

St Michael's CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123143
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	314512
Inspection dates	24–25 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Carol Worthington

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	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	202
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	30
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr E J Forty
Headteacher	Mrs S Grundy
Date of previous school inspection	27 June 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Marston Road Oxford OX3 0EJ
Telephone number	01865 241476
Fax number	01865 728035

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average sized school serves a culturally diverse, mainly residential area of Oxford. About half of the pupils are from minority ethnic groups. The proportion speaking English as an additional language (EAL) is above the national average. Nine pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD), particularly those who struggle with reading and writing, is similar to that found nationally. The number of children with statements of special educational needs is low. There are 30 Reception age children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). In September 2003 the school underwent reorganisation from a First school to a Primary.

A privately run pre-school occupies the same site. 'Mickey's' after school club takes place daily on the school premises from 3.15 to 5.45 pm.

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 school. By the end of Year 6, standards are broadly average, reflecting satisfactory progress from pupils' starting points. However, progress varies throughout the school. It is good in the EYFS and Key Stage 1, where pupils achieve well because teaching is consistently good. Standards by the end of Year 2 are slightly above average, particularly in reading. In Key Stage 2, however, progress varies, due to a changing school population and inconsistencies in teaching, particularly in mathematics. On balance, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. However, those capable of attaining the higher levels in national tests do not always make good enough progress. Throughout the school, pupils with learning difficulties make good progress in relation to their starting points because of the good support and guidance they receive. Those who do not speak English fluently make good progress in learning it, so they can start to achieve in other subjects.

The headteacher is a good leader and has identified, through careful self-evaluation, the priorities for improvement. Despite having no permanent leadership team for much of her five terms in post, she has worked hard to put in place measures which are starting to enable improvements in English, mathematics and science. However these have not yet had time to make a full impact on standards in Key Stage 2. A good example of the changes is the new system for tracking progress, which is starting to show potential underachievement early enough for it to be remedied. Teachers are starting to use this system to guide pupils towards higher standards. Pupils have a clear understanding of their targets for improvement, and what they need to do to meet them. As one Year 4 pupil said, 'It's the best way to find out what you're good at and what we need to work on'.

The school takes exceptional care of its pupils. It has excellent procedures to protect them, including those who are potentially vulnerable. It makes sure that all pupils are included in all aspects of its provision. Many parents value this highly. As one so aptly put it, 'The school has a wonderful sense of community.' Pupils contribute exceptionally well to their school community through the school council and other areas of responsibility. Links with local churches are strong and many pupils take part in musical or sporting events locally and beyond. The school pays particularly strong attention to pupils' social and moral development, so their behaviour and attitudes to learning are excellent. They make good progress in their personal development because they respond well to the good range of opportunities they have to develop into good citizens. Pupils have good understanding of how to live healthily and keep themselves safe. Their preparation for secondary education is satisfactory, in the light of their average standards at the end of Year 6.

Staff have worked hard to review and improve the curriculum, particularly in making sure that pupils build on their knowledge, skills and understanding as they move through the school, and this has already resulted in some improvement in science scores in national tests. The excellent range of activities outside lessons is very popular and much enjoyed by pupils. Governors are highly committed to the school and give freely of their time to support its many activities.

Given the degree of improvement in standards in writing, science and higher level mathematics in 2008 tests, and the new measures that are already raising achievement, the school has a good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children join the Reception class with skills that are broadly typical for their age, but are lower in communication, language, literacy and aspects of mathematical development. They make good progress, because they are well taught, so that most reach and some exceed the goals expected of them by the end of Reception. Staff provide a good balance of opportunities for children to choose activities for themselves or work under the guidance of an adult.

Consequently, children soon gain confidence and develop their independence in this supportive environment. They enjoy working and playing alongside others, too, and they share equipment and take turns sensibly. Their enjoyment is reflected in the view of one parent of a newly arrived child who stated, 'My child...likes the school and his new teacher very much.'

A strong emphasis is placed on promoting children's language development. Those at an early stage of learning English make good progress because they are supported well and included fully in the activities. Staff keep a close check on children's progress and use the results of their day-to-day assessments well to plan their next steps. Although the acting Key Stage 1 leader is currently overseeing EYFS, plans to increase the leadership role of the capable Reception teacher are well in hand. The EYFS is well resourced and good use is made of the indoor and outdoor areas.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement in Key Stage 2, especially in mathematics, by increasing the consistency of teaching and learning.
- Increase the amount of challenge in lessons for those capable of reaching higher levels.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children maintain good progress from the EYFS through Key Stage 1 and, by the end of Year 2, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are slightly above average. Achievement is good. In Key Stage 2, progress is inconsistent because of inconsistencies in teaching. Many more children move into and out of the school during Key Stage 2 than in most schools. They enter with varying prior attainment. By the end of Year 6, standards shown by national tests are broadly average. This represents satisfactory progress and achievement when compared to pupils' starting points. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress in relation to their starting points because of the good support and guidance they receive. Those who do not speak English as their first language make good progress in learning it, so they can start to achieve in other subjects.

