

# St Michael's Catholic Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	104377
<b>Local Authority</b>	Wolverhampton
<b>Inspection number</b>	324033
<b>Inspection dates</b>	10–11 March 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Don Mason

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 aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	303
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>	Rosalie Watkins
<b>Headteacher</b>	Catherine Williams
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	30 November 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>	Telford Gardens Merry Hill Wolverhampton WV3 7LE

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	10–11 March 2009
<b>Inspection number</b>	324033

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

The majority of pupils are from White British families. About a quarter come from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average overall but varies considerably from year to year. The Early Years Foundation Stage provision is for children in Nursery and Reception. The school has received Investors in People status, Healthy School award and the Sportsmark.

Last term, the school temporarily took over the running of the before-and after- school club following concerns raised about the privately run provision. The outcome of the current, independent investigation is expected in the near future.

## 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. It has made significant improvement since the last inspection and enjoys the strong support of most parents. One parent summed up the views of many, stating, 'We are very happy with the teaching and care provided for our two children at St. Michael's.' The pupils are cooperative, polite, friendly and sometimes highly articulate. They feel safe and secure and clearly enjoy their time in school. This good personal development is partly a consequence of the very good pastoral support they receive from adults in the school.

Children enter the Nursery with levels of attainment that are broadly in line with those expected for their age. They make good progress and enter Year 1 working securely within the nationally expected levels. Progress from Year 1 to Year 6 is good and standards at the end of Year 6 are above average overall. This represents good achievement. It is the result of the school's successful work to improve the quality of teaching, curriculum provision and, crucially, the procedures for checking pupils' progress. The gap between boys' and girls' achievement is narrowing because of the close attention the school now gives to checking the progress of every pupil to ensure that they make at least expected progress and that those in danger of falling behind are provided with appropriate support. Despite this general improvement, the attainment, particularly of more able pupils, remains inconsistent between subjects and from year to year. Standards in writing and mathematics for these pupils still lag behind those in reading especially at the end of Year 2. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is a strength of the school. As a result, they make as much progress as their peers, and sometimes better.

One characteristic of the good teaching is that teachers are now using the detailed information they have about their pupils' achievements to plan appropriate work for the majority of pupils. Pupils enjoy their lessons and the interesting activities provided. The academic advice offered is satisfactory. It is not better than this because it is mainly concerned with letting the pupils know that they have understood the purpose of the lesson rather than giving them clear advice about their achievements and what they need to do to improve further. The many attractive displays around the school are an indication of the good curriculum in place. It is well enriched by a wide range of visits, visitors and special events and the pupils are enthusiastic about taking advantage of a good range of after-school activities. The curriculum makes a particularly strong contribution to pupils' understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy and the importance of exercise. Pupils make a good contribution to the community, for example through the work of the school council, through parish and community events, and taking on responsibilities in school such as play leaders and charity fundraising.

The headteacher provides good leadership for the staff who work well together to bring about improvements. Senior staff successfully support their colleagues in a variety of ways. However, they have too few opportunities to undertake formal monitoring activities to develop their leadership skills and check the impact that improvement measures in their areas of responsibility have on pupils' achievement.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

The Early Years Foundation Stage provision, particularly in the Nursery, is a strength of the school. As a result of the very good organisation and good planning, there is a calm but

purposeful atmosphere in which children are happy and engaged in their activities. The children are confident and able to work independently or with others, taking turns and sharing resources well. A good range of activities is provided inside and out and children have many opportunities to pursue their own interests as well as working with an adult. Adult-led activities are well planned and staff extend the children's learning effectively through effective questioning. In Nursery, a sandwich-making activity, thoroughly enjoyed by the children, enhanced their understanding of number and shape as well as developing their speaking and listening skills. Assessment procedures have been improved but staff recognise that there is more to be done to consolidate recent improvement in children's achievement. The fact that children were encouraged to wear gloves when handling the 'ice balloons' is an example of the close attention given to promoting children's welfare. As a result of this good provision and good leadership, children make good progress and are well prepared for the next stage in their education. The very small number of children who sometimes attend the before-and after-school club are provided for satisfactorily.

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

- Ensure that the progress made by pupils, especially the more able, in reading, writing and mathematics is consistently good between subjects and from year to year.
- Improve the advice given to pupils about their achievements and next steps in learning.
- Provide more opportunities for senior staff to be involved in formal monitoring activities to enhance their leadership skills and to check the impact of improvement measures on pupils' achievement.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Achievement and standards are good overall. The results of national tests show that standards in reading and writing, at the end of Year 2, have improved in the last two years and were significantly above average in 2008. Standards at the end of Year 2 are good overall despite attainment in mathematics being only average. More able pupils attain less well in mathematics and in writing than in reading. Year 6 national test results demonstrate that standards, although above average, vary considerably from year to year and between subjects; for example, in 2007, the attainment of more able pupils was significantly higher in mathematics than in English while in 2008, this situation was reversed. The school recognises the need to address this issue and ensure that improvements, particularly related to the achievement of more able pupils, are consistently built upon. Standards in writing have risen as a result of the improvement work undertaken, and the differences in boys' and girls' attainment are gradually being ironed out because of the close monitoring of pupil progress.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils from all backgrounds feel valued in this inclusive school and parents of minority ethnic pupils sometimes visit to talk about their faith and customs. These contributions enhance the cultural development of all pupils most effectively. Pupils show high levels of self-confidence and self-esteem because they are praised for their efforts and adults take time to listen to their thoughts and opinions. Pupils behave very well, although those who are new to the school sometimes take a little time to respond to the high expectations of the staff. The pupils' good understanding of healthy

