

# St Michael's Church of England Primary School, Thorpe on the Hill

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	120540
<b>Local Authority</b>	Lincolnshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	313660
<b>Inspection dates</b>	9–10 February 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Robert Greatrex

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	138
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Robert Sheldon
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Elizabeth Jones
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	27 June 2005
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	School Lane Thorpe-on-the-hill Lincoln Lincolnshire LN6 9BN
<b>Telephone number</b>	01522 681923

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	9–10 February 2009
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**Fax number**

01522 696875

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This is a smaller-than-average primary school. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and live in Thorpe-on-the-Hill, or in nearby villages. Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage when they are four years old and transfer to Year 1 at the end of their Reception Year. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. Attainment on entry is broadly average, but varies considerably from year to year. The proportion of pupils with learning and/or disabilities is higher than that found nationally. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is also above average.

The school has been awarded the Healthy School award. The school also holds the Eco-schools Green Flag and the International Schools Intermediate Level.

The school runs a breakfast club. The onsite playgroup and after school club are not managed by the governing body.

## 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. The clear improvement since the last inspection is due to good leadership and effective teamwork. Pupils are beginning to take responsibility for their own learning, and to understand how to learn from success and failure alike, so their personal development is good. Pupils thrive at the school and enjoy all it has to offer. There is a real buzz of excitement and enthusiasm in the classrooms because so much learning is relevant and interesting, such as the ecological changes pupils have helped lead themselves. A strong sense of community enables pupils to feel that they belong and to understand the contribution they can make. Behaviour is good and relationships between staff and pupils are excellent. The vast majority of parents praise the school, a typical comment being, 'We believe our child will look back on her primary years as fun, challenging and successful.'

Pupils achieve well throughout the school because teaching is good and on occasions, outstanding. Progress in reading, writing and mathematics in Years 1 and 2 is at a good rate so that standards are well above average by the time pupils move into Year 3. In the two years leading up to 2007, standards in Years 3 to 6 declined steadily. Although outstanding teaching in Year 6 was leading to rapid improvement in that year, too little progress was made in Years 3 to 5 so standards dipped, particularly in mathematics. This trend has now been reversed. In 2008, standards in English, mathematics and science were above average because progress was good throughout Years 3 to 6. In 2009, robust tracking systems show that pupils are continuing to progress well, although the school has correctly identified writing as an area for improvement. Here, new initiatives are beginning to make an impact.

The good curriculum is vibrant, innovative and meeting pupils' needs well. Basic skills are often developed through other subjects. Skills such as problem-solving are taught from the earliest age, and tasks offer good opportunities for pupils to use and apply their knowledge in meaningful activities that have sufficient depth and challenge. 'Self initiated tasks' give pupils opportunities to practise and refine their skills through activities that interest them. This is effective, although not enough refinement is provided to help pupils reach the high levels of independence the school strives for. Pupils use computers impressively as everyday learning tools, whether handling data or researching the weather in the location of their international partner school. The curriculum provides good opportunities for pupils' personal development. Pupils develop an excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles. They have a thirst for learning so participation in the wide range of activities, such as orchestra, is good. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They work very well with one another demonstrating excellent teamwork and sharing of ideas. These skills, coupled with their growing confidence as learners and overall good progress in learning, give them outstanding preparation for the future.

Good quality care and support contribute to pupils' sense of safety and well-being. Assessment is good and used to set appropriate targets for learning. Pupils are becoming more actively involved in assessing their own progress, and many can talk confidently of improvements made and areas they are concentrating on now. This is at an early stage of development, but already shows benefit.

The school is constantly striving to improve. Data and information from self-evaluation help direct improvement strategies. For example, the dip in standards was corrected through a more consistent approach to teaching within a vibrant learning atmosphere. Partnerships with others

are used to support and extend work done in school. Senior staff check the work of the school well, but subject managers are not as actively involved. Governors provide good oversight of the school's work and a clear strategic steer for its future development. Given the thoroughness and accuracy of the school's self-evaluation, the pace and quality of recent improvement and the strong teamwork, the capacity for further improvement is good.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Children settle quickly and happily into school because staff look after them with utmost care and attention. Children feel safe. Their personal development is good. Teaching is good and children enjoy learning because they are provided with good opportunities to explore and discover for themselves. Children have a good range of tasks to provoke their thinking. Weekly 'challenges', whether to build a boat or plan a party for Cinderella, are relevant to children's interests and excite them. They develop the positive attitudes and begin to use the skills that form the basis of work to follow in later years. Achievement is consequently good. Adults make careful observations of what children can do to plan tasks at the right level. By the end of Reception, most children reach standards above those expected for their age. Staff work very well together and make a very effective team. Children's progress is monitored well.

Good links are established with parents, who are welcomed warmly into class. Links to the playgroups from which children come are improving. Transition to Year 1 is managed very well so that children are confident and keen to join their 'new' class.

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

- Increase further pupils' opportunities to understand their role in their learning and personal development.
- Further devolve the responsibility for monitoring new initiatives and the quality of teaching to subject managers to help ensure that they are having a positive impact on pupils' learning and standards.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Standards are consistently well above the national averages in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2. Currently standards are above average in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. After a downward trend over the previous two years, the effective measures put in place by the school raised standards in 2008. The school changed curriculum and teaching styles so that the rate of progress in mathematics particularly increased. The improvement has continued in 2009 and most pupils are currently working at above expected levels. Precise assessment has enabled the school to recognise that girls are overly passive in mathematics, and a few boys in writing. This is being addressed with some success currently.

