

St Michael's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113788
Local Authority	Bournemouth
Inspection number	311375
Inspection dates	17–18 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Janet Simms

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	408
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steve Jenkin
Headteacher	Robert Kennedy
Date of previous school inspection	19 May 2003
School address	Somerville Road Bournemouth BH2 5LH
Telephone number	01202 290497
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average primary school in the centre of Bournemouth. Pupils come from an increasingly diverse range of backgrounds and countries, and are often from working families who do not stay long in the area. The proportion of pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) has increased significantly recently and is now 50% of this year's reception intake. Pupils come from 46 language backgrounds. The school has no on-site playing field.

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 where pupils from a variety of backgrounds thrive together and achieve well. Staff manage the increasing complexity of language and other needs effectively, so the many newcomers settle quickly to become self-confident members of this harmonious community. Excellent collaboration with the school's partners contributes significantly to this achievement.

From a low entry base, pupils progress well in Reception and subsequent stages, with standards at Year 6 broadly average. Leavers aged 11 in 2006, particularly girls, did well and in 2007 achieved their targets. In all years, a large number of pupils enter and leave the school, so about two-thirds of reception starters remain to Year 6. Mid-term leavers are often amongst the more able and newcomers mostly enter with little or no English. These factors mean that standards are lower by age 11 than they otherwise would be. Almost all the 'stable core' of pupils achieve well and many exceed challenging targets.

Progress is particularly good in English, though the standard of boys' writing is often lower than it should be. This partly accounts for a larger than average gap between boys' and girls' achievement. A small minority of pupils do not achieve as they should. These often have language needs which overlap with learning difficulties and entrants often have no prior experience of schooling. In a few cases, progress is also hindered by absences, although most EAL pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities progress well because of very good help from staff and effective external support.

Pupils' welfare, safety and well-being are at the heart of school provision and their personal development is good. Existing pupils take good care to make sure that newcomers feel included and happy. Older, more able pupils do not take enough responsibility for pushing forward their own learning because they lack information about how to do so. Several parents say they would welcome more information about their children's progress.

Learning is good because teachers and assistants work effectively together to match provision closely to pupils' needs. Curriculum planning has improved and is now satisfactory, but lacks focus on specific ways to improve weaker areas of boys' writing, mathematics or the development of independent learning. Pastoral care is outstanding, though academic guidance and marking do not help pupils understand well enough how to improve their work.

Good leadership, management and governance have moved the school forward well since the last report and the capacity to improve further is good. Useful monitoring and evaluation of learning provides an accurate view of current teaching practices and careful analysis of performance clarifies management understanding of pupils' performance.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The good provision in the Foundation Stage enables children to make at least good progress from their starting points so that they start Year 1 at the levels expected nationally in their personal, language and mathematical development. They are much higher than their levels of knowledge and understanding of the world and physical and creative development. This good achievement is due to consistently good teaching, a rich learning environment and outstanding leadership and management. Additionally, successes are due to the excellent teamwork between teachers and the well qualified, very effective teaching assistants. Difficulties such as insufficient

EAL help and outdoor play equipment are managed well, but a lack of both restricts what the school can do.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve boys' writing to match the standard of girls' and reduce the gender gap in achievement.
- Improve pupils' understanding of how to improve their own work through informative marking and short-term target setting.
- Identify clearly in curriculum and lesson planning, opportunities to improve literacy and numeracy skills, particularly for EAL pupils, and to develop independence amongst more able pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Older pupils' starting levels were lower than those of pupils entering now and Year 6 have made good progress to reach broadly average standards. Year 2 are on track to reach higher standards than last year as their work is currently average. Targets are set high and almost all pupils in the stable core are on track to achieve or exceed these. Most pupils who enter late also make good progress, doing well in English as well as in knowledge and understanding of other subjects. Achievement in English is good because the school rightly places a high priority on language learning. Teachers regularly use good visual clues to help EAL pupils understand things, which also helps other pupils' learning.

A small minority of pupils, often with complex combinations of difficulties, receive good support to improve identified underachievement. These are often boys whose needs include English language and who have various complex learning difficulties. They also often lack prior experience of schooling or strong home support and are frequently absent. Translation of questions into native languages in mathematics and science last year helped many of these pupils to explain their ideas better in national tests. This partly accounts for improvement in science tests in 2007, where answers were also translated. Improvement in the science curriculum and better teaching have also improved achievement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Behaviour and attitudes towards learning are good. Pupils are courteous and polite, feel very safe and greatly enjoy school. Newcomers adapt quickly to the new culture and environment because pupils and adults help them sensitively. Pupils report that bullying is not a problem. Attendance has improved slightly because of school actions, but remains lower than it could be because of limited response from a small number of families.

