

# St Michael and All Angels Catholic Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	105090
<b>Local Authority</b>	Wirral
<b>Inspection number</b>	308762
<b>Inspection date</b>	7 December 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Mark Madeley

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>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	167
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr P Regan
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Sally Collins
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	10 November 2003
<b>School address</b>	New Hey Road Upton Wirral Merseyside CH49 5LE
<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 6774088
<b>Fax number</b>	0151 6770885

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the impact of the school's management on pupils' current achievement and standards, and on their personal development and well-being; the quality of teaching and learning; and the quality of pupils' academic guidance. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation, national published assessment data and the school's records of pupils' progress. Policies, attendance and financial data were reviewed and observation of the school at work as well as interviews with the chair of governors, staff and pupils were also undertaken. The views of the parents were sought through a questionnaire. 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, and these have been included, where appropriate, in this report.

## Description of the school

This smaller than average school takes most of its pupils from the nearby estate of mainly rented accommodation. The pupils are almost all of White British heritage. More than half of the pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is an exceptionally high proportion. The school has an above average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Children join school on a part-time basis in the Nursery class soon after they are three-years-old. After one term as acting headteacher, the new headteacher took up a permanent appointment in September 2007.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

The inspector agrees with the senior managers', governors' and parents' view that this is a good school. The school makes outstanding provision for children in the Foundation Stage, in its care, guidance and support for all pupils and the use it makes of its partner schools and agencies to promote pupils' well-being. Senior managers have an accurate view of the school's many strengths and its few areas for development because pupils' progress and the quality of teaching and learning are checked thoroughly. Significant improvements have been made since the last inspection: standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are higher, pupils' attendance has increased and subject coordinators are taking more responsibility for their subjects. This thorough understanding of the school, coupled with the improvements since the last inspection, indicate that the school has good capacity to improve further. It gives good value for money.

Children's language skills have improved significantly from their starting points in the Nursery class. Despite outstanding teaching in the Foundation Stage, pupils' very low levels of skill when they start in the Nursery mean that when they start Year 1 they still have narrow vocabularies and weaknesses in writing skills which impact on their future learning. Consistently good teaching in Years 1 to 6 develops pupils' understanding of the world around them and enhances their number skills. Even so, the ability of some to write accurately and use expansive vocabulary remains weak. Pupils make good progress through Key Stage 1. Standards in reading and mathematics are average, but in writing they are below average. Standards in English, mathematics and science are currently at least average in Key Stage 2 but pupils find it difficult to use punctuation correctly and they find it difficult to engage an audience with interesting vocabulary. In the 2007 national tests pupils made very good progress in mathematics and science, reached above average standards and exceeded their challenging targets. Weaknesses in writing impacted on results in English and standards were below average. Fewer than anticipated pupils reached the higher grade (Level 5).

Pupils say they feel safe in and around school and know simple ways of keeping themselves safe. For example, older pupils have a thorough knowledge of the dangers of non-medicinal drugs. Safeguarding procedures are in place. A few pupils expressed concerns about bullying but they acknowledged that the staff are quick to deal with it. Indeed, phrases from the pupils to describe the staff, such as, 'They're always there for us,' and 'You can always get help when you need it,' were common. The parents of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are kept fully in the picture about the additional provision their children receive. Good links with the learning support services mean that difficulties are identified promptly and planned provision put in place quickly. This allows these pupils to make good progress.

Behaviour is good in class and around school. Staff manage their classes skilfully using a combination of reward and sanction and most pupils respond positively. The sometimes very challenging behaviour of a few, often caused by circumstances outside the school's control, is exceptionally well managed by the lead behaviour professional, who knows the pupils and their families very well. The breakfast club and checking procedures have had a positive impact on pupils' attendance, but this remains below average.

The good curriculum supports pupils' enjoyment of school well. It also gives pupils many chances to understand the wider world through a very good range of educational visits. Further opportunities for pupils to use and develop their writing skills are being put in place. Outstanding links with local schools provide skilled foreign language tuition and opportunities to extend

pupils' computer skills. Additionally, the community arm of the local professional soccer club enhances the literacy and computer skills of Year 5 pupils through a course of tuition at the club ground.

Pupils join in with a huge range of sports activities, including an outstanding variety of extra-curricular sports clubs, and know that regular exercise is one way to stay fit. They have a good understanding of what healthy food to eat - indeed the active school council has had discussions with the school catering service about making menus more 'healthy' next term.

Most pupils try very hard to achieve their learning targets. They know and understand the system exceptionally well. They are also given time to reflect on teachers' marking of their work and understand what they have to do to improve. During lessons pupils work well together. They regularly review their own learning, usually by giving the teacher a sign when they have or have not understood. Teachers use this information effectively when planning future lessons. Pupils also take on responsibility well; for example, older pupils show infant children a wide range of playground games in their role as lunchtime play leaders. These examples, linked to the good progress pupils make in their academic skills, show that they are well prepared for their next school because they are confident learners.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 1**

Children start school with poor language skills and many find it difficult to share toys. From this very low starting point, children make exceptional progress and reach standards which are in line with national expectations by the time they join Year 1. Despite high quality teaching and many good opportunities to 'make marks' in play and formal situations, children's writing skills remain weak. Children are encouraged to do things for themselves, such as put on their own coats and decide when to take their drink and snack; this type of activity promotes their personal development exceptionally well. Activities are carefully planned to stimulate children's curiosity and extend their understanding. Staffing levels are very high and this extensive contact with skilled adults aids children's progress considerably. Each activity is fully assessed and this information is exceptionally well used to plan the next stage in children's learning. Management of the Foundation Stage is particularly good; for example, children's induction into school is very well planned so that their parents are happy and they settle in quickly.

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

- Encourage pupils to use a broader vocabulary and make better use of punctuation to improve the quality of their writing.
- Improve attendance rates.

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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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
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	3
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?	1

<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	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**

I really enjoyed my visit before Christmas to your school. You made me very welcome and freely shared your views of the school. They were important to me and I used them when coming to my judgements about your school. You and your parents told me that the school is good and I agree. You get a good education and make good progress in both your learning and your personal development. The school has three outstanding features. First, the quality of the Foundation Stage provision helps children make exceptional progress in their early learning. Second, you all know how to use your learning targets and the teachers' marking to improve your work further - well done to all of you. Finally, you have outstanding opportunities to learn from other schools and support agencies - such as through recent robot work at a local grammar school.

You told me that you enjoyed school and I saw that in your faces in lessons. Behaviour was good both in the classroom and outside in the playground. When talking with me you showed a good understanding of how to stay fit and well. The school council is well organised and gets things done for you.

Your headteacher and her staff have an accurate view of the school and want to improve it further. I have left the school with these two points for improvement.

- Improve your writing by encouraging you to use more exciting vocabulary and teaching you how to use punctuation accurately.
- Make sure that everyone comes to school and on time.

You can play your part in making your school an even better place in which to learn by trying not to miss a day of school, by continuing to be on your best behaviour at all times and doing your best in the tasks set for you. Thank you very much for your help during the inspection. I wish you and the school well for the future.