

St Michael's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Lyme Regis

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113851
Local Authority	Dorset
Inspection number	311404
Inspection dates	28–29 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Joanna Pike

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	151
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Audrey Vivian
Headteacher	Chris Tozer
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2003
School address	Kings Way Lyme Regis DT7 3DY
Telephone number	01297 442623
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Michael's is smaller than most primary schools and the number on roll is falling. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is less than that of most schools, as is the number of pupils eligible for free school meals. Almost all pupils are of White British origin. Three pupils speak English as an additional language, but are not at an early stage. The school has gained the Investors in People award, Healthy Schools Status, Artsmark Gold and Sports Activemark. A children's centre has been built on-site recently and will provide a range of services, including a pre-school from September 2008.

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 rapidly improving school with some outstanding features. Pupils' thorough enjoyment of school is reflected in their very good attitudes and exemplary behaviour. Pupils really want to do well and value the help they receive to overcome gaps or weaknesses in their learning. Pupils relish the many good opportunities they have to contribute to the school and local community. Work leading to gaining Healthy School status gives pupils a good understanding of the need for safety, exercise and healthy eating. In 2007, results in mathematics declined significantly and were significantly below average in science. Achievement was significantly below expectations overall and specifically in mathematics and science. This was because these pupils made slower progress during Years 3 and 4, and although the school had provided extra support, the more able pupils in particular did not catch up sufficiently. The school has now taken swift and decisive action to address this dip in achievement and standards so that standards are improving and at the end of Year 6 are broadly average. A greater proportion of pupils are now on track to gain higher levels of performance at the end of Years 2 and 6, particularly in mathematics and science in Year 6. Pupils are now achieving in line with expectations across the school. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress similar to other pupils as a result of the good support they receive. The quality of teaching has improved, but is not yet consistently good. Overall, it is satisfactory. Strong teaching is characterised by clearly identified learning objectives, shared with pupils at the start of lessons, together with the steps pupils need to make in the lesson in order to reach what is expected of them. Where teaching is less successful, tasks are not sufficiently matched to pupils' needs. At times, too much talk on the part of teachers reduces the amount of time available for pupils' active learning. Parents are very pleased with the good care and support shown to their children and, as one parent wrote, 'this is a school where children are well cared for and taught well'. For their part, pupils feel safe and have every confidence in adults. Academic guidance has improved and is now good. Staff know pupils well and use information from assessment activities effectively to help plan future learning. Most pupils know how well they are doing and how to improve. The good leadership of the headteacher, well supported by senior and middle leaders, gives the school a very sharp focus on raising achievement. The outstanding way in which the school evaluates itself has been a significant contributory factor in the recent improvements in pupils' progress. The headteacher has created a shared vision of a school which offers its pupils a safe and caring environment in which they can flourish and experience a good and exciting curriculum, especially rich in the arts.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

When children start in the Reception class, their knowledge, understanding and skills are slightly below expectations, although the current cohort was in line with expectations. As a result of effective leadership and management, provision in the Foundation Stage is good. This enables children to make good progress so that almost all will reach, and many exceed, the expected levels this year. Children greatly enjoy the exciting range of activities which are carefully planned to build on their current stage of learning. They gain good independent skills because they are given many opportunities to choose an activity. Progress is closely monitored so that achievements can be celebrated and next steps planned. This information is effectively shared with parents so that they can better support their child. The new outdoor area is contributing

