

St Michael's Church of England Primary School (Tenterden)

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118670
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	313038
Inspection date	16 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Jacque Buttriss

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	199
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nicola Denoon Duncan
Headteacher	Glynis Dougall
Date of previous school inspection	13 October 2003
School address	Ashford Road St Michael's Tenterden TN30 6PU
Telephone number	01580 763210
Fax number	01580 765186

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: • The quality of teaching and its impact on standards and achievement. • Improvements since the last inspection. • The impact of recent governing body changes on the effectiveness of their work in monitoring and supporting the school. The inspector gathered evidence from a range of documents, pupil progress data, school records, lesson observations, discussions with pupils, staff and governors, observations around the school and a site inspection. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average school with a higher than average proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Nearly all pupils are of White British backgrounds.

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 with some outstanding features. The majority of parents are strongly supportive of the school and praise the education it provides for their children. Typical comments include, 'The school is a credit to our village', 'I am really pleased I chose St Michael's School' and 'Keep up the great work!'

Pupils make good progress through the school and, in 2007, attained standards in the Year 6 national tests that were well above the national average. This represents outstanding achievement for this particular group of pupils, compared to their well below average attainment when they started in the Reception class. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress and more able pupils are challenged to do their best. As one parent put it, 'We feel our daughter is reaching her potential.' However, despite a steady rise in standards over the past few years, some pupils in Key Stage 1 do not achieve as well as they could, especially in writing, which has been a focus for improvement throughout the school.

Personal development and well-being are good and behaviour is exemplary throughout the school. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, although pupils are not all aware of the diversity of cultures in British society. Pupils have a very good understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles, citing the need to eat a balanced diet, though they readily admit that not all pupils eat enough fruit! However, they do say they all take regular exercise. Pupils understand well how to stay safe, for example by staying well away from the busy main road. Pupils demonstrate outstanding enjoyment of school. One pupil said, 'There's nothing I don't like about this school.' Many parents echoed this comment, 'Our son goes to school happy and cheerful every day with a desire to learn.'

Pupils of all ages make an excellent contribution to their community, both in the school and in the wider area. For example, they sing to elderly residents and invite them into school for special events. One parent commented that 'the school is a focal point for community spirit'. Members of the active school council have been instrumental in recent improvements to the building, such as the newly decorated toilets. Pupils are confident that their views are valued and that adults take their concerns seriously. Good acquisition of a wide range of personal and learning skills prepares pupils well for their future lives.

The good quality of teaching has had a strong impact on raising the achievement of Key Stage 2 pupils. In an exciting upper set mathematics lesson, pupils were exhilarated by a series of challenging investigations into population data, in which high expectations and a fast pace contributed to excellent progress and impressive standards of work. Teachers set work which is well matched to pupils' needs. Most lessons are stimulating and fun for pupils, contributing to their positive attitudes to learning. Teaching assistants provide good support for learners. However, in some lessons in Key Stage 1, pupils are set work that is too easy and a lack of pace leads to slower progress.

The good curriculum is impressively enriched by a wide variety of themed afternoons and well attended extra-curricular activities. As one Year 6 pupil commented, 'All the clubs are good and different and there are lots of them.' Information and communication technology has improved significantly. Writing skills continue to be a focus for improvement. Recently introduced strategies have led to good improvements in writing in Key Stage 2 but are taking longer to raise standards in Key Stage 1 as a result of staff changes during the past year.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Pastoral care is recognised by parents and pupils alike as a great strength of the school. There are very good links with outside professionals and organisations to provide additional support for pupils and families. Excellent partnerships with other schools and pre-school providers ensure outstanding transition arrangements for pupils joining and leaving the school. An excellent 'buddy' system ensures that all reception children are partnered with Year 6 pupils, who play with them and help them settle in. Vulnerable pupils are very well supported and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are helped to make good progress. All pupils have individual learning targets which are regularly reviewed. 'When a target's done, you get another target', explained a Year 5 pupil. Teachers have good assessment procedures and pupils are developing good self-assessment skills so that they know how well they are doing. Books are marked constructively to help learners know what to do to improve their work. The school does everything it can to protect children's safety and well-being.

There is a strong sense of teamwork amongst leaders at all levels, which supports recent changes in both the staff and the governing body. Governors provide good support and challenge for the school and are gradually taking a more active role in school improvement. The senior leadership team has been reorganised so that they each have more specific monitoring roles. The headteacher demonstrates clear vision and provides outstanding direction for the development of the school. Staff work hard to ensure good provision for all pupils. Leaders set challenging targets which have successfully raised standards across Key Stage 2. Good analysis is made of pupils' progress data and the school has rigorous self-evaluation processes which enable leaders to identify areas for further development. This has resulted in a number of recent successes such as the rise in attendance figures to above average. This demonstrates the school's good capacity to improve still further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children have an excellent start to school life in the Reception class. Staff provide an exciting range of stimulating learning opportunities to meet every child's needs. Following recent work with pre-school providers to raise standards, attainment on entry is now in line with expectations and children make very good progress to reach above average standards at the end of their Reception Year. Children's behaviour is exemplary as they enjoy all the fun of learning in their safe and secure environment. Outstanding teaching and excellent relationships help children to grow impressively in confidence and to gain very good independent learning skills. The children all show great enjoyment in their learning and happily talk about their experiences at school. One reception child explained that 'everybody is my friend'. The support and encouragement of Year 6 'buddies' are much appreciated by parents and children alike and one child said that what she liked best was, '...playing outside with my buddy'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement and standards in Key Stage 1 by offering pupils more challenging work and increasing the pace of learning.
- Improve writing in Key Stage 1 by strengthening handwriting and spelling skills and by developing more opportunities for writing across the curriculum.

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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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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	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?	1

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	1
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

17 October 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of St Michael's Church of England Primary School, Tenterden, TN30 6PU

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when I came to inspect your school. You made me feel very welcome and I enjoyed talking with you. Yours is a good school that helps you to do well in your work and cares for you outstandingly well.

These are the things I especially like about your school:

- Your behaviour is excellent. Well done.
- Children in the Reception class have an outstanding start to their education.
- You greatly enjoy school and are keen to do your best.
- Everyone provides excellent care, guidance and support for you.
- Year 6 buddies do a great job in looking after younger pupils.
- Your teachers work very hard to provide enjoyable learning activities that help you make good progress and achieve well.
- Your School Council works very well to improve your school and you do some excellent work in the local community.
- There are very strong links with other schools to help you with your learning.
- Your headteacher, staff and governors are leading the school well and are working hard to make it even better.
- Your parents and carers are very pleased that you come to this school.

These are the things I think your school could do even better:

- Work for some of you who are younger pupils is sometimes too easy and I think you could get more work done in lessons.
- Those of you in a younger class need more help with your handwriting and spelling. I would also like to see you have more opportunities to write in different subjects.

You can help by continuing to work hard and doing your best.

I would like to wish you lots of success in your future education.

With very best wishes

Mrs Jacquie Buttriss Lead inspector

17 October 2007

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Lead inspector