lifestyles is reflected in their choices of school meals and packed lunches and their enthusiastic participation in sporting activities. Most pupils leave the school with good personal and academic skills which will serve them well in the future. However, attendance has stubbornly remained only satisfactory for some years.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Good teaching ensures that pupils' achievement is good in all year groups. Lessons are presented in a lively manner, making good use of computer whiteboards, and the pace is good. Teachers make effective use of a wide range of high quality resources and provide activities which interest and motivate the pupils. Usually there is an appropriate balance between the length of time the teacher talks to the whole class and the amount of time pupils have to work on their activities, although sometimes teachers talk for too long. Lessons overall are well planned. However, in some lessons, the planning is minimal and does not identify enough challenge for more able pupils. The best lessons make good links between subjects, provide practical activities and enable pupils to develop their writing and mathematic skills. For example, pupils in Year 4 made sandwiches, tasted them and investigated shop-bought ones, using laptops to record their findings, thereby covering work in several subjects and enhancing their understanding of healthy lifestyles.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The good curriculum has a positive impact on pupils' attainment in the basic skills and in information and communication technology, in their personal development and their understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy. An exciting scheme involving the use of palmtop computers in Years 5 and 6 has been on hold because of the need to train new staff but is now underway once again. A very promising start has been made in a new initiative to give pupils experience of a number of modern foreign languages. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are particularly well catered for because of the effective support provided by conscientious teaching assistants. Gifted and talented pupils have been identified and encouraged to enter competitions and to take advantage of opportunities available in their local area. Visits from Aston Villa football coaches, African drummers and lessons on money management are examples of the very good curriculum enrichment which motivate pupils. The good range of after-school clubs includes a newspaper club which a group of more able pupils have been invited to join. Often, in subjects other than English and mathematics, the same task is set for all pupils when the more able would benefit from greater challenge. The before- and after-school club provides pupils with a good range of interesting activities, indoors and out, which contribute well to their learning and enjoyment. The pupils are safe and secure, and older and younger pupils play well together.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

Pupils thrive because of the very good care they receive from adults who know them very well. The school has strong links with a variety of outside agencies which support pupils' personal development and well-being. The care provided for vulnerable pupils and those with learning

difficulties and/or disabilities is exemplary. The requirements for safeguarding pupils are fully met. Attendance is closely monitored and, while it is promoted through awards and special assemblies and close links with the educational welfare officer, the school does not yet have a system to highlight on the first day any pupils absence for follow up purposes. The academic guidance provided for pupils is satisfactory and the use of pupil targets is developing. Marking is mainly congratulatory or tells the pupils that they have achieved the purpose of the lesson. The best marking is to be found in writing where pupils are more frequently given clear advice about their achievements and what they have to do to improve further.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

A collegiate style of leadership is in place in which the headteacher chairs regular meetings of the senior management team and where responsibilities and actions are allocated as necessary. This approach ensures that senior staff have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and what needs to be done to bring about further improvement. It has also mitigated the impact of staffing reductions and the long-term absence of staff. Monitoring and evaluation activities are successfully carried out, mainly by the headteacher, and are informed by the good information the school now has about pupil progress. However, partly because of budgetary constraints, senior teachers do not have sufficient time or opportunity to carry out formal monitoring activities to look at provision and standards in their areas of responsibility. Less experienced teachers feel well supported and are appreciative of the career development opportunities made available to them.

The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion at the local, national and global level. An example of this is the way the school follows through its charity work so that pupils learn about the people and the country the funds are going to. While it enjoys the wholehearted support of the majority of parents, a significant minority express concern about a range of issues. The school accepts that there is more it could do to allay concerns. Governors are proud of the school and have provided strong support in dealing with some difficult issues. The experienced chair has a good understanding of assessment data and is effective in helping the school to move forward. The improvement since the last inspection and the positive response of the staff to new demands and initiatives provide evidence of the school's good capacity for further improvement.



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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

<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	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

<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	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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

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

12 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Michael's Catholic Primary School, Wolverhampton WV3 7LE

My colleagues and I really enjoyed our visit to inspect your school. Thank you for being so friendly and helpful. We particularly enjoyed visiting your classrooms, seeing the work you were doing and talking to you about your school. We found that your school has improved well since the last inspection and now provides you with a good education.

Things we found out about your school.

- You make good progress in your work, and standards at the end of Year 6 are above average.
- You behave very well in school. You enjoy your lessons and get on well with your teachers.
- Teachers have been checking your work more frequently and are using the information to plan activities which have helped you to make better progress.
- The adults in school take good care of you so that you feel safe and enjoy your education.
- The headteacher and adults in school are still making changes which are improving the school and helping you to make better progress.

Things we have asked your school to do now to improve further.

- Make sure that those of you who sometimes find your work easy make better progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Tell you more about how you can do better in your work and help older children understand how they can reach higher levels.
- Give senior teachers and subject leaders more opportunities to check how well the school is doing in those areas for which they are responsible.

You can help your teachers by continuing to work hard, behaving well and always doing your best. A few of you could help by coming to school as often as you can so that you can make the most of the opportunities available to you.

We would like to wish you all the best of luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

Don Mason

Lead inspector