Life skills are taught and practised well, building pupils' confidence and the ability to select the strategies needed to answer complex questions. All pupils are active in tasks which are at the right level for them so that pupils who find learning difficult are well supported and make good progress as do the small number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils enjoy school very much and this is reflected in their good attendance. They take pride in their achievements and talk with particular satisfaction about the progress shown in their books. They are courteous and polite showing great respect for one another, the adults and their school. Behaviour in lessons is generally good and supports learning. Pupils work and play together harmoniously. Spiritual development is good because it is a part of everyday life. Assemblies nurture pupils' confidence and sense of self-esteem by celebrating their achievements. Cultural development is equally strong so pupils have good first hand experience of people who have different customs and beliefs, and their knowledge of cultural diversity in the United Kingdom is good. Moral and social development are good. Pupils look after one another well. They readily take on many responsibilities and make a good contribution to the school and wider community by leading playtime games and raising funds for good causes. Pupils' preparation for their future life is excellent because they know how to work both independently and as members of a team. All have opportunities to experience enterprises that teach them many life skills.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teachers plan meticulously so time is used productively. Support staff are well deployed and, because they are skilled and knowledgeable, they work effectively to support individuals and groups in lessons. Pupils learn well from the excellent range and variety of interesting tasks that motivate and enthuse them. Teachers use the new outside covered areas well to extend learning opportunities. High quality learning takes place. Work is generally well matched to pupils' individual needs with a good level of challenge. The quality of questioning is good. In the best lessons, questioning is sharply focused on probing pupils' understanding, challenging them to think further and developing their capacity to think for themselves. Teachers generally manage classes well but strategies to handle the effects of gender imbalance are not always used effectively. Pupils' work is well marked. Written comments tell pupils how well they are doing and often give them helpful guidance on how to improve their work. Pupils' personal development is enhanced because teachers ask pupils to respond with their own thoughtful comments.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development so they become confident learners. Within a clear structure, pupils are given a diet of relevant and challenging tasks that ask them to use their skills and knowledge in meaningful ways. Good opportunities for collaboration and personal research often promote writing in other subjects which is a school focus. Improvements to the curriculum, to encourage problem solving, analytical thinking and evaluation, are beginning to have a positive impact on learning. Carefully planned opportunities for self-initiated tasks give pupils space to explore what they have learnt and apply it to new areas. Support for pupils who sometimes find learning hard is good so they do well. Visitors and a good variety of visits, often linked to themes, bring learning to life and add much to

pupils' enjoyment. Pupils enjoy German and are keen to speak it. The excellent extra-curricular activities, including gardening, are very popular.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

A strong ethos of inclusion generates a real sense of community. Pupils thrive emotionally and feel safe because staff attend well to their needs and readily provide effective guidance. The few behavioural incidents are handled promptly and effectively. The school meets requirements for safeguarding its pupils. There are good links with outside agencies, and pupils enjoy the breakfast club activities. Since the last inspection, the school has worked more effectively with parents particularly to encourage parental involvement in their children's learning. Parents now have a voice in the school. Although not fully embedded yet, pupils' involvement in assessing their own learning is making a positive impact and developing well. Success criteria are used well in some classes. Guidance and support through targets is good and particularly effective when parents are fully involved.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher provides good leadership and is well supported by the deputy headteacher. They have forged a strong teaching team with a great deal of consistency between classes which benefits pupils' learning. New initiatives are well planned, implemented carefully and checked for effectiveness. Rigorous tracking of pupils' progress against challenging targets enables the school to identify and tackle underachievement quickly. However, subject managers are insufficiently engaged in directly monitoring the effectiveness of teaching or the impact of new initiatives. This reduces their ability to be more active in driving forward school improvement. The school recognises this and plans appropriate changes. Governors know their school's strengths and weaknesses very well. They bring together many skills to the benefit of the school, for example to manage the impact of the falling roll. Community cohesion is good. The school actively promotes local, national and international links and has done much to prepare its pupils for life in a multicultural society.



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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

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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/or disabilities make progress	2

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<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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
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	1

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

## 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	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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

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**Annex B**

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

12 February 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of St Michael's Church of England Primary School, Thorpe-on-the-Hill, LN6 9BN

Thank you so much for welcoming me to your school. Like you, I think it is a very friendly place to be and you get on very well together. My particular thanks to those of you who kindly gave up some of your time to talk to me. I found what you had to say very helpful. In return, I now want to share with you my findings.

St Michael's is a good school. You told me that you really enjoy school and I can see why, particularly when I saw the interesting lessons you have and how you enjoy the chances to work with the staff and on your own tasks. You also enjoy the good range of clubs, visits, visitors and other opportunities such as the Eco schools' work. You told me your teachers are helpful. I agree that teaching is good and all the adults care about you a great deal and work hard on your behalf. I could see that you think hard about how well you have completed your work and try to reach the targets your teachers set for you. I was impressed when some of you told me about your involvement in assessing how well you have done, and how proud you are of the achievements you could show me. I noted that standards are above average and you make good progress because teachers keep a close eye on how well you are getting on, so you do not fall behind. I was also impressed by your good manners and your ability to discuss things in a very sensible way. Your headteacher and the senior teachers provide good leadership. I have asked them to do two things to make your school even better:

- Give you more opportunities to be responsible for your own learning and checking how well you are doing.
- Involve the subject managers in checking how effective the teaching is, and the effect of the changes made.

Your school is successful, not only because of what the adults bring to it, but also because of your contributions. You are very positive about learning and I was very impressed with your good behaviour and how welcoming you are to visitors.

Thank you again for your help.

Yours sincerely

Robert Greatrex

Lead inspector