

St Michaels Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104656
Local Authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	324085
Inspection date	30 April 2009
Reporting inspector	Dee Brigstock

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	282
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	Mrs J Riley
Headteacher	Mr A Hegarty
Date of previous school inspection	10 July 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Guion Street off Boaler Street Liverpool Merseyside L6 9DU

Age group	3–11
Inspection date	30 April 2009
Inspection number	324085

Telephone number
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the causes of the school's success in raising pupils' achievement, how well the school promotes community cohesion and the impact of monitoring on the quality of teaching and learning.

Evidence was collected from observing lessons and pupils' work, and from a scrutiny of the school's documentation and progress data. Inspectors also analysed the parent questionnaires and met with senior leaders, groups of children, staff and governors.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self- evaluation were not justified and these have been included, where appropriate, in the report.

Description of the school

St Michael's Catholic Primary School is a large primary school serving an area of considerable economic and social disadvantage. The proportion of pupils eligible to claim free school meals is high. Most pupils are White British but the proportion of pupils from other ethnic backgrounds is above average, as is the proportion of pupils whose first language is not English. Several of these pupils are refugees and asylum seekers. An above average proportion of pupils joins and leaves the school throughout the school year. Children's skills on entry are low compared with those of children of similar age. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The school has the Healthy School's Award.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

St Michael's is an outstanding school which operates in challenging circumstances. Pupils thrive in its nurturing atmosphere and parents have great confidence that the school values their children and keeps them safe. The school has many outstanding features, notably its leadership and management. The key to its success is the uncompromising search for improvement driven by the inspirational leadership of the headteacher. Staff know they are valued and have a genuine say in school improvement. Leaders have a determination, drive and passion to raise pupils' self-esteem and achievement and to improve the way they carry out their own work. As a result, high pupil and staff expectations of just how well pupils can do has led to a year-on-year rise in standards. The school provides excellent care, guidance and support to all pupils.

Children's skills on entry are low, particularly in language and communication. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage in developing speaking and listening skills and in learning to concentrate and work cooperatively. Progress is outstanding overall. Pupils make at least good progress consistently throughout the school. This accelerates to excellent progress in Years 5 and 6 where there is some inspirational teaching, so pupils' achievement is outstanding overall. Pupils with learning difficulties, those at an early stage of learning English, and newly admitted pupils all make excellent progress. One group of pupils does not match this pattern; these are the pupils who are persistent absentees. Although the school works hard to encourage good attendance, there are a small number of pupils whose irregular attendance and lack of punctuality holds back their learning.

Achievement has been exceptionally good over several years. Standards rise to broadly average in Year 2, attainment in mathematics being better than in reading and writing. However, standards in Year 2 are rising year-on-year. By Year 6, standards are well above average in English, mathematics and science, reflecting excellent achievement in all three subjects. The school has accessed guidance and support to raise levels of writing for the higher attaining pupils. It is clear from the school's own records and from pupils' books that this has been a resounding success. A well above average proportion of pupils are now attaining the higher levels in Year 6 national tests in English and mathematics. Standards have risen significantly since the previous inspection. Procedures for analysing progress are effective in identifying pupils who need additional support in learning and future work is planned effectively to meet their needs. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have very concise, measurable and achievable targets for improvement. These are regularly reviewed so these pupils achieve success, encouraging them to progress more.

Teaching and learning are outstanding overall and a major factor in enabling pupils to achieve exceptionally well, although, as the school agrees, there is still some room for improvement in the way staff inform pupils on how well they are doing in their work to help them improve further. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 can say exactly what level they are working at and what they need to do to reach higher levels of attainment, but pupils in other year groups are not so well informed about national curriculum levels. However, teachers' marking is very precise and suggests practical ways for pupils to improve their work. Teachers' management of pupils is excellent and lessons proceed at a good pace. Typically, parents comment very positively on how approachable staff are to them. Lesson planning meets the needs of different abilities and teachers use information and communication technology well to support teaching and learning. The experienced and well-trained support staff make a good contribution to pupils' learning.

