

St Michael on the Mount Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109148
Local Authority	Bristol, City of
Inspection number	309898
Inspection dates	30 April –1 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Patricia Davies

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	202
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tim Higgins
Headteacher	Lesley Allen
Date of previous school inspection	13 October 2003
School address	Park Lane Bristol BS2 8BE
Telephone number	01179 030434
Fax number	01179 030435

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Michael's on the Mount is broadly average in size. It draws its pupils from a wide range of backgrounds and ethnic groups. Those from minority ethnic backgrounds have increased in recent years and now represent just over half the school's population. There has also been a shift in the background of these pupils; the largest group is Black or Black British African and largely from Somali families. The proportion of pupils at the early stage of learning to speak English has also increased since the school's last inspection, rising to almost a quarter of pupils, which is above the national average. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also above average, as is the percentage of pupils with statements of special educational need.

There have been some significant changes in staffing, particularly within the last 18 months and especially at senior level. The current headteacher and two other senior leaders took up their posts 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: 3

St Michael's on the Mount is a satisfactory school. Clear leadership and direction from the headteacher and key developments within provision have generated faster academic progress over the course of this school year. Good progress is not yet consistent, however, and achievement as a whole is satisfactory. Despite the many recent changes within the school, good quality care, guidance and support continue to be strong features and ensure that pupils feel safe and happy. They express much enthusiasm about their experiences at school. The particular delight they show for drama and the great pleasure and skill with which they sing pay testament to the richness within the school's satisfactory curriculum. Pupils are quick to say how much they enjoy its wide variety of opportunities and recognise the benefits they have gained from new initiatives to promote key skills in English and mathematics. Their maturity, good behaviour and a high level of harmony among pupils from different ethnic backgrounds contribute much value to learning and to everyday life at the school. Most pupils come to school regularly and punctually, but a very small minority do not. While the school works hard to make improvements, it recognises there is more scope for greater celebration and promotion of good attendance.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory. While many lessons are taught well, there is still some variability. Nevertheless, significant improvements to assessment ensure robust and frequent evaluations of pupils' progress and subsequent adjustments to the curriculum to meet the very different needs of each year group. As a result, activities are mostly matched well to the needs of individuals. Rigorous monitoring and targeted professional support have also been instrumental in developing the quality of teaching. High profile programmes to heighten pupils' knowledge of letter sounds and develop writing, together with some changes to teaching arrangements for mathematics, are gradually proving successful.

Children get off to a good start in Reception. Rapid progress now occurs frequently across the school in reading, and is most consistent in mathematics. Pupils currently in Year 6 are also progressing well and maintaining the improved picture in last year's test results. Although standards in Year 6 remain below average overall, they are a little higher than they were last year. Nevertheless, progress in writing is satisfactory, but it is still too variable. In addition, new initiatives and better progress have yet to make a marked impact on standards at Year 2, where they remain low. Pupils learning to speak English as an additional language make the same progress as others during lessons. However, they do not yet benefit from a systematically planned curriculum tailored to their specific needs in order to ensure that their attainment increases as quickly as possible.

The headteacher's strong leadership has created an enthusiastic team of staff and governors who are increasingly stepping up behind her to lend full support to monitoring activities and move the school forward. Accurate evaluations of the school's work enable the school to make well-targeted use of local authority expertise.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Attainment on entry to Reception varies from year to year, but is now generally lower than it was at the time of the last inspection. The attainment of the current group on starting school was well below the expected level, particularly in key areas of communication, language, literacy

and mathematical development. These children are making good progress. Nevertheless, given there are few attaining at the higher levels in this group, standards remain below average as they near Year 1.

Children are happy and enthusiastic. Their activities are often good fun and this acts as a keen motivator for getting stuck in to those with more structure, such as writing. Children settle quickly to their tasks and collaborate successfully on shared endeavours. While preserving plenty of opportunity for children to direct their own activities, there is close attention to building early literacy and mathematical skills. This approach is proving beneficial for all children in this group, but particularly for the significant minority learning to speak English as a new language. Support for these children is bespoke and often in small groups to provide more individual attention. Adults are skilled at capturing their interest during discussion, although the more hesitant of these children are not always encouraged to start their tasks quickly enough and ensure no time is wasted.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure pupils make consistently good progress, particularly in writing, in order to raise standards, especially at Year 2.
- Implement a systematically planned curriculum tailored to the specific needs of those pupils learning to speak English as an additional language, so that their attainment increases as quickly as possible.
- Celebrate and promote the importance of frequent attendance, particularly with the very small minority who do not come to school often enough.

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

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Last summer's national test results at Year 6 already indicated that progress was better than the previous two years, and satisfactory overall. Increasing rates of progress during this school year have sustained this improvement. Progress is now often rapid, especially in mathematics and reading, but still too variable for pupils' achievement to be any greater than satisfactory. This variability is most marked in writing. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those learning to speak English as an additional language are making similar gains to other pupils.

Standards in last year's results at Year 6 were higher than the previous year. Although standards in the present Year 6 are still below average as a whole, their current good progress has ensured a further modest lift on those of last year, especially in mathematics. Progress in the current Year 2 has also accelerated, but has not had a significant impact on standards; in addition, this group has the greatest proportion of pupils at the highest level of special educational needs. As a result, standards are still low in reading, writing and mathematics, in keeping with test results of previous years.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are confident, happy and friendly. Good relationships are evident at all levels – among pupils and with adults. Pupils work together productively in lessons and racial harmony is high. They recognise that the special responsibilities they hold, such as prefects or as members of the school council, carry the requirement for them to be good role models. These positions are hard won and, therefore, held in high regard. Such maturity bodes well for pupils' success in adult life, while academic skills are developing at a relatively slower rate.

