

St Michael's East Wickham Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101475
Local Authority	Bexley
Inspection number	307701
Inspection date	3 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Wendy Simmons

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	197
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Karl Hanney
Headteacher	Mr Richard Varney
Date of previous school inspection	16 June 2003
School address	Wrotham Road Welling DA16 1LS
Telephone number	020 8303 3287
Fax number	020 8298 7358

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- how well the school is developing provision for the most able pupils, especially in Key Stage 1
- how well standards are improving in science
- how effectively pupils receive academic guidance and support.

The inspector gained evidence from lessons and from the school's own evaluations of its work. Discussions were held with staff, pupils and two governors. A range of documentation was evaluated. Samples of pupils' work were scrutinised and the views of parents were gathered from questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified. These have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

St Michael's East Wickham is an average sized school, which serves an increasingly diverse community, although most pupils come from White British backgrounds. The next largest groups include pupils from Black African, Asian Indian and mixed race heritages. Only a very few pupils receive free school meals. An average number of pupils have learning difficulties and disabilities. Pupils' learning difficulties and disabilities cover a very wide range of needs. The school has gained the Healthy School Award.

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 East Wickham is a very happy family school that provides pupils with a good education. The school has several outstanding features that include the pastoral care provided for pupils, the exemplary curriculum and aspects of pupils' personal development. Pupils are inspired learners who work hard and achieve well.

The school has a good capacity to improve because leadership is effective. The school is well on the way to becoming outstanding in the future because leaders show clear direction and good plans are in place to develop the school still further. Staff are skilled and ambitious to do the best for the pupils.

Standards of work are higher than the national average by the end of Year 6. From the pupils' starting points, this represents good progress. Good leadership, outstanding pastoral care and effective teaching and learning enables pupils from all backgrounds and abilities to achieve well. Lessons are well organised to help pupils of all abilities to learn quickly. Teachers have high expectations so that pupils' skills increase quickly.

The headteacher shows considerable passion and enthusiasm for his school. He is well supported by his senior management team and all other staff. Governors give good support. Some governors and staff are especially long serving and show a dedicated commitment to the school. Leaders demonstrate a real sense of purpose and vision in their work. As governors so rightly say, 'Staff go that extra mile'. Teachers' skills complement each other and allow pupils to benefit from a wide range of very exciting learning experiences. The curriculum is excellent and results in outstanding personal development for pupils. At all levels of the school, there is a very strong sense of teamwork. For example, The Parents' Association does a great job in raising funds for the benefit of pupils and the school is kept beautifully clean by a caring support team. There is a joint sense of harmony in the school and good evaluation of what needs to be done to improve still further.

In the last year, leaders have made target setting more challenging and they have developed a more rigorous way of checking pupils' progress. This is helping the most able pupils to do well, which is also helping to raise standards at Key Stage 1 and in science throughout the whole school. These features are very important, as pupils have not done as well as they could in these aspects in the past. In particular, writing is developing very well now throughout the school. Science is also improving due to the improved assessments of pupils' skills, a better range of investigations, real life learning activities and visits.

Pupils receive outstanding pastoral support and good overall academic guidance and support. This is often because they have appropriate targets in English and mathematics and they are helped to reach these targets quickly through good teaching. The guidance and support given to pupils is good. Leaders are keen to make this outstanding in the future. In their drive to achieve this, they have accurately identified that pupils need targets in science and more help in explaining their scientific conclusions, especially when using information from graphs and charts. Across a range of subjects, teachers sometimes miss the chance to mark pupils' work to very best effect so that pupils are thoroughly guided in how to improve their skills and knowledge. Teachers often have very good one-to-one discussions with pupils about their work and this helps these pupils to improve.

Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress due to the effective support that they receive. Some pupils have very good ideas and staff recognise that pupils need a diverse range of approaches to help them to record their ideas effectively.

The range of clubs and extra activities enhances pupils' personal development exceptionally well. As a result, pupils contribute a great deal to the community through such things as the fantastic Mambo Steel Band. The excellent range of sporting activities really helps pupils to understand the importance of perseverance, commitment and teamwork. Most importantly, these activities develop pupils' self-confidence and help them to be fit and active. The very high quality school lunches encourage pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. For example, music is also skilfully used by teachers to create atmosphere in lessons and during assemblies. Visits expand pupils' horizons and help them to understand that Britain is a very varied mix of cultures, communities and locations. Assemblies help pupils to celebrate their achievements, reflect on the world around them and explore their emotions. Lessons also foster spiritual awareness. For example, in the superb lesson in which pupils are making their own suspense film using actions and exciting music to create a sense of suspense. Pupils have a growing knowledge of different faiths.

Pupils are right to be proud of their school. Almost all behave exceptionally well, although a few find this hard if they are angry or upset. Most parents have great confidence in the work of the school and note such things as, 'The excellent environment for learning' and 'Teacher's enthusiastic, professional and caring approach'. Some parents commented that they are worried about bullying. The headteacher has taken this concern seriously. Staff have completed a review of the school policy, procedures and support systems. The school has an effective way of dealing with any bullying if it should occur. However, parents are not clear about this. The headteacher recognises that workshops would be helpful in giving parents greater reassurance. Pupils noted that they are happy that action would be taken immediately by staff if they have any worries.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

When children join the Reception class, their skills and knowledge are slightly lower than is usually expected for their age when they start school. By the end of the Foundation Stage, standards are at an expected level. They make good progress because teaching is good. Activities are exciting and help children to explore things well. Children clearly enjoy learning, have fun and are mostly well challenged. They quickly develop important social and communication skills because adults place a strong emphasis on this and have developed excellent relationships with the children. There is an increasing focus on helping children to learn letters and sounds (phonics) and this is helping them to read better. The outside learning area is used well.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make sure that pupils are given the best possible guidance and support so that they can develop their skills to best effect.
- Build on the good work done to help pupils to do as well as possible in science by giving pupils targets and clear guidance about how to draw scientific conclusions.

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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	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 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	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?	1
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.

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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

15 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Michael's East Wickham Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Welling, DA16 1LS

You may remember that a school inspector came to your school recently. Thank you for being so friendly. I am writing to let you know what I found out.

You go to a good school. This means that many things are just as they should be for you. Only a few things need to be improved to make the school even better. Your headteacher and all of the other staff are working very hard to make the school a happy and caring place. You are helping by working hard and being enthusiastic learners. Almost all of you behave in an outstanding way and those of you who sometimes find this hard are well supported. Your teachers give you many exciting activities, which make learning fun and I know that you like this. Your music and sports activities are especially impressive. Well done for this and please keep this up. You do many things for your community, which you can be very proud of. I like the way that you are working to be fit and healthy. I am very delighted how well you explore your feelings and learn to respect others. Some of your English work is very good. I was very impressed by the film that Year 4 are making, this is fantastic! I would like to congratulate you all on working so well on your English and mathematics targets. Your teachers work very hard to help you learn many new things quickly and well. This means that you get to the levels in your work that are higher than in many schools overall.

Your headteacher and all of the adults would like to make your school outstanding in the future. I agree with them that the following things will help with this:

- make sure that you are all given the best possible guidance and support when doing your work, so that you can develop your skills to be very best effect
- build on the good work that you are already doing in science by giving you science targets and by helping you more to explain your scientific ideas, especially using charts, tables and mathematical graphs to help you with this.

Best of all I enjoyed listening to the Mambo Band and taking part in your special assembly. I hope that you all have plenty of fun in the summer, as you deserve it!

Yours sincerely

Wendy Simmons

Lead Inspector