Pupils' personal development and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. The school is a very harmonious community in which pupils from diverse ethnic backgrounds show mutual respect and work very well together. This reflects the school's outstanding commitment to promoting equality of opportunity. Pupils' thorough enjoyment of school is reflected in their attentiveness and participation in lessons. They behave exceptionally well in work and at play. Pupils are involved well in improving their local community. For example, they are working in partnership with local residents and the Council to make a local subway safer. They develop a good appreciation of different cultural traditions and beliefs within their own community. Their understanding of different faiths and cultures further afield, although planned, is at an earlier stage of development.

The good curriculum promotes pupils' basic skills extremely well. It is adapted well for different groups of pupils. It ensures that they develop an exceptionally good understanding of how to stay safe and healthy. The curriculum is enriched through several visits to places of interest which aid pupils' first-hand learning effectively. For example, pupils talk with enjoyment about a visit to a city farm. Pupils' skills in using computers are good. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities which pupils enjoy. A current school priority is to strengthen provision in music and this is furthering pupils' knowledge of music from other cultures well.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Procedures for vetting staff and safeguarding learners meet government requirements. Several parents particularly praised the way that staff work with them to ensure that their children are well looked after. They also appreciate the friendly atmosphere and the fact that a breakfast club has been set up to help working parents.

The school has much to celebrate. Leaders have an accurate view of where the school is and how to move its provision on further. Changes to systems including the monitoring of teaching and learning, teaching styles, the buildings and the management of pupils' learning in the past few years are moving the school on at a rapid pace towards even higher goals. The staff and governors have faced these challenges head on and with great success. Consequently, the school is in an excellent position to sustain and escalate improvement still further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make good progress across all areas of learning and, by the end of Reception, most meet the standards expected of them for their age, although their skills in communication, language and literacy lag behind other areas of learning. Good teaching and strong teamwork ensure that children become more confident. Staff plan a wide range of interesting and challenging activities, indoors and outside, and ensure a good balance between independent activities and those led by adults. Staff are skilled at questioning children and developing their understanding. Good quality observations and assessments mean that staff know the children really well and keep a good track of their progress.

Nursery children quickly become engrossed in activities when they arrive. Their spoken language is poor on entry to the Nursery but they soon become accustomed to the routines and their personal development is promoted extremely well. Work in the Reception classes builds very well on that started in the Nursery. Direct teaching and small group activities enable key skills to be taught effectively. This was evident when children and their teacher took part in enjoyable role-play, complete with boat, in the role of 'Mr Gumpy.

Children are extremely well cared for. The way staff seek out opportunities to engage with children and praise their contributions, ensures that children feel happy and secure. Very good

attention is paid to ensuring children's health and safety. The emphasis on children's personal and social development has a strong impact on their learning, enjoyment, and ability to form constructive friendships.

Good leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage ensure consistency and set a clear direction for the staff. Best practice is shared and children's progress and development is tracked diligently.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide all pupils with the knowledge to know exactly how well they are doing to help them improve further.
- Improve the attendance and punctuality of the small number of pupils who are persistently absent from school.

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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?	1
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	1

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?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

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	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
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

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1
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?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
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**

Thank you very much for making us welcome when we came to inspect your school. You go to an excellent school. You make excellent progress and reach higher standards in English, mathematics and science than most pupils in other schools and are very well prepared for your next schools.

Your behaviour is excellent and you work very hard. We know you help the school to run smoothly and that you get on extremely well together. It was good to see you enjoying playtimes and lunchtimes and eating healthily.

We found that provision in the Nursery and Reception classes is good. When we visited classes in Years 1 to 6, we also saw that the staff teach you very well and provide interesting things for you to do and learn. The staff look after you extremely well. You know they will help you if you have any problems.

Your headteacher and other leaders lead the school exceptionally well and are always making improvements to your school. We have asked your teachers to make sure that they always tell you exactly how well you are doing and what you can do to improve even further. A few of you do not come to school often enough or are often late and this holds back your learning. We have asked your headteacher to encourage those few pupils to come to school more frequently.

We both enjoyed visiting your school and reading some of the fantastic descriptions that you have written in your writing books in Years 5 and 6. They were outstanding. We were impressed by how much involvement you have in helping to keep your community safe and how much say you have in improving your playgrounds. Keep up the good work!