Pupils say they enjoy school a lot. They think learning is fun and enjoyable, and as happily cite their enthusiasm for mathematics as they do for sport and trips out. Attendance is below average. Most pupils have good attendance, but a very small minority have lengthy periods away from school. Pupils' extremely orderly entrance to assembly illustrates their good understanding of how to maintain their own safety and that of others. They say there is no bullying and are clear about the school's mechanisms for encouraging good behaviour. Healthy selections of food for lunch and a good take up of physical activities show a well-developed understanding of keeping healthy.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

In most lessons, good teaching secures pupils' interest and concentration through imaginative activities and well-pitched tasks, but these features are not yet consistent. Typically, pupils work together well, sharing tasks or ideas with a partner, or as a small group. A demanding text, for example, or well-targeted questioning provide good levels of challenge for all, while opportunities for role-play keep the more spirited pupils particularly well engaged. Indeed, skilful handling of those pupils who are sometimes demanding of attention allows them time to share their thoughts, while still keeping the lesson securely on course.

Not all lessons have these elements in the same measure, however. Sometimes the level of challenge falters because more able pupils spend too much time doing something they already understand, or discussion does not draw on a wide enough range of pupils. On other occasions, resources do not fully reflect pupils' experience and interest. Where factors of this kind are present, some pupils, and most frequently boys, lose concentration and progress slows to satisfactory. Very occasionally, this inattention is not tackled quickly enough, and then these pupils make less than satisfactory progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Recently introduced projects to promote basic literacy and numeracy skills are proving increasingly successful, although they have yet to make a full impact on standards. At the same time, the richness and flexibility of the curriculum have been maintained. In particular, successful use is made of the local area to give learning relevance and interest, while the arts also figure highly. These activities are popular with pupils, provide a productive outlet for their energies and allow them the opportunity to excel in areas such as singing and drama.

The school is now poised to review its curriculum to reflect more closely the changing culture and experience of its pupils. While there is often good individual support in lessons for those pupils whose first language is not English, the school is well aware that it has no discrete structured programme to ensure that they move on as quickly as possible. The underdeveloped use of investigation in science supports the school's intention to focus more closely on developing pupils' learning skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils say they feel safe at school and really appreciate its friendliness and care. Safeguarding arrangements, security and risk assessment are attended to well. The challenging behaviour of a very few is managed effectively so that temporary exclusion from school is now rarely needed. A recent review of provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has streamlined support so that it now focuses exclusively on these pupils. The school takes many steps to improve the attendance of individual pupils, but acknowledges that it could still do more to promote good attendance, through rewards, for example.

Improvements to assessment give staff a clear picture of each pupil's progress. This information enables a closer focus on those who should be doing better and allows staff to set well-focused learning targets in English and mathematics. Improvements to the marking of writing are valued by pupils because they are given clear guidance on how to improve their work, but this approach has yet to be adopted in other subjects.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Recent improvements have gradually secured more rapid academic achievement, although the school is aware it still has further to go. Clear and decisive leadership from the headteacher is giving the school a strong sense of direction. Phase and subject leaders are developing their skills and responsibilities so they can match the rigour of the headteacher's monitoring and support her fully in this work. Governors, too, are keen to check the school's performance and are already keeping themselves informed through the scrutiny of assessment and test information. These factors illustrate the school's secure capacity for bringing about further improvement.

The school is now about to gather views from all members of its community to contribute to planning in detail the next stage of its development. Much has been done to reach out to parents and allay the anxieties caused by changes to the school's staff and culture. While a minority continue to express concerns, especially about the school's communication, the majority are positive about the school and its work.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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	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	3

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	3
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	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

1 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Michael's on the Mount Primary School, Bristol, BS2 8BE

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We very much enjoyed our visit and talking with you, the staff and governors about your work and life at school. This letter is to tell you some of the things we found out. We were really pleased to hear how enthusiastic you are about school and all the things you enjoy – the school's friendliness, for example, all your trips and visits and even mathematics! Importantly, yours is a satisfactory school where all the staff and governors are working hard to make sure that your progress gets faster and faster – this is starting to happen, but it does not happen yet all of the time and in every subject.

Here are some other important things about your school

- Those of you in Reception make a good start, including those learning to speak English for the first time.
- All of you get on well together – your behaviour is good and you say there is no bullying.
- Most of your lessons are taught well and this is helping all of you to make faster progress, although some could be even more challenging and interesting.
- You really like drama and music, indeed you sang beautifully in assembly.
- All the staff take good care of you and track your progress carefully so that they can help you to do better.

This is what your school has been asked to do to make things even better

- Make sure that you always make good progress, particularly in your writing, so that you all know and understand even more, especially at Year 2.
- Use special planning to help those of you learning to speak English as a new language to progress as quickly as possible.
- Do more to reward those whose attendance is good and make sure that all of you come to school regularly.

We hope that you continue to work hard at school and enjoy its many opportunities.

With best wishes

Patricia Davies Lead inspector

Annex B



1 May 2008

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Lead inspector