

# St Michael's Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	109796
<b>Local Authority</b>	Reading
<b>Inspection number</b>	310101
<b>Inspection dates</b>	17–18 September 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Derek Watts

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>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	180
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr C Muirhead
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr M R Byrne
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11 November 2002
<b>School address</b>	Dee Road Tilehurst Reading RG30 4AS
<b>Telephone number</b>	0118 901 5550
<b>Fax number</b>	0118 901 5549

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a smaller than average sized primary school. Nearly two thirds of the pupils come from a White British background. The remainder come from a range of other ethnic backgrounds with Caribbean and Pakistani being the next largest groups. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional is language is above average but none of these are currently at an early stage of learning English. Over one third of the pupils have learning difficulties and this is well above average. The proportion eligible for free school meals is above average.

## 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 has made considerable improvements during the past three years and its overall effectiveness is now good. Pupils achieve well and their personal development and well-being is good.

The school's reputation within the community has grown and parents hold very positive views about St Michael's. They are extremely pleased with the care and education provided. They particularly praise the headteacher's leadership, the commitment and dedication of the staff and the positive school climate. Their numerous comments include, 'The school is very well managed and staff are approachable', 'There is a real family atmosphere', 'I really feel at home, the teachers and headteacher make you feel very welcome' and 'The staff put in a lot of hard work to make it a great school for the children'.

Good leadership and management and strong teamwork among the staff are key factors contributing to the school's success and to the improvements made. An experienced and highly regarded headteacher has provided clear educational leadership and direction. Good use is made of teacher expertise and other leadership responsibilities are effectively shared. All leaders make a valuable contribution to monitoring the school's performance and implementing improvements. In recent years, effective action has been taken to improve assessment, teaching, behaviour and the partnership with parents. These positive changes have had a significant impact on achievement and standards.

The good care, guidance and support, and a very positive school climate contribute well to pupils' personal development. Pupils enjoy school and this is shown by their keen participation in all activities. High expectations by staff and very good relationships lead to consistently good behaviour. Pupils show a clear understanding of healthy lifestyles and keeping safe. They willingly take on additional responsibilities which contribute well to the school and to the wider community.

Good teaching and a well-planned curriculum enable pupils to make good progress across the school. By the time pupils leave in Year 6, standards are broadly average. Teachers are enthusiastic and set high expectations of behaviour and learning. There is a strong emphasis on developing pupils' speaking and listening and literacy skills. Not enough pupils have attained the higher levels in mathematics but effective action is being taken to tackle this. In science, pupils in Years 3 to 6 do not always have sufficient opportunities to plan and design investigations of their own and this impedes the development of the more advanced scientific skills. Pupils have clear learning targets to work towards in English and mathematics but this good practice has not been extended to science or information and communication technology (ICT). A good range of additional activities enriches the curriculum. At St Michael's, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Children enter the Reception with standards below those expected for their ages. A significant number have very limited language and numeric skills. Good teaching and a stimulating curriculum give children in Reception the great start they need. Teachers and assistants provide a good blend of direct teaching and allowing children to explore, work creatively and independently. Children are enthusiastic about their learning and make good gains in all areas.

The school has made considerable improvements to the Foundation Stage since the last inspection, particularly to the outdoor learning areas.

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

- Improve pupils' scientific skills in Years 3 to 6 by extending opportunities for them to plan and carry out investigations of their own.
- Extend the system of individual target setting to science and ICT so that pupils know what they are working towards in these subjects to improve.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Across the school, pupils achieve well and by Year 6, standards are broadly average overall. In Years 1 and 2, pupils build on the good progress made in Reception. Standards have improved in Year 2 in recent years and they are now average in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress throughout the school because their needs are carefully identified and they receive effective support from teaching assistants. Higher attaining pupils also make good progress although they have achieved less well in mathematics. The school is taking positive action to increase the proportion of pupils who reach the higher levels in this subject. School leaders set challenging targets as part of the drive to raise achievement and standards further.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils participate well in school activities and show positive attitudes to learning. The school has worked hard to promote and monitor good attendance and as a result, attendance levels are now closer to the national average. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good with moral and social development being particularly strong. In assemblies, pupils reflect on issues such as supporting each other. They sing tunefully and with enthusiasm. Pupils have positive relationships with adults in the school and amongst themselves. They adopt healthy lifestyles and possess a good understanding of the importance of healthy diets and taking regular exercise. Pupils, particularly the older ones, take on additional responsibilities such as helping younger ones in the playground. Pupils are well prepared for their future because they are making good progress in acquiring literacy skills and possess good personal and social skills. However, progress in mathematics for the more able has been less strong.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good with elements of outstanding practice. All teachers have established high expectations of learning and behaviour and have built very good relationships with their class. Classrooms are attractive, stimulating and positive learning environments. Throughout the school, teachers effectively share the purpose of the lesson with the class, so that pupils know what they are expected to learn. Teachers' instructions, demonstrations and explanations are clear and informative. Pupils are attentive and respond extremely well to their teachers. Speaking and listening skills are developed well for example through paired discussion or role-play. Assessment information is usually used effectively to match tasks well to pupils'