Pupils make good contributions to the school and wider community. In school they readily carry out a variety of responsibilities and the school council is proud of its role in the appointment of new staff. Pupils have a good understanding of how to live healthy lives and enjoy good opportunities for exercise. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. This is particularly evident in the way pupils from a wide range of ethnic and language backgrounds work and play together happily. Pupils' preparation for the next stage of education and for later life is no better than satisfactory because of current standards in literacy and numeracy.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The good quality of teaching and learning is improving achievement and is the result of common strengths across the school. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good. Teachers make good use of resources such as interactive whiteboards to explain ideas clearly and imaginatively. Skilled teaching assistants work closely with teachers to provide good help for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. They also contribute significantly to the good progress of pupils with EAL. As a result, most pupils are enthusiastic about their work and want to achieve well. Teachers transmit clear expectations of pupils' behaviour and attitude to work and pupils strive to meet these. This has a positive impact on the quality of their learning.

Teachers check pupils' progress satisfactorily but are not using what they learn from such assessments to set specific targets to improve the pupils' basic literacy and numeracy skills. Work planned for groups is generally well matched to the needs of lower and average ability pupils. There is not always sufficient challenge in the literacy and numeracy activities provided for more able pupils, or in expectations of independent learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Although weaker areas such as boys' writing are clearly prioritised in development plans, the curriculum is not planned well enough to promote this improvement. A lack of planning to involve older or more able pupils to develop more independent learning skills also limits achievement. The curriculum is satisfactory overall, including adequate physical education (PE) provision on and off site. Planning for science has improved, with more exciting learning now leading to better achievement. Information and communication technology (ICT) facilities are well used and a good range of extra-curricular activities enriches pupils' experience. Teachers liaise well, passing on information about learning effectively as pupils move through the school.

The increasing requirements of pupils with EAL are well understood, but ways to improve language are not always identified in teachers' curriculum planning. A few parents express concerns about funding for EAL pupils, but the school uses allocated resources very well to provide good curriculum support. Additional school investment also helps, but specialist resources are severely stretched and the good progress of pupils with EAL is a tribute to the staff's success in making the most of what they have.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils' welfare is of central concern and adults provide an outstanding quality of pastoral care. There is a strong focus on ensuring the well-being of every pupil, with staff taking particular care of vulnerable pupils and those new to the school. Pupils in turn are very confident that they have an adult to turn to if they are worried. Safeguarding procedures are good. Parents value staff's alertness to early signs of distress or anxiety in their children and the effectiveness of the school's responses in resolving these.

Staff ensure that pupils work in a safe, secure and clean environment. Rigorous safety checks and risk assessments are routine. Pupils learn about the importance of healthy living and staff remind them regularly of the need to take care, for instance in PE lessons.

Teachers mark work regularly, but whilst they often add encouraging comments, they do not always provide specific advice about how pupils can improve their work. The school recognises the need to improve marking to include short-term guidance about what pupils need to do next.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The senior team work very well together. They monitor and evaluate teaching and learning effectively and constantly check on pupils' standards and progress. As a consequence, achievement is being driven upwards. Senior staff's data analysis is very thorough. This is used constructively to identify where improvement can be made and determines action necessary to achieve this, but teachers are insufficiently involved in this process. The use of information about pupils' performance to improve achievement is therefore limited.

The leadership and management skills of subject leaders have developed well since the last inspection. They now have detailed knowledge of where improvement is required and successfully lead staff in carrying out action to raise standards. This is evident in the way achievement in science has improved and in the good progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Good management of teaching assistants contributes significantly to their effectiveness.

The school knows itself well and self-evaluation judgements are largely accurate. The governing body is fully involved in the day-to-day life of the school, contributes well to school improvement planning and has effective strategies for monitoring the school's effectiveness.

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?	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	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	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?	2
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?	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

19 September 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Michael's Church of England Primary School, Bournemouth, BH2 5LH

Thank you very much for welcoming the two other inspectors and myself into your school on 17 and 18 of September. I am writing to tell you what we found out.

- Yours is a good school where all the adults take very good care of you and where you do well in your work.
- We like the way you welcome new children who join your school; we saw lots of examples where you are helping them to settle down quickly and making newcomers feel happy and cared for.
- We enjoyed talking to you very much. Thank you for the way many of you greeted us politely and told us about the school and what you were doing in lessons.
- Teaching is good and adults give you work which suits most of you well; you are really enjoying using the new computers and more exciting science lessons and that is helping to improve your work in these subjects.
- We very much like the way the school brings in lots of other people from outside to help you if you need them; you also welcome them and learn lots from them.
- To make things even better we have asked the school to do these things:
 - Teachers will be trying to make boys' writing better because it is not as good as girls' yet. They are already trying to think of ways to do that and to find subjects that interest boys more. Perhaps you can try to think about this to help them.
 - Adults will also be giving you more information about how you can improve your own work, especially older pupils. You will need to listen carefully to what they say and read the marking on your work so that you understand clearly what to do next and what your next targets are.
 - Teachers are already giving you more computer work in different subjects and planning to give you more writing and mathematics work in lessons other than literacy or numeracy. This is to help you with these important areas so that your standards improve even more.

We hope you enjoy the rest of the autumn term and thank you again for your welcome.

Yours sincerely

Janet Simms Lead inspector

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Lead inspector