

St Michael's CofE Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109155
Local Authority	Bath and North East Somerset
Inspection number	309903
Inspection dates	11–12 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Jonathan Palk HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	193
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris Chatfield
Headteacher	David Goucher
Date of previous school inspection	9 February 2004
School address	Newton Road Twerton Bath BA2 1RW
Telephone number	01225 421888
Fax number	01225 481617

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Michael's is a smaller than average junior school. It serves an area of Bath with low levels of economic prosperity, which is reflected in the higher than average number of pupils entitled to free school meals. Attainment on entry is below average. The number of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is above average and the proportion with statements of special educational need is high. This is because the school includes a resource base for nine pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Pupils are mainly White British. The headteacher had recently resigned with effect from January 2008 and at the time of the inspection was absent due to illness. The deputy headteacher was in charge during the inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school that puts children at the heart of all that it does. One parent rightly summed up the strength of the school's care for its pupils when she said, 'I used to worry about what the (other) school were going to say... since he has been here I feel as though a weight has been lifted off my shoulders.' The attitudes and behaviour of the pupils are good. A clear and high expectation of pupils' behaviour, combined with a curriculum that is extremely well matched to meet their interests, ensures that pupils enjoy learning. There is an excellent range of additional activities and these include many instances where the community supports pupils' good personal and social development. Pupils learn quickly from the good role models they meet and, as a consequence, learn to work well as team members and take over as leaders. In this way they are very well prepared for their future economic well-being.

Standards last year were above average. This year they are average, although pupils' achievement remains good. The school addresses very effectively the shortcomings in pupils' language and communication by providing worthwhile opportunities for writing. This has been rewarded with steady year on year good progress. Practical and investigative work in mathematics and science has also seen pupils' achievements improve and here too they are good.

Teaching is good. The quality of relationships in lessons is excellent, support is well matched to needs and, consequently, very little time is wasted. The good planning ensures regular opportunities to develop spoken and written language. However, teachers' marking does not adequately help all pupils develop understanding of their own learning. Care, guidance and support are good. Procedures for improving attendance are working and attendance is now satisfactory, although there are still too many pupils who arrive late. Pastoral care is of the highest order and, consequently, despite a significant minority of pupils with extremely challenging behaviour joining school, all pupils feel safe and can enjoy what the school has to offer.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Good leadership has brought the school to where it is now. However, because of the unexpected resignation of the headteacher, the management team is in a state of change and responsibilities are being redrawn. Self-evaluation is good and gives an accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for development. Governors know the school well, although they are not sufficiently challenging in holding it to account for its performance. There is a lack of clarity in the terminology in the school development plan that makes it less easy to monitor the school's progress at a glance. Day to day management is very good. The deputy headteacher has maintained high morale and is extremely successful at drawing the community into the school. Based on previous improvements, such as the good progress of boys and pupils that are more able, and rising achievements in writing and mathematics, the capacity for improvement is judged as good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the methods for monitoring and evaluating action to bring about further improvement.
- Make better use of marking to help pupils improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievements across the school are good. All pupils make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development because of the very strong emphasis the school places on this important aspect of learning. The large group of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities makes good progress because of the way that the school organises their learning and the careful account taken of their needs. National test results in 2007 were above average and continued an upward trend that started in 2003. The present Year 6 have made similarly good progress but, because they started from further back, their standards are average. The good attention given to developing confidence in speaking and to extending pupils' vocabulary contributes very well to progress in writing. Regular opportunities for problem solving in mathematics and investigative work in science also encourage good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The pupils' enthusiasm for school and the pride pupils have in it are evident in the way they respond to visitors and work with the many partnerships that support the school. Attitudes towards work and to each other are good and pupils behave well in class and on the playground. Pupils are very aware of healthy eating and talk knowledgeably about the benefits of healthy snacks and healthy options at dinner times. The attractively decorated dining hall and enthusiasm for developing basic cooking skills enable pupils to gain a full understanding of the importance of eating healthily. Sporting skills are highly valued. For example, one pupil with skills in karate organised a workshop for his peers in aid of charity. Pupils know how to keep safe in school and on the way home. Good access to anger management classes and specialist support ensures a minority of pupils with challenging behaviour learn to be safe around others. Involvement in the school council and regular circle time results in pupils who are confident in seeking advice and keen to improve their school. For instance, pupils are currently working on plans to improve the outdoor area still further. Spiritual, moral and social development is very good. The pupils respect and value each other and work together as a 'family' to support and look after each other well. Pupils make an outstanding contribution both to the school and to the local community. Many invest time in helping others as playground 'buddies'. Pupils are keen to stay on at school to take part in clubs and the many competitive activities. They regularly work together to raise funds and this develops basic skills and team working extremely well and helps pupils to appreciate economic principles.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Meticulous preparation for lessons, sound subject knowledge, and consistent classroom management are strong features of the teaching. Clear explanations at the start of lessons ensure pupils know what they will be learning. Pupils are keen to learn and this shows itself in their good work rate. Teachers are experienced in using very good resources, such as interactive whiteboards to best effect. All pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities and those who are more able, make good progress as a result. Teaching is well supported by a

committed and skilled group of teaching assistants, but sometimes they are under used during sections of lessons, such as carpet time.