different abilities and needs. When this happens, pupils are challenged well, their interest is maintained and they make good gains in their learning. Occasionally, tasks are not sufficiently well matched to needs and the rate of learning can decline. The marking of pupils' work is constructive and helpful particularly in English and mathematics. Good work is recognised and guidance to help improvement is provided. Marking is also related well to pupils' individual targets.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum enables pupils to make good progress and contributes well to their personal development. There has been a strong emphasis on promoting speaking and listening, literacy and language skills. Mathematics continues to be a priority and the school is well focused on raising achievement in mathematics for the more able. In science, pupils have adequate opportunities for practical work but there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to plan their own investigations. ICT provision has improved since the last inspection and is used satisfactorily to support teaching and learning in a range of subjects. A good range of clubs including cricket, choir, dance, football, netball adds to pupils' enjoyment and interest. The choir sing with enthusiasm and regularly make good contributions to local festivals. Visits successfully enhance pupils' learning and a bi annual residential trip to Wales for Years 5 and 6 provides challenging outdoor activities and builds pupils' social skills. Health and personal safety education receive good attention.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Very good pastoral care and support contribute extremely well to pupils' personal development. Procedures to ensure pupils' protection and safety are highly effective so pupils are safe and secure at school. Staff know the pupils very well and have established very good relationships with them and their parents. Good use is made of support agencies to help pupils in the areas of attendance, behaviour, learning difficulties and English language acquisition. Systems for assessing and tracking pupils' attainment and progress are effective in English and in mathematics. Assessment information is usually used well to plan teaching and to set challenging individual learning targets in English and mathematics. As a result, most pupils know what they are working on to improve their performance in these subjects. The school has not yet extended this good practice to science and ICT.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management successfully promote effective educational provision and care. This leads to good outcomes for pupils. The headteacher has provided strong leadership and has gained the respect of the whole school community. Other responsibilities are effectively shared among the teaching force who make a good contribution to the leadership of the school. Teamwork among the staff is strong and there is a clear commitment to raising standards and ensuring that all pupils receive the best possible care and education. The school's determination to improve and a more settled teaching force have contributed to the good improvements since the last inspection.

Through thorough self-evaluation, the school knows what it does well and identifies areas in need of improvement. The school has been modest in judging some aspects of its work. Nevertheless, it has taken effective action to bring about needed improvements. As a result, provision has improved and standards by Year 6 have risen from below average to average. The school is aware that there is more to be done in terms of increasing investigative work in science and extending individual target setting to subjects other than English and mathematics. The school has demonstrated a good capacity to improve.

The governors are well informed about the school's performance and actively involved in the life of the school. They provide considerable support and constructive challenge.

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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 <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?	2

<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

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

1 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Michael's Primary School, Reading, RG30 4AS

Thank you so much for welcoming us into your school and showing us your work. We enjoyed our visit and would like to tell you what we have found. The school has made many improvements in recent years and St Michael's is now a good school.

These things are strengths of the school.

- You enjoy school and take part in activities with enthusiasm.
- The school has a very positive and friendly atmosphere.
- Teaching is good, which is why you are learning so much.
- Children in Reception get off to a great start.
- Most of you are making good progress in English, mathematics and science.
- You clearly enjoy the good range of clubs and additional activities provided.
- Your behaviour is consistently good and you get on well with others.
- The headteacher leads the school extremely well with good support from other staff.
- Staff know you very well; they take good care of you and give you good support.
- Your parents are very pleased with the care and education provided.

We have asked the school to improve these areas.

- Pupils in Years 3 to 6 should be given more opportunities to plan and design your own investigations in science to extend your science skills.
- Your teachers could set you individual learning targets in science and ICT to help you make even more progress in these subjects.

Finally, thank you once again for all your help. We wish you all the best for the future.

With kind regards,

Derek Watts

Lead Inspector