, this issue has been addressed well through the strategic deployment of staff and has led to improved achievement evident in Year 4.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The well-planned curriculum successfully meets the needs and interests of all learners, enabling them to make good academic progress and outstanding personal progress. There is still more to do to ensure that the planned teaching of ICT skills is fully embedded in every subject, and problem-solving skills are fully and effectively pursued in mathematics and science. However, a good start has been made and the flexibility within the curriculum has allowed changes to be made to planned activities to address these issues. Theme days, links between subjects and

a very wide range of enrichment activities ensure that there is something for pupils of all ages and abilities outside of the normal school day. The high level of attention to health and safety extends to these activities and to the very effective use the school makes of its exceptionally well developed outdoor environment. Very strong links with outside agencies enhance the specialist provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and contribute to their good progress.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The procedures for health and safety, for child protection and for the care and protection of vulnerable pupils are first rate. Very high quality care, guidance and support ensure that pupils feel safe and valued and that they achieve well. Because relationships between pupils and staff are so good, pupils feel safe, confident and highly valued. Teachers guide pupils very well through good marking, target setting and constant reminders of what they need to do to improve. All pupils spoken to knew their targets, how to reach them, and how they would know when they had done so. The school involves parents very well in its work and parents are virtually unanimous in their praise for the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. Their impact on promoting personal development and well-being is outstanding. The school has dealt effectively with many changes since the previous inspection and it has improved. The school's self evaluation is accurate. For example, it has correctly identified the need to raise achievement in mathematics and science. It knows what needs to be done and it sets about doing it well. There is a strong sense of teamwork in the school. The headteacher is particularly effective in encouraging initiative in and expecting accountability from the staff. Her monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning is exemplary and she is successfully coaching other staff how to do these things well. All of this gives the school good capacity for further improvement. The improvement plan embraces a very wide range of initiatives and priorities. However, the targets showing how these might be moved on within a given year to reach the outstanding effectiveness the school clearly seeks, lack precision. This limits the effectiveness of the planning. Governors are fully involved in all aspects of school life. Through their visits and discussions with staff and pupils, they have a good understanding of the school and know what questions to ask to check its work.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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	1

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.

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

- Thank you for making us so welcome in your school. It was a delight to talk to you and to find out how well you are doing. We really enjoyed listening to you and finding out how much you enjoyed school and how much you appreciate the way the staff care for you and give you lots of exciting things to do. Yours is a good school and some of its work, including how well it cares for, guides and supports you, is excellent. Here are some of the highlights:
- You make good progress because you work hard and your teachers constantly check how well you are doing. They make sure your work helps you to learn more each day.
- Your behaviour is excellent. You care deeply for each other and for the environment and are very conscious of how you can help to improve it.
- You have a very good understanding of how to keep yourselves safe and of why it is important to keep fit and healthy. You show this in your horticultural work and your attendance at so many of the clubs that the school runs for you.
- The headteacher and the governors run the school well. They want to make it excellent in every way and are constantly trying to find ways to do this. You can help them by continuing to work hard and making as much progress as you possibly can.
- Your parents and carers recognise all of the good work the school does and they work very hard to support you and it. We have asked your school to keep up its good work and to help you to do even better by:
 - making it easier to track your progress over the whole time you are in school, and
 - being more precise about the important areas it needs to work on to help you to make even faster progress. We hope that you will continue to enjoy learning and to be as enthusiastic and caring as you are now, when you grow up.