

St Michael's Nursery and Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112143
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	301754
Inspection dates	1–2 November 2007
Reporting inspector	David Earley

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	96
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Eileen Bold
Headteacher	Mrs Andrea Pattinson
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2003
School address	Station Road Workington Cumbria CA14 2UY
Telephone number	01900 325244
Fax number	01900 325246

Age group	3–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average sized school near the centre of Workington. It serves an area with high levels of social deprivation. Most pupils are of White British background. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The school has received the Healthy Schools Award.

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 and improving school with some outstanding features. The school strives in all that it does to match the aspirations of its motto, 'Giving the best to achieve the best'. A significant factor in this is the excellent leadership provided by the headteacher. Her relentless drive to raise standards and her vision to achieve only the best for each pupil are shared by staff and governors, leading to improving standards and excellent personal development.

Children make a good start in the Foundation Stage. Most children do not reach the levels expected for their ages when they enter Year 1. However, most children enter the Nursery with skills and understanding that are significantly below those typical for their ages so this represents good progress and achievement. Pupils continue to make good progress in Key Stage 1 and achieve well. Standards have gradually improved in recent years and are average overall at the end of Year 2. However, the performance of boys in reading is below average.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils have a very good awareness of how to lead healthy lifestyles and behaviour is excellent. Relationships are excellent and pupils really enjoy coming to school. This helps them to become confident and eager to learn. Pupils say that they feel safe and are confident to approach an adult should they have any worries. They make a very good contribution to the community and are very well prepared for the next stage in their education. Attendance is good.

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers ensure that learning is fun so that pupils want to learn. Teachers have good subject knowledge and make good use of questions to challenge pupils' thinking and to extend their speaking and listening skills. However, marking does not consistently advise pupils how to improve their work. The curriculum is good. It is enriched by lots of visits and visitors so that learning is practical and relevant. Recent improvements to the curriculum are helping staff to improve the continuity between the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, extend pupils' skills in the use of letter sounds and respond more readily to pupils' interests.

Care, guidance and support are excellent. The school rightly regards itself as a big family. All pupils are very well known and cared for and very well supported, academically, physically and emotionally. There are very close links with parents and carers which help to support learning. A parent commented that, 'The school works hard to involve parents and to offer extra activities for children and adults.' Systems for child protection and safeguarding children are in place. Very effective systems for assessment and tracking help to underpin good progress.

Leadership and management are good. There is a shared commitment to raise standards and improve provision. In this small school, all staff readily share

responsibilities and work well together as a team. Self-evaluation is good and leads

to clear strategic planning. Governance is good. Governors are very supportive and play an active role in helping to shape the direction of the school.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision is good and leads to children achieving well. This is because teaching is good and planning, assessment and tracking of progress are very thorough. Children settle quickly because

relationships are excellent and there are good links with parents and carers. The curriculum has been improved by linking the Nursery and Reception planning more effectively which gives continuity to learning. Improvements to outdoor provision and initiatives such as the sensory room to promote thinking and creativity help to make learning stimulating, so that children are eager to come to school and want to learn. Leadership and management are good. Staff share a clear vision for raising standards and improving provision.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in boys' reading by the end of Year 2.
- Mark pupils' work more effectively so that they are clear about what they should do in order to improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Most pupils make good progress, whatever their ability or background.

When most children start school in the Nursery their standards are significantly below those typical for children of this age. They achieve well and make good progress, although by the end of the Foundation Stage many of them do not reach the levels expected.

