

St Michael's Church of England Primary School, Louth

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120574
Local Authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	313678
Inspection dates	10–11 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Martyn Groucutt

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.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	222
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
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr C Tacey
Headteacher	Mr P Fox
Date of previous school inspection	25 April 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Monks Dyke Road Louth Lincolnshire LN11 9AR
Telephone number	01507603867

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Michael's is an average sized primary school situated in Louth, Lincolnshire. The proportion of pupils from non-white British heritage families is far below the national average and an extremely small number do not speak English as their first language. The numbers with learning disabilities are around the national average, while those qualifying for free school meals are below. Attainment on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is currently below that expected for children of this age. The school has received the Active Mark, the Healthy Schools Award and the Financial Management Standards in Schools Award. It is working towards Fair Trade School and Eco-school Award status, inspired by the active Eco Team of committed pupils.

At the same time as the school inspection, The Limes Play and Learn independent nursery, which shares the same site as the school, was subject to a parallel inspection which is reported separately.

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 is a good and improving school. It demonstrates effective self-evaluation and has good capacity for further improvement. Pupils make good progress as they move through school. In Reception, good progress brings standards into line with those expected by Year 1. Infant pupils' progress and standards are satisfactory, in line with expectations, but in Years 3–6 they are good and above the expected level by Year 6. From the start pupils who have learning difficulties are given effective support so that they make good progress. However, there is insufficient challenge for the more able and a need to be more effective in identifying gifted and talented pupils. Consequently some of these pupils could do better.

Leadership and management are good, and, since his appointment, the headteacher has moved the school from serious weaknesses to its current overall good standard. His devolved style of leadership allows others to take effective roles in curriculum leadership and school improvement. Governance is good, with governors involved in curriculum development, target setting and planning. Teaching is good and all staff work effectively together, supporting good learning and personal development. They offer good care, guidance and support, and are committed to developing the wider social and personal skills of pupils. This results in the school being a positive community where behaviour is good and team work is strong. Pupils demonstrate social concern through activities such as seeking Fair Trade School status. However, they currently have few opportunities to explore the diversity in contemporary British society. They enjoy learning and attendance is generally good, although the overall figure has been affected by a few parents who withdrew their children for holidays during term time.

The curriculum is good. An appropriate emphasis is given to literacy and numeracy and the curriculum is well supported by information and communication technology (ICT). Reading and science are particularly strong by the end of Key Stage 2, considerably above the national average. Writing is weaker and the school is currently making this a focus for improvement. The wider curriculum creates opportunities to undertake a number of learning opportunities to acquire new skills, sometimes working alongside pupils from other year groups in Key Stage 2. The curriculum is monitored well and teachers with specific responsibilities show strong commitment to developing their subject areas. As a result of the very good practice, pupils with learning difficulties have good access to the curriculum and are able to make good progress. Pupils know how to be healthy and safe and through opportunities such as the school council and the Eco Team, they can play a good role in supporting the school and helping in the wider community. Skills for future economic well-being are supported through the wider curriculum.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children settle well in Reception because good links exist between the school, parents and the pre-schools, and routines are clear and helpful. Teaching is good. Staff have a good understanding of how young children learn and use this well to provide a range of interesting activities which encourage children to have fun when learning. Consequently, children's behaviour and attitudes are particularly good. A good balance of activities is provided which focus on the children learning alongside an adult or learning through following their own interests. A priority is placed on extending children's personal, social and emotional development and excellent progress supports their learning elsewhere. This emphasis has paid dividends as children display high levels of independence and cooperation, as seen when one of four boys

working to make a reindeer robot out of cardboard boxes said, 'We're working together as a team'. Currently, children do not have ready access to computers but there are plans to remedy this. Children are well cared for and welfare requirements are met. Staff are developing ways to assess and record children's achievements. A good start has been made but this is still work in progress. Good management and leadership in the EYFS are based on high aspirations. Children's learning and development are good so that, by the time they enter Year 1, nearly all are working at levels expected for their age and their personal, social and emotional development is above that frequently seen.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase numbers achieving the highest levels in National Curriculum assessments and those identified as gifted and talented through more effective targeting and challenge.
- Increase pupils' awareness of diversity in contemporary Britain within the context of the moral and social elements of personal development.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

On entry to the EYFS, children display standards below those expected nationally. They make good progress and by Year 1 their standards are broadly in line with those nationally. Children's individual profiles are effective in identifying those who need additional support. During Key Stage 1, pupils make the expected progress in mathematics, reading and writing and standards are satisfactory. Writing is the least successful but is still in line with the national average. Rigorous tracking identifies pupils who are not making expected progress and support enables them to make progress in line with others. By the end of Year 2 pupils are generally achieving the national average, although numbers getting the highest grades are below those that might be expected. Achievement is good through Years 3 to 6 and pupils are demonstrating progress better than that expected nationally. Standards in reading and science are particularly high and well above the national average, reflected in the results in unvalidated Key Stage 2 tests in 2008. Those whose attainment was at the lowest end in Key Stage 1 made more than the expected progress as a result of their very good support. However, the highest achievers in Key Stage 1 made slower progress in Key Stage 2, resulting in fewer reaching level 5 than the national average. The school's effective tracking of individual pupils shows that standards are continuing to rise.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school and develop positive attitudes to learning. They arrive in the morning keen to start and attendance is broadly average. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Through good guidance and interaction with staff, pupils learn what is expected of them. This results in good behaviour and relationships which make an important contribution to learning. The school is a harmonious community. Pupils know that racism and bullying are wrong and know what to do if they were to occur. They develop good personal safety awareness and contribute to the safety of others by acting sensibly when moving around the school. Pupils' contribution to the school and wider communities is good. They know their ideas are taken seriously and, through the school council, suggest ways to improve the school or help others. They also have a good understanding of sustainability issues. However, they have a limited understanding of the diverse nature of Britain today. Their good knowledge

of how to live a healthy lifestyle through regular exercise and eating a range of food is influencing what they do. Good social skills and good progress in literacy and numeracy prepare pupils well for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

