

# St Michael's Church of England Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	100731
<b>Local Authority</b>	Lewisham
<b>Inspection number</b>	307460
<b>Inspection dates</b>	11–12 September 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Wendy Simmons

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 aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	289
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Margaret Cooper
<b>Headteacher</b>	Miss Tabitha White
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	5 November 2001
<b>School address</b>	Champion Road Sydenham London SE26 4HH
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8778 8407
<b>Fax number</b>	020 8778 5017

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

St Michael's is a popular and larger than average school, which is located on a split site. Deprivation is higher than average. Since the last inspection, the characteristics have altered and increasing numbers of pupils join and leave the school at intermittent times throughout the school year. The school has more pupils from vulnerable circumstances. The school is more socially and ethnically diverse than it was in 2001. An above average proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language. Most pupils are from Black British Caribbean heritages and those from White British backgrounds form the next largest group. An average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties. The school has gained awards including 'Healthy Schools', 'Sports Mark', 'Eco Schools' and 'Supergrounds'.

## 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 achieve well and are well prepared for their future lives. They are keen to come to school and enjoy all that the school has to offer. Pupils' individual needs are well met whatever their ability or background. Vulnerable pupils and those new to the school are very well supported. It is a harmonious and happy community. One pupil commented, 'The best thing is that we have so many friends'. The school works well with the local community and church.

Teaching is good and, when combined with the wide range of interesting activities, ensures that pupils learn effectively. Pupils were enthusiastic to note that, 'Teachers make lessons come alive by making them fun' and inspectors agree. Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to learn in different ways.

Good leadership, especially by the headteacher, is the central reason why the school is successful. Staff work very well as a team and are focused clearly on raising standards. They show a strong commitment to ensuring that pupils achieve well. Achievement is good and standards are average overall. Pupils do best in English where standards in this subject are above average by the end of Year 6. This is because there is a very strong focus on promoting speaking skills and ensuring that pupils write and read for interesting purposes. This particularly helps pupils who speak English as an additional language and those with learning difficulties. English skills build up in a clear way and teachers assess pupils' learning carefully.

Leaders have been working hard with all staff and pupils to raise standards in mathematics, as there had been some underachievement in this subject in the past. This underachievement had led to a fall in standards and was due largely to staffing difficulties, which meant that too many pupils were not reaching their full potential. The school has successfully improved mathematics and achievement is now good. This is due to better tracking of pupils' progress, good support, improved teaching skills and, a considerable focus on calculation and mental mathematical activities. Leaders know that pupils have insufficient opportunities to tackle real life problem solving in the subject. They are starting to address this issue well.

A significant strength of the school is the outstanding way that all staff respect pupils and listen to their views, worries and ideas. This demonstrates the school's strong, care and excellent relationships. Pupils say that their teachers '...are supportive and really nice'. Pupils gain confidence, develop high self-esteem, are motivated to work hard and behave well. Pupils know much about how to be healthy and safe.

The school is well placed to develop further. In the last year, the school has faced complex staffing difficulties, which have been addressed. Standards are now rising.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 3

Children settle quickly into the Foundation Stage because of the warm and caring relationships and close links with parents. When they join the school their skills are lower than expected, especially those of boys. Children make steady overall progress, although standards remain lower than average by the end of the Foundation Stage. Children make the best progress in writing and in their social skills. The school has started work on a more rigorous approach to teaching of letters and sounds to improve reading. A suitable emphasis is placed on mathematical

development, although this is stronger for counting than shape and measurement work. The outside area does not have enough resources for climbing.

Reception children are currently mixed with Year 1 pupils, although this will change in 2008 when the school will be able to cluster the youngest children altogether in one class. The teaching team is new this term and whilst teaching is satisfactory overall, this has resulted in the planning for the youngest children being currently too variable in quality. This means that they do not yet have a consistently appropriate curriculum. Leaders know this and are supporting teachers to improve their planning.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve the Foundation Stage so that the all of the youngest learners are provided with an appropriate and challenging curriculum throughout the day.
- Provide more real life problem solving activities in mathematics.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Achievement is good. Pupils make good progress from their below average starting points, bringing standards up to average overall by the end of Year 6. Since the last inspection, the school has maintained above average standards and good achievement in English. In 2006, pupils developed gaps in their mathematical knowledge and some were not give challenging enough work. At this point, standards fell to below average in mathematics. The school has turned this around with the current Year 6 and other classes showing at least average standards and good catch-up. Achievement in mathematics is now sound and shows good improvement. Achievement is good in English and Science.