well to pupils' good achievement by extending the range of activities. However, the lack of large play equipment and space limits children's opportunities to further their physical skills.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement and standards, especially in mathematics and science, by ensuring that teaching is consistently good across the school.
- Give the youngest children more opportunities to use large play equipment. 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 the next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are in line with national expectations and achievement is satisfactory. Fewer children start in the Reception class with above the expected levels than in most other schools, and greater numbers are below expectations. The good teaching in this class enables these children to make good progress, so that they start in Year 1 in line with expectations. They continue to make steady progress so that in Year 2, standards remain in line. This year, more pupils will reach the higher levels, particularly in reading and writing, because of the effective support they have received. This good support to boost pupils' achievement, both in lessons and in catch-up groups, continues in Years 3 to 6, and, together with very careful monitoring of pupils' progress, is helping to improve standards. In Year 6, standards have improved, especially in mathematics and science, and are now average. Achievement has also improved in Years 3 to 6 and is now satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils really enjoy and value their school; as one pupil said, 'we are like a great big family in my class'. Pupils say bullying is rare and that adults deal with inappropriate behaviour quickly and fairly. Good gains in their spiritual, moral and social development enable pupils to appreciate the needs and achievements of others and to show care and consideration. Pupils know about other cultures and religions and their understanding of life in a multicultural British society is satisfactory. Pupils contribute well to the school and local communities. They take responsibility seriously, for example when acting as mentors for younger children and as monitors around school. The school forum makes a satisfactory contribution in ensuring pupils' views are represented. Raising money for charities, together with work related to the 'Rights Respecting School' initiative, gives pupils a good understanding of wider social and economic issues. As one pupil commented, 'It helps us appreciate how much we have compared to others'. Such activities, together with a good focus on basic skills, lay a sound foundation for pupils' next stage of education and their future working lives. The school has been successful in raising the rate of pupil attendance, which is now in line with the national average.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers have high expectations of work and behaviour and this results in pupils working really hard and little time being wasted. The majority of lessons are carefully planned, making very good use of pupil progress information to build on previous learning. Where this does not occur, tasks are not so well matched to pupils' needs. Good use is made of resources such as interactive whiteboards to enhance pupils' understanding. Teaching assistants are used effectively in groupwork in classrooms and in support groups. However, opportunities are missed for teaching assistants to contribute in assessing pupils during the start and end of lessons. Sometimes questions are not used effectively to extend pupils' learning or teachers miss opportunities to encourage pupils to explain their thinking. This limits pupils' progress. Teachers mark work regularly. The best marking tells pupils what they have achieved and gives good advice on how to improve. Increasingly, pupils assess their own or others' work and this is helping them to understand their own learning better.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The broad and interesting curriculum meets the needs of all learners well. Provision is enhanced by a wide range of visits, visitors and special events, together with a good number of after-school clubs, including circus skills and dance. French is taught to pupils in Years 3 to 6. A good emphasis is given to teaching and using basic skills in English and mathematics. Teachers are making an increasing number of purposeful links between subjects to enhance pupils' enjoyment in learning. The enthusiasm with which pupils speak about art and sporting activities reflects the success the school has had in gaining national awards in these areas of provision. Provision for information and communication technology has improved significantly since the last inspection and is now good, and is used well to support learning in other subjects. While providing well for pupils who find learning difficult, the school has yet to develop fully its provision for those identified as gifted and talented. A comprehensive programme of personal, social and health education, supported by residential trips, gives pupils a good understanding of the need for healthy lifestyles.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school looks after its pupils well. Pupils feel safe and confident that teachers will respond quickly to any problems. Child protection and other arrangements to safeguard learners, such as risk assessments and responsible internet use, are robust. Effective procedures help pupils settle quickly whenever they join the school and help those in Year 6 prepare for their next stage of education. Good links are maintained with other agencies and services to support the well-being of vulnerable pupils. Academic guidance is good. Effective use is made of the information gained from thorough assessment procedures in English, mathematics and science to help plan future learning. Pupils know and value having targets for their next stages of learning. They say this helps them to know how well they are doing and how to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The recent improvements in pupils' standards and achievements are as a result of the good leadership of the headteacher, well supported by senior and middle leaders. The school reacted quickly to the dip in results last year, seeking good support from the local authority. Effective planning resulted in sustained action to identify where pupils were underachieving and to put in place rapidly strategies to overcome this. Since then, all staff have been working hard on these strategies to raise achievement in English, mathematics and science. Very careful monitoring of these strategies by subject leaders, overseen by the headteacher, has ensured that the drive to improve is maintained. Additionally, information from tracking pupils' progress is used very effectively in targeting support where it will have best effect. The quality of this support is further enhanced by well-trained teaching assistants. The quality of teaching is improving, with a good focus in helping pupils understand how to improve. The recent positive impact on pupils' achievement across the school shows that the school has good capacity to improve. Subject leaders monitor their subjects effectively and this results in them being extremely well informed about strengths and weaknesses in provision and pupils' performance. They use this information well in planning further improvements. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are highly committed and are kept well informed by regular visits to the school and through presentations from subject leaders. Governors ask searching questions, but have yet to fully develop their role as 'critical friends' in order to challenge the school to do its best.

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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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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	1
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?	2
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	1
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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

- 30 April 2008 Dear Pupils Inspection of St Michael's CE VA Primary School, Lyme Regis DT7 3DY It was good to come and see you at your school! Thank you for making us so welcome, talking to us and helping us during the school's inspection. We especially enjoyed the good discussions we had with some of you. We learned a lot. Currently, your school is giving you a satisfactory education and has some outstanding features. Here are some of the most important bits of the inspection report that I thought you might like to know about.
 - You work hard in lessons and make sound progress. You reach expected standards. You and your teachers are making good efforts to improve this further.
 - Your personal development is good. You really enjoy your time in school. You have a good understanding of how to stay safe and keep healthy. Your behaviour is outstanding.
 - Your teachers have been busy working hard to improve things. They provide satisfactory teaching.
 - Your teachers work hard to give you a good curriculum which is full of exciting events such as concerts and trips out.
 - The school does a good job to make sure that you all feel safe, settled and secure. Most of you know how well you are doing and how to improve.
 - Your headteacher is doing a good job and, with the staff and governors, is working hard so that you all do even better. To improve further the school should now:
 - help you to achieve even better, especially in mathematics and science, by making even more lessons good
 - provide children in the Reception class with more opportunities to use large play equipment.
- Thank you again for all your help. Joanna Pike Lead Inspector

30 April 2008

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Thank you again for all your help.

Joanna Pike
Lead Inspector