Standards of reading and writing are higher than those in mathematics. Recent initiatives have further improved the standard of writing. Science standards have also improved from past underachievement. Some more able pupils have recently improved their attainment of higher grades in national tests, particularly in mathematics, but more needs to be done to improve their all-round achievement and standards.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school sets great value on personal development and provides many opportunities for its pupils to develop well as young citizens. Pupils' moral and social awareness is particularly well developed. Consequently, behaviour in and out of lessons is excellent, and pupils of all backgrounds and cultures have very positive relationships with staff and other pupils. Older pupils are proud to help younger ones. Although there are some opportunities to learn about cultures other than their own, the knowledge of some pupils is patchy. The school council is very influential, and they are rightly proud of their efforts to raise funds for charities. Pupils are very well involved beyond the school, too, both locally and globally through the Comenius project. Pupils have a good understanding of how to be healthy and safe. Their enjoyment of school is reflected in rising levels of attendance. Pupils make satisfactory progress in their basic skills, which prepares them appropriately for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory but improving. In the EYFS, Key Stage 1 and Year 6, it is good, because teachers structure lessons well and plan for enjoyable learning activities. Teaching is inconsistent in Key Stage 2, notably in mathematics. Too often, pupils are expected to spend a long time on the carpet or doing worksheets. Pupils capable of attaining higher levels are not consistently challenged. This variation leaves too much to catch up on in Year 6. The best lessons motivate all pupils to learn. A good example was seen in the 'crime' scenario involving the supposed theft of a mobile phone set up by a teacher to help pupils write a detective story. This made particularly good use of the class interactive whiteboard and other technology. Less successful lessons have lower expectations and pupils find concentration more difficult and the pace of learning drops. Teachers mark work regularly and give points for improvement, often relating to pupils' targets. In some classes, pupils are learning to assess how well they are doing in lessons. This results in a better understanding of what they must do to improve and is starting to have a positive effect on their progress. There has not yet been time for these changes to embed fully and make a real difference to standards, although some improvements are already apparent.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is monitored rigorously and the new national planning for literacy and numeracy has been embraced thoughtfully. Previous weaknesses in planning for subject progression in the 'Contexts' curriculum have contributed to past underachievement, for example in science. This has now been tackled and science attainment has improved. The school recognises that there is still more to do to make sure that the improved planning is used to accelerate pupils' progress in Key Stage 2. Staff modify their planning successfully to meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties, and this contributes to their good progress. Although planning usually identifies what more able pupils will do, this often lacks sufficient challenge and, consequently, their progress is only satisfactory. The curriculum is enriched by an excellent range of out of class activities, clubs, trips and residential visits which are much enjoyed and valued highly by pupils and their parents.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school takes exceptional care of its pupils and provides them with good support and guidance. Systems to check on the suitability of adults to work with children are extremely robust. A very careful check is kept on the risk presented by activities in and out of school. Pupils with learning difficulties are supported well and, as a result, they make good progress. Support for those who are new to learning English is well organised, so that they, too, soon gain confidence. Systems to track pupils' academic progress have improved considerably, and this is giving leaders clear information about pupils who are at risk of underachieving. This information is being used increasingly well to ensure that pupils get the extra help or challenge they need, although this has not yet had full impact on pupils' progress in Key Stage 2.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is a good leader and has high expectations for the school's development and of its pupils' capabilities. She has put in place many measures to improve standards, which are already having a beneficial effect. Good examples of these are the introduction of the system for tracking individuals' progress, effective measures which have improved attendance, and excellent systems for care and safeguarding children. Because of measures put in to Year 6 last year, writing and science standards improved in the 2008 national tests. Also a greater proportion of pupils achieved higher levels in mathematics. School self-evaluation is accurate, but is a little over-generous in some areas. The challenging targets set for pupils' attainment are not yet being met despite good progress in Year 6. This is because many pupils could not catch up on what they had missed earlier in Key Stage 2.

The senior leadership team is highly enthusiastic and committed, though mainly new and inexperienced. They and the governors are benefiting from training set up by the headteacher. The school is a highly effective example of community cohesion. There is a very wide ethnic mix; all get on well together; all are included and there is no discrimination. The governing body is highly committed to the school and its place in the community. Governors are active in school. They give good service and make sure that all resources are satisfactorily deployed.

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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 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?	3

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/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	2
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	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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
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

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	3
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?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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**

09 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Michael's CofE Primary School, Oxford, OX3 0EJ

Thank you very much for making us so welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking to you and found you very polite and well mannered. Your views and opinions gave us a lot of helpful information. We thought you might like to know more about what we found out.

Your school gives you a satisfactory education but it has been improving over the past year. Younger ones in Reception and Years 1 and 2 make better progress than those of you in Years 3 to 5. However, this is starting to change and improve. More of you have recently been doing better in English, mathematics and science. Some of you are now reaching higher levels, but still more of you could do so.

Here are a few of the things we liked most about your school.

- Your headteacher and staff take exceptionally good care of you.
- Your behaviour and attitudes to learning are excellent.
- There is a real sense of belonging to a community in your school. You all work and play together and make sure nobody is left out.
- There are lots of opportunities for you to develop into good citizens.

Here are some of the things we have suggested for improvement in your school.

- Continue to raise the standard of work in Years 3 to 6, especially in mathematics.
- Make lessons more challenging for those of you capable of getting higher levels in 'SATS'.
- Make sure all lessons in Years 3 to 6 are consistently good.

You can help by working hard to make sure you get the best from your lessons, and by doing your homework regularly.

Once again, thank you for your help during the inspection. We wish you all success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Carol Worthington

Lead Inspector