

Farnsfield St Michael's Church of England Primary (Voluntary Aided) School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134202
Local Authority	NOTTINGHAMSHIRE LA
Inspection number	316497
Inspection dates	4–5 December 2007
Reporting inspector	David Martin HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	233
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Mr Tony Walker
Date of previous school inspection	23 May 2006
School address	Branston Avenue Farnsfield Nottinghamshire NG22 8JZ
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Age group	5-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Michael's is an average sized primary school that serves Farnsfield and the villages in a wide area of the surrounding countryside. It is a largely rural area and levels of social disadvantage are relatively low, as is the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. The great majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and no pupils have English as a second language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is less than half the average, and no pupils have statements of particular need.

The school has recently appointed a permanent headteacher after a period of interim post-holders.

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 rapidly improving school that provides a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils and satisfactory value for money. The school has made good progress on all the issues from the last inspection. Therefore, in accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

The two main factors in this rapid improvement are stronger leadership and improved teaching and learning. The local authority (LA) has played a significant role in partnership with the school in improving these aspects of its work.

The appointment of an acting headteacher, seconded to the school for two terms, was crucial in providing a strategic sense of direction. By identifying priorities, planning actions and carefully monitoring and evaluating the outcomes, the school gained a renewed confidence. This planning and direction continued under the stewardship of the deputy headteacher in the interim period until the appointed permanent headteacher took up post in October 2007. The senior team and subject coordinators had their roles and responsibilities clearly defined during this time. They became empowered to drive improvement in their areas of influence and were increasingly involved in monitoring the effectiveness of practice. Governors too have come to understand their roles as critical friends to the school. They now have a much stronger understanding of how the school operates and its strengths and weaknesses.

All the teaching staff at the school have risen to the challenge of improving classroom practice. Supported by consultants and other external leading teachers, they have successfully adapted their practice to meet expectations. The way in which they have embraced the use of information and communication technology and active teaching and learning approaches is commendable. They have access to better information about the progress of pupils and use this effectively to match work increasingly well to their different abilities. This is partly due to the excellent development of data at whole school level, led by the assessment coordinator. The use of feedback and marking is significantly improved. Pupils know what is expected of them, how well they are doing and their next steps in learning. The curriculum has improved alongside classroom changes, although not all subjects are planned well enough to offer coherent and exciting programmes of study. Improvements in teaching are too recent in pupils' school experience to impact fully on test results.

The result of this improvement in provision has been a significant improvement in the standards that pupils are attaining and in their improved personal development. Recent teacher assessment at Year 2 and tests at Year 6 have shown a marked improvement, with pupils attaining at least expected levels. Higher attaining pupils are identified and planning provides opportunities for them to have a good level of challenge in many lessons. However, the school has rightly recognised the progress of higher attaining pupils as a future priority.

Pupils are cared for well on a day-to-day basis. The academic guidance that they receive has improved a great deal. As a result, the personal development of pupils is good overall. They are happy, healthy and enthusiastic learners who greatly appreciate the improvements made to their school. They are ready to accept responsibilities and greater opportunities to develop enterprise skills and contribute more widely to the community.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter Reception with knowledge and skills similar to children nationally. Through good and on occasions, excellent teaching, most children achieve well and leave Reception with standards above those expected of five-year-olds. Children learn the important skills they need to be able to read, write and use numbers most effectively. Teachers and teaching assistants reinforce these skills regularly and learning is rapid. The teaching is lively and very well planned. There is a good balance between teacher led activities and those that children choose.

Children treat their classrooms and each other with great respect, which reflects the strong personal and social programme the school offers. They feel safe and secure. Children respond exceptionally well and grow quickly into new routines, such as to work on their own during some activities. The quality of the school's work in the Foundation Stage is such that the coordinator has been identified as a leading skills teacher within the local authority.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils capable of higher levels of attainment perform to their potential.
- Make planning for foundation subjects as thorough as that seen in core subjects.
- Enhance pupils' broader experiences in terms of independent learning, enterprise skills and involvement in the community in order to prepare them fully for their future lives.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children in Reception achieve well and make good progress. At Year 2, assessment results improved in 2007 in all areas after a dip in 2006. They are above the national average in reading and mathematics and around average in writing. Results in mathematics in 2007 at higher levels were significantly above average, whilst results at higher levels in writing were not as good as in the other subjects. Test results also improved significantly at Year 6 after a dip in 2006. Standards are significantly better than the national average overall, although stronger in science and mathematics than in English. This is also true of performance at higher levels. When considering the starting points of the pupils at the end of Year 2, all pupils made satisfactory progress, including pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The school is setting increasingly challenging targets for future performance. The prior attainment of pupils on entry does vary from year to year and targets are increasingly set on the expectation that pupils will make at least expected progress from their starting points.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school is a calm and happy establishment where pupils develop good relationships with each other and with adults. Pupils of all ages are very polite and friendly towards visitors. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall but there are not enough opportunities for pupils to appreciate and value the richness of a multicultural society. A good

range of visits including residential trips, make a strong contribution to pupils' personal development.

Pupils know how to keep themselves healthy and demonstrate this through the choices they make for healthy snacks and sports. Behaviour is good and pupils understand teachers' high expectations during lessons and as they move around the school. Pupils feel safe and are confident that bullying is not a problem and adults are readily available to help them when required. Pupils in all classes enjoy learning and work hard especially in those lessons where teaching is good. Attendance is broadly average and the level of unauthorised absence is low.