Good progress and achievement continue in Key Stage 1. The results of the statutory assessments in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 in 2006 were broadly average overall, although standards reached by boys were below average, particularly in writing. In 2005 and part of 2006 there severe was disruption to staffing which led to a dip in standards. Staffing is now stable and the school has successfully implemented a range of strategies to improve boys' writing. As a result, early indications are that standards overall in 2007 were better than 2006. However, recent strategies to improve standards in boys' reading have not had enough time to be effective. This has resulted in standards falling in reading in 2007. The school's current data indicates that planned improvements have had a positive impact for the current Year 2 and that these pupils are on track to exceed their challenging targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is excellent. Pupils say that they really enjoy coming to school and feel safe and well cared for. They have a very good understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles, enhanced by opportunities to eat healthily and to take regular exercise. Pupils have lots of opportunities to accept responsibility and take the initiative, for example, as 'buddies' or school councillors. Behaviour is excellent and pupils make a very good contribution to the local and wider community through involvement in community events and charity fund-raising. Relationships are excellent, increasing pupils' self-esteem so that they become confident learners. They work very well independently and in collaboration with others, and are very well prepared for the next stage in their education. Their personal and academic development is promoted well by a much appreciated rewards system. For example, pupils have opportunities to sit at the 'Captains Table' at meal times. Attendance is good and exceeds the school's targets.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good, leading to good progress. Good use is made of assessment information to provide tasks which are suitably challenging for pupils of differing abilities. However marking of pupils' work does not always indicate clearly enough what pupils need to do in order to improve. Teachers generally share and check lesson objectives with pupils so that they develop a good understanding of their learning. Typically, lessons move at a brisk pace and pupils work hard and sustain their interest. Pupils enjoy learning and are eager to improve because lessons are fun. Teachers know pupils well and provide a good variety of activities to encourage them to learn through their own interests, particularly boys. Teachers and support assistants work well together, particularly in support of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. These pupils make good progress because individual and group education plans are clear and are used effectively during lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. There is a good focus on developing the skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology, extended by using them in other subjects. The curriculum is well matched to pupils' needs. For example, in Year 1, recent developments are helping to ensure continuity of learning between the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. The recent organisation of pupils according to ability in the learning of letter sounds is also helping to improve their skills. The curriculum is further enhanced by a very wide range of enrichment activities, including visits, visitors and extra-curricular activities. These give a purpose and excitement to learning and help to make learning irresistible. Pupils have a very good understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles through an effective programme of personal, social and health education. There are strong links with outside agencies, including the local church and schools, which help to extend the curriculum well.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are excellent. Pupils flourish personally and academically in the very warm and welcoming environment. All are valued, whatever their ability, and become very confident learners. There are very good links with parents and carers and the school has an exceptionally strong, caring family atmosphere, exemplified in family outings to the theatre. The development of the 'learning zone' helps parents and pupils to learn and work together. Healthy meals are cooked in the school's newly-opened kitchen. Pupils say that they are confident to approach an adult should they have any problems and this is reinforced through 'worry boxes' and opportunities to discuss any issues privately in 'bubble time'. All required safety and safeguarding procedures are securely in place. Very effective systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress give teachers a very clear view of what needs to be done in order to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides very strong and inspirational leadership. She has a very clear vision for raising standards and improving provision, supported well by the assistant headteacher. Staff and governors share the same determination to provide the best for each pupil. This helps to create a very inclusive school with high levels of personal development and good academic achievement. Self-evaluation is thorough and leads to clear identification of areas for improvement. For example, an analysis of performance led to the implementation of strategies which are helping to raise standards in aspects of boys' literacy. Staff work well together as a team and set challenging targets to improve provision. Curriculum leaders are extending their roles in checking teaching, learning and academic performance in order to make further improvements. Governance is good. Governors know the school well and play active roles in holding the school to account for its performance. Parents are well informed about the life of the school and most take advantage of the many opportunities to be involved in their children's learning. A parent commented, 'I would recommend this school to anyone and everyone.' Issues from the previous inspection have been successfully addressed and prudent management of the budget helps to raise standards and improve provision. The school has good capacity to improve.

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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

5 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Michael's Nursery and Infant School, Cumbria, CA14 2UY

I think your school is good and some parts of it are super. I really enjoyed my visit because you were so kind and welcoming. It was good to talk to you and find out how much you enjoy coming to school and that you feel safe and well looked after. I liked the way you were all polite and friendly and help to look after each other. I was pleased to hear how you understand about eating healthily and the importance of getting plenty of exercise to keep you well and fit.

Here are some of the things your school does well:

- lessons are fun and you learn lots of new things
- the school council and buddies help to make the school better
- teachers keep a good check on how well you are doing so that they can help you to improve
- everybody helps to care for each other really well so that school is like a big family
- you are extremely well behaved and take good care of your school.

Here are some of the things your school is trying to do better:

- helping more boys to do well in reading.
- showing you in marking your work how to make it better.

Thank you again for making my visit such an enjoyable one. I hope all your bulbs come up in the spring.

Yours sincerely

David Earley

Lead inspector