

St Michael's Church of England Primary School, Alkrington

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105822
Local Authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	308961
Inspection date	11 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Marie Cordey

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	235
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Dalziel
Headteacher	Mrs Jill Brenchley
Date of previous school inspection	8 March 2004
School address	Boardman Fold Road Alkrington Middleton Manchester M24 1GD
Telephone number	0161 643 8393
Fax number	0161 654 6504

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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: pupils' achievement and standards; the quality of teaching and learning; pupils' personal development and well-being; and how well the school's leadership promotes care and high standards. Evidence was gathered from national published assessment data; the school's self-evaluation, assessment records, policies and minutes; observation of lessons and pupils' work; discussion with pupils, staff, parents and the chair of governors; and the questionnaires returned by parents. 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 in its self-evaluation form were not justified. These have been included, where appropriate, in the report.

Description of the school

This average sized school is in an attractive, advantaged area close to the town of Middleton. Few pupils are eligible for free school meals and below average numbers of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The vast majority of the pupils are of White British heritage. The headteacher took up post in September 2007 and a new deputy headteacher was appointed at Easter 2008. The school has gained the Healthy Schools Award and the Eco Bronze Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St. Michael's is a satisfactory and improving school. The headteacher provides committed, clear leadership and acts as a strong role model for all staff and pupils. Good relationships with parents and outside agencies, such as educational psychologists and local authority partners, contribute to the good progress the pupils make in their personal development. They thrive in the uplifting and caring atmosphere of the school.

Standards are above average at the end of Year 2 and Year 6, and pupils make satisfactory progress from their above average starting points. The school has accurately identified the need for improvement in the achievement of more able pupils, particularly in mathematics and writing. The headteacher is rigorous in identifying areas of concern and acting on them speedily. The success of recent actions to improve standards and achievement in science demonstrates this. Most pupils reach their targets and the tracking of pupils' progress has been refined so that underachieving pupils can be identified quickly and supported appropriately. Satisfactory teaching overall helps pupils to make the expected progress. There are also examples of good and outstanding teaching and learning that accelerate pupils' achievement. Effective support for the needs of vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities enables them to make satisfactory progress. They are speedily identified and supported by well deployed teaching assistants. Pupils enjoy lessons, especially when they are actively involved and there is a variety of activities to stimulate their curiosity and eagerness to learn. Most work is marked regularly but sometimes it is not always made clear to pupils, particularly the more able, how they might improve.

Pupils take their health very seriously; they are keen to eat nutritional meals and to exercise regularly. They are appreciative of the many after-school sporting clubs run by teachers and teaching assistants. Pupils welcome the organised games and physical activities at lunchtimes. The breakfast club and after-school provision are popular and appreciated by pupils and parents alike. Pupils on the school council and the Eco committee take their responsibilities seriously and are rightly proud of the differences they have made to their school and the local community. They are keen representatives on the 'Middleton Forum' and play an active role in taking care of their local area. Through the school's emphasis on celebration and developing tolerance, pupils are well prepared for life in our rich and diverse society. This is reflected in their good behaviour and attitudes. Occasionally, they become restless and sluggish in lessons when they are less inspired and motivated by their learning. This is being addressed through a systematic programme to monitor and evaluate teaching. A revised, more creative curriculum is now in place to raise standards in literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT). This has begun to have an impact by linking the learning in these areas to all subjects. The recent 'Knights and Castles' project enthused and engaged all pupils through, for example, history, writing, drama and ICT. As a result, pupils made significant gains in their learning, especially in reading and speaking and listening. Limited resources hamper the effectiveness of initiatives to improve pupils' ICT skills. There are insufficient computers to allow pupils to use them regularly enough to be able to develop fully their ICT, writing and research skills.

The inspiring headteacher and deputy headteacher have carefully planned systems to improve pupils' achievement and further raise standards. They are supported by middle leaders who are now more actively involved in planning for improvement. The monitoring of the revised curriculum is beginning to show where there are gaps in pupils' learning that need to be addressed. Pupils, parents and governors appreciate the headteacher's clear vision and

determination to improve the school's performance. Governors are very supportive and strategic in their shared work with the headteacher to make St. Michael's 'a good school in the next three years and outstanding in five years'. Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. Self-evaluation is searching and accurately identifies the areas which require improvement. The school has good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children join the Foundation Stage with above expected skills for their age overall, although their writing development is less strong than their other skills. They settle into the Reception class very quickly because of effective admission arrangements. In one of the opportunities to take part in the Foundation Stage sessions before their children join school, parents spoke about how pleased they were that their children were coming to this school because of its good reputation in the community. Children develop their confidence and understanding and become comfortable in playing together. There are plans to use the school's fields and woodland to develop further children's imagination and self-reliance. In response to the generally satisfactory quality of teaching, children make the expected progress and their skills are above those typical for their age by the end of the Reception year. Skilful teaching to link letters and sounds enables children to make good progress in their writing skills. Leadership is particularly effective in promoting children's good personal and social development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement in writing and mathematics for higher attaining pupils.
- Improve the quality of teachers' marking so that it makes clear to all pupils precisely what they need to do to improve their work.
- Ensure that the curriculum has enough ICT resources and is monitored effectively in order to raise standards in the key skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before the next Section 5 inspection.

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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?	3
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?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

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	1
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?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
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	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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**

Inspection of St Michael's Church of England Primary School, Alkington, Middleton, M24 1GD

I wish to thank you for the warm welcome you gave me when I inspected your school. You were very polite and keen to tell me about your school. I would especially like to thank the members of the school council, the Eco committee and all the individual pupils who took the time to talk to me. Your school provides you with a satisfactory education.

You are well behaved and look after each other. Older pupils look after the younger ones well and you like using the pleasant surroundings of your school. You enjoy school, and 'well done' for your good attendance. Your school's three R's, respect for yourself, respect for others and taking responsibility for your actions are taken seriously by all of you. Children in the Reception class settle down quickly and enjoy school. You have had some changes of leaders recently and you have warmly welcomed your headteacher and deputy headteacher. They are determined that you will do even better. I have asked the school to make sure it does the following things to help you all and to improve the quality of education you receive.

- Make sure that all of you, particularly those who learn quickly, are helped to reach higher standards in writing and mathematics.
- Ensure that your teachers help you all to know precisely what you need to do in order to improve your work
- Plan and check the curriculum regularly and increase the number of computers for you to use, to help you improve your standards in the key skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT.

I am sure that you will help your school by working hard to achieve your targets and by checking what you could do to improve your work.