High expectations of staff and pupils and good attitudes and behaviour create a calm environment where pupils learn readily. Planning is good. Teachers have a clear understanding of what they want pupils to learn and share this so pupils know what is expected. Work is generally well matched to pupils' capabilities so learning builds systematically. In some lessons, however, the progress of more able pupils slows because insufficient challenge is given at the start of lessons. Sometimes pupils take time to start their individual work so their overall progress is slower than it should be. Teaching assistants make a positive contribution to pupils' learning, particularly those who need additional support with English and mathematics. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this well to ask questions that stimulate pupils' thinking and develops understanding. Interactive whiteboards are used well as a teaching aid but less frequently used by pupils to progress their own learning. Teachers assess pupils' work and progress well and most pupils find their comments in books useful, particularly those in Key Stage 2.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The creatively designed curriculum makes a positive contribution to pupils' personal development and learning. For one afternoon a week pupils in Key Stage 2 work in mixed age groups to develop skills across a range of subjects. This has helped, for example, to raise standards in swimming. Staff are focusing on a greater use of drama techniques and film, which is helping to maintain pupils' interests and improve progress in literacy. There is a wide range of popular clubs, educational visits and visitors to the school. Music and drama have high profiles in the school and pupils thoroughly enjoy the opportunity to join the choir, play a musical instrument and take part in school plays and productions. This develops their sense of self-esteem as well as helping them to develop new skills and interests. Music groups from the school regularly participate in local events and perform to community groups. The curriculum for gifted and talented pupils is insufficiently adapted to fully meet their needs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff provide good pastoral care to promote pupils' personal development, well-being and academic standards. Working effectively with a range of agencies ensures that pupils receive good care and support. Policies and procedures for safeguarding pupils and their welfare are firmly in place, as are procedures for child protection. Staff liaise well with parents and involve them in school activities and their children's learning. Parents are very supportive of the school and what it does for their children. The school monitors pupils' attendance effectively and, with support from specialist personnel, follows up any child whose absence is of concern. However, despite clear guidance from the school, a significant but small minority of parents continue to take their family holidays in term time. Academic guidance is good, so pupils are

clear about the focused lesson objectives and their literacy and numeracy targets. The school's tracking system quickly identifies where pupils are in danger of falling behind. Consequently, staff are able to give good additional support in order to accelerate these pupils' progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Since taking up his post, the headteacher has led the school from one showing serious weaknesses to one now judged good. His style of devolved leadership gives teachers opportunities to take responsibility for areas of school life and curriculum leadership. They respond positively, creating a team where everyone is focused on school improvement and raising standards and achievement in an atmosphere where pupils thrive. Led by an effective Chair, the governing body provides good challenge and support to the school. It plays an active role in target setting, curriculum development and identifying priorities for the school improvement plan. Financial management is good and the office manager is a key team member. The spiralling deficit inherited by the headteacher has been eradicated and sound financial procedures underpin effective educational provision. Good links with a range of external agencies enable effective support to be provided for pupils who benefit from this. The school is well placed to maintain its improvement and offers good value for money. The school promotes community cohesion satisfactorily in a number of ways, for example, through offering its accommodation to a range of social and religious groups so that over 300 people a week use its facilities. However, the systems for evaluating how successfully the school is helping pupils to understand others and value diversity are limited.

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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?	1
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 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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which 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 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

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

12 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Michael's Church of England Primary School, Louth, Lincolnshire, LN11 9AR

I am writing to thank you for the help that you gave my colleagues and me when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed our time with you and were very impressed by your very good behaviour and enthusiasm for learning. You obviously enjoy school a lot and you get on extremely well together and with your teachers. We particularly enjoyed the opportunity to watch the infants' Christmas concert - you all did really well.

We think that you go to a good school that is always trying to get even better. Those of you who do not always find learning easy get very good help and so you are able to make good progress. The standards the school reaches in reading and in science are particularly good. You know how to be safe and healthy and many of you are concerned about the environment - well done the Eco-team for raising people's awareness of this and issues such as Fair Trade, and to the school council for representing you well.

We have asked the school to do a couple of things that will make it even better than it is already. Firstly, we have asked the school to ensure that those of you who learn more quickly are given extra challenges to help you reach the very best of which you are able. Sometimes this will also involve identifying those of you with special gifts and talents that could be developed further. We have also asked that you have more opportunities to find out more about people from other racial and ethnic groups and religions who live in considerable numbers in many parts of the country. This will help you understand better what life is like for people who come from different backgrounds to yourselves.

You are very lucky to go to a school where all the staff and governors are working so hard to help you do well. They are a great team and you told us how much you appreciate them. They work so hard to help you and you respond very well, which makes St Michael's a great community. Keep it up in the future!

Yours sincerely

Martyn Groucutt

Lead inspector