Pupils make a satisfactory contribution to the school and the wider community. The newly appointed school council and playground 'buddies' are having a good impact on the quality of playtimes and the life of the school. Older pupils act confidently as monitors and librarians but their independent learning skills are less well developed. They are learning the appropriate basic skills to provide them with sound preparation for secondary education and the world of work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The school has rightly concentrated on improving the teaching and learning in literacy and numeracy. This has been successful. The pace of learning has improved, pupils are more productive in lessons and their progress has improved. Teachers have standardised their lesson planning. This includes good attention to pupils' learning styles and gives closer attention to work that matches pupils' needs. The tasks set for most groups are pitched at the right level, but the most able pupils do not always have enough challenging activities that stretch them. A greater range of teaching strategies, such as practical activities in mathematics and science, has improved pupils' progress because they find their work more interesting. Behaviour management is good and teaching assistants provide pupils who find learning difficult with the support they need to make progress.

Marking of pupils' work is more consistent and helpful. Pupils know what they are trying to achieve in English and mathematics because their targets are clear. The teachers make good use of assessment to track how well pupils perform. They have an accurate picture of their progress but pupils' presentation of work is inconsistent between classes.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum has improved and planning is comprehensive in English and mathematics. Pupils enjoy lessons and make quicker progress because their work involves enquiry or investigations, usually well matched to their abilities. Pupils were observed making good use of computers to look up facts about mountain bikes to support their work in literacy. Lessons successfully involve role-play to develop pupils' sense of empathy for people who lived during the Second World War. Lessons in the foundation subjects are not as well planned. Here, pupils make less progress because they often complete the same activities, regardless of their abilities. The school's leaders realise the curriculum needs to be broader and provide more exciting opportunities for learning. There are good plans in place to make these improvements.

Pupils take part in a wide range of additional activities that develop their team building and outdoor skills during after school clubs and residential visits to places of educational interest, such as Anglesey.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school pays close attention to the safeguarding of pupils and the level of pastoral care and welfare is of a high standard. Pupils learn in a safe and happy environment where relationships are good. The staff know pupils well and give high priority to developing their personal and social skills. The school works closely with parents and outside agencies to ensure that pupils who need extra help receive the necessary support. There are good and rigorous procedures for child protection, risk assessments and for medical and emergency aid with regular training for staff. Pupils are well supported and guided academically because the school's procedures for tracking and assessing their progress have been improved and are now good.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The seconded headteacher addressed special measures issues with a sense of urgency and a sharp focus, particularly on improving teaching and learning. The clarification of leadership roles meant that members of the senior leadership team and subject coordinators were enabled to lead effectively in their areas. The senior team and middle leaders responded enthusiastically and continued with the planned changes.

The school, with the support of the local authority (LA) has worked hard to improve teaching, learning and the tracking of pupils' progress. The school identifies pupils in danger of underachieving and employs a range of successful strategies to improve their performance. Targets now have an appropriate level of challenge for all pupils. This is particularly the case for groups, such as boys or pupils capable of attaining higher levels but who do not all currently perform as well as they might.

Managers now monitor the work of the school well and the good self-evaluation that follows leads to clear, robust action. Governors have re-defined their committee structure to involve them more closely in the work of the school and have begun to be involved in first-hand monitoring. Consequently, they are more able to hold the school to account and ask searching questions.

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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	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	3

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?	3
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?	3
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 tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
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	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

6 December 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Farnsfield St Michael's Church of England Primary (VA) School, NG22 8JZ

I am writing to tell you what we found on our most recent visit to your school. You may know that inspectors in May 2006 decided that your school needed extra help and regular visits in order to improve. You will be delighted to know that we no longer feel this to be necessary. We will not need to visit the school again for some time, but will miss seeing you at work and play!

Your school has improved in so many ways in the last year. Mr. Mansfield helped the staff to decide what needed to be done in order to make lessons more interesting so that you could learn as much as possible. The teachers and other adults have worked hard to make sure that this happened. They now explain what you are learning and make sure that you have work that is at the right level for you. You are involved in knowing your targets and the comments teachers' make in your books help you to improve your work. You were quick to tell us about these improvements and are very proud to belong to the school. You are also well looked after in school and are developing into caring, pleasant and polite young people. Mr Coyle helped to keep up the good work after Mr. Mansfield left in the summer.

Mr. Walker, your new headteacher, is delighted to be in charge of such an improving school. He has many ideas to make your school even better in the future. After two days watching you work, we have tried to help by suggesting a few things that would make the school even better. We have asked teachers to provide extra help so that those who are able to achieve the very highest levels can do so. We would also like to see the planning for your work in all lessons to be as good as it is in literacy and numeracy. We also think that you could now take even more responsibility for your learning and take part in an even wider range of activities that will help to prepare you for the future.

In conclusion, I would like to thank you, on behalf of all the inspectors who have visited your school, for the help you have given us. You have talked to us in the classroom and playground as well as in meetings with the school council. Everyone has been very friendly, polite and kind. We would like to wish all of you, and your school, every possible success in the future. Have a lovely Christmas - I hope the many exciting events at school in the next two weeks are great fun!

Yours sincerely,

David Martin

Her Majesty's Inspector