Clear and appropriate targets have been set by the school to ensure that pupils do equally as well in English, mathematics and science. Standards in science and information and communication technology (ICT) have improved well since the last inspection, especially for higher attaining pupils. Pupils from Black Caribbean backgrounds do better at this school than is the case in many schools nationally.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils know about and respect different religions, cultures, traditions and experiences. The school's strong Christian ethos and good links to St Michael's Church help pupils to celebrate their own beliefs and learn important moral values. When pupils made a film with senior citizens, they learnt great respect and empathy whilst also gaining a superb insight into life during World War Two. Pupils, parents and inspectors agree that pupils behave well and thoroughly enjoy school. They make a positive contribution to the community and keenly take on responsibilities. Pupils understand the importance of selecting healthy foods. One commented at lunch, 'I wouldn't recommend the chips much, but the rest is healthy'. They enjoy sport and know how to keep themselves safe. Pupils learn many new skills, which prepare pupils well for the future. For example, pupils know how to manage money, are capable in the use of ICT and confidently express their views.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Teachers have good knowledge of the subjects being taught and learning is challenging within most lessons. However, written lesson plans do not always identify how different ability groups will be challenged. In particular, planning for the Foundation Stage is too inconsistent. Pupils are engaged in lessons and motivated to do their best because most teachers have high expectations. Resources, including ICT, are well used and modified to meet the wide range of abilities in classes. This helps pupils to learn in many different ways. Relationships are excellent and give pupils the confidence to ask for help and express their ideas. Teachers ask good questions, which make pupils think. Learning is made fun through opportunities to share ideas and explanations with 'talk partners'.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

Overall, the curriculum overall is very well planned. From Years 1 to 6, leaders have worked closely to develop good links between subjects and special topic weeks, which allow pupils to engross themselves in new skills. However, in the Foundation Stage, investigation, play and creative activities are not yet sufficiently imaginative or challenging. Across the school there has been a good emphasis on basic skills work in mathematics and clear awareness of the need to develop problem solving. The homework club helps to boost achievement, especially for boys. The good emphasis on investigation in science and exciting English work play an important part in pupils' good progress. A wide variety of clubs, visits and extra activities, including drama, enhances pupils' personal development. Projects such as the recycling fashion show and celebration of different foods help to bring the diverse local community together. Pupils love the musical work, which is of a high standard.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 2

High quality support means that pupils achieve well. Pupils are well cared for, especially pupils with learning difficulties, vulnerable pupils and those who join the school at intermittent times throughout the school year. In particular, the work of the learning mentors and 'Drop in Support Group' are outstandingly effective. Systems for child protection and health and safety are rigorous. Assessment is well developed. All teachers mark pupils' work regularly and give guidance and targets for pupils' improvement. Teaching assistants provide an effective contribution to pupils' learning overall, but sometimes they are not used well enough throughout an entire lesson. By acting as prefects and 'buddies', older pupils support younger children very well.

## Leadership and management

#### Grade: 2

The headteacher has very good drive and vision and is well supported by all managers. In particular, there has been an outstanding focus on developing the curriculum for pupils' personal development and this is influencing well on pupils' overall achievement. Leaders have an

accurate view of the school's effectiveness because they check the quality of learning and pupils' progress well. For example, there has also been a successful focus on helping boys to do as well as girls through projects such as the school magazine and introduction of the school band. As a result, boys show improved enthusiasm to work hard and achieve well. There is a good plan in place to improve the school. Governors provide satisfactory support. They are keen and caring. They recognise that a better understanding of school data would help them to evaluate achievement more effectively. They are working hard to plan improvements to the accommodation, as some classes are too small for pupils.

The views of parents and pupils are highly valued and respected. Parents have considerable confidence in the school. The words of one sum the school up well, 'It provides every opportunity for children to enjoy school and progress well'.

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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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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

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

<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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
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	3
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

24 September 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Michael's Church of England Primary School, London, SE26 4HH

You may remember that three inspectors came to your school recently. Thank you for being so friendly. I am writing to let you know our findings.

Your school is a good school and you do well in learning the things that you need to know for the future. In particular, we like your English work and are pleased that you are all working to make mathematics even better. Well done for improving your mathematics, especially keep up with your mental mathematics targets. As you go from class to class, you make good progress and this means that your work is at the level we expect by the time you leave Year 6. You clearly enjoy learning and the many exciting visits and activities that adults provide. Congratulations for coming to school so regularly. The teaching in your school is good and you learn well. It was very pleasing to see you discussing your ideas so well with your teachers. We are pleased that you show such good respect for each other and note that your school is a very happy place to be. Well done for being polite, respectful, and behaving so well. Inspectors are especially impressed by your singing and agree that you are well cared for.

Your headteacher staff and governors are working hard to make the school even better for you, so we have asked them to do the following things:

- make sure that the youngest children in the Reception class have plenty of exciting and challenging activities to do throughout the day
- help you to do more real life problem solving activities in mathematics.

Please continue to work hard and remember to thank your headteacher, all of the adults and your parents for making this a good school.

My best wishes to you all. The inspectors thoroughly enjoyed their visit.

Yours faithfully

Wendy Simmons (Lead inspector)