The school is giving priority to encouraging pupils to evaluate their own progress, but the quality of marking is not always helping them with this. Pupils do not always have the opportunity to respond to written comments and show that they have understood what they need to do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is rich and varied and helps raise pupils' expectations of what they can achieve. It provides extremely relevant experiences that challenge the full range of pupils' basic skills and motivate pupils who find learning difficult. Cross-curricular links are good. For example, working to produce items for a Christmas stall, pupils evaluate products currently on sale, write reports and collect data on 'consumer' response to prototypes. There is an impressive range of extra provision that comes from the school's close working with local and national partnerships. For example, working with Bath Rugby Union Club and the project for raising achievements in writing have had a dramatic effect on achievements of less able writers. These partnerships also give opportunities for the pupils to participate in competitive sport, work with artists and poets, and engage in activities to help them become good citizens. The majority of pupils take part in some form of after school clubs and the numerous visits to venues away from the community broaden the pupils' horizons and help build resilience and determination. These make a significant contribution to pupils' attitudes to learning, their personal development, and to the standards pupils achieve.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Parents say that their children feel safe and well looked after. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are good and all statutory requirements are met. Staff show a very positive approach towards care and support and this is reflected in the caring way in which pupils treat each other. For example, the playground buddies greatly help all pupils to feel included and have a good experience during break times. The school places high priority on inclusion ensuring, for example, that those pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities have adult support available whenever it is needed. Procedures to ensure the health and safety of pupils, including risk assessments, are rigorously applied. Bullying and racism are comparatively rare because procedures for dealing with them are robust. The quality of academic guidance is good because the school uses assessment information effectively to analyse progress and set targets. However, pupils' knowledge about their own learning is underdeveloped.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school has made good progress since the last inspection. Leaders and managers accurately identify what is required to raise pupils' achievements and standards have improved year on year. The headteacher, along with the leadership team, established regular procedures for monitoring teaching and learning that resulted in good quality lesson planning and higher expectations. Staff strengths are understood well and ensure that teachers and teaching

assistants are placed where their expertise best matches pupils' needs. The regular tracking of pupils' progress leads to effective teaching and learning that result in improving achievements. Subject leaders keep a good track of provision in their subjects and, through well established team working, successfully modify what is taught in order to meet challenging targets. The deputy headteacher has maintained the high focus on continuing to raise achievements but the school improvement plan is cluttered, and the lack of clear timescales and sharp success criteria makes it difficult for governors and managers to challenge how well the school is doing in this interim period.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ 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	1
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	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?	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	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	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

13 December 2007

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of St Michael's CofE Junior School, Twerton, Bath BA2 1RW

I am writing to tell you about what we discovered when we visited your school this week. The first thing to tell you is that we really enjoyed our visit. You have a good school and are rightly proud of all the many exciting experiences you have there. We were particularly pleased to see what good opportunities you have to learn about working as part of a team in your fundraising activities. These skills will certainly help you in the future. We were also impressed with the way you have learnt to understand how different pupils have very different needs and how helpful you all are towards each other.

We could see how much you enjoy school by the happy way you come in each day. You could help the teachers if more of you made an effort to come into school on time. We were pleased to see your enthusiasm for learning in lessons. In particular, the way you are developing important skills like giving reasons for your answers. We did think that you need more help in understanding what you need to do to improve, so we have asked your teachers to make sure they do this when they mark your work and set your targets.

We know that your parents like your school and they appreciate how hard the school works to involve them in all that goes on in school. Please thank them for filling in the questionnaire because it helped us form a good picture of what matters to them.

The headteacher, deputy headteacher and all the staff are very good at supporting each other in developing what it is you have to learn and how to teach it. They are rightly proud of the changes they have made over recent years and of how well you have played your part. However, we have asked them to make sure they know who is going to check up on the things they are doing and when this is going to happen. This will help them understand more clearly what is and what is not working and it will help the governors, who care a lot about you all, to understand the good progress the school is making.

Once again, thank you all. Good luck in everything you do next year.

Best wishes from Jonathan Palk and Chris Nye Her Majesty's Inspectors

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