

St Michael's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106478
Local Authority	Wigan
Inspection number	324410
Inspection dates	27–28 April 2009
Reporting inspector	Ms Elizabeth Godman

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.
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)	201
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr D Benson
Headteacher	Mrs Janet Woods
Date of previous school inspection	July 2006
School address	Leigh Road Atherton Manchester
Telephone number	M46 OPA
Fax number	01942 883118
Email address	01942 891108 enquiries@admin.howebridge.wigan.sch.uk

Age group	4–11
Inspection date(s)	27–28 April 2009
Inspection number	324410

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 13 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents, including policies, the school development plan, minutes of governors' meetings, the school's monitoring records and analyses of pupils' attainment and progress. Inspectors analysed 56 questionnaires returned by parents.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- The progress pupils make and how effectively they learn in lessons, in particular, in English at all ages and the more able pupils at Key Stage 1.
- The outcomes of provision on pupils' personal, social and cultural development.
- The impact of outdoor provision on learning and development in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- The quality of teaching and the use of assessment.
- The effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels, including governors.

Information about the school

This average-sized school serves a socially and economically mixed area. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. The school provides for the Early Years Foundation Stage in one Reception class.

A new deputy headteacher joined the school in September 2008. The school holds the Basic Skills Quality Mark, the Healthy Schools Award and the Eco School Silver Award.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

St Michael's is an outstanding school. The clarity of vision and commitment of leaders and managers at all levels, including governors, are central to communicating the school's high ambition. No-one is complacent and all the staff are constantly seeking ways in which to improve the school further.

During their time at the school all groups of pupils make outstanding progress, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, because their needs are carefully identified and they receive very good support. More able pupils are challenged and stretched and so progress very well, particularly at Key Stage 2. The quality of pupils' learning in lessons is exceptional. Pupils make outstanding progress in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy, reaching above average standards. These skills, their high attendance and exceptional personal and social skills prepare them extremely well for the future.

Pupils' consistently mature and thoughtful behaviour creates a very positive and secure atmosphere in school. They think deeply about others, eagerly take on responsibilities at all levels throughout the school and contribute much to the school and to the immediate local community, where their involvement is greatly appreciated. Pupils' experience of different cultures and religions is enhanced through the curriculum, visits and visitors, but they have fewer opportunities to learn alongside children from other ethnic and cultural groups. This limits pupils' opportunities to contribute to the wider community.

A key feature of the school's excellent teaching is the outstanding use of assessment. All pupils, from the youngest to the oldest, assess for themselves how well they have done and how they could improve their work. This stimulates hard concentration and very rapid learning. The great strength of the school's outstanding curriculum is in the way every development is carefully considered and provision is designed and modified to match the needs of each pupil exactly. Outstanding care, guidance and support secure a very warm and stimulating atmosphere, which is highly motivating to pupils and they say they feel very safe and secure in school. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, accommodation restrictions limit children's access to outdoor areas and opportunities to use their learning outside, although the staff do ensure access to outdoor learning every day.

Value for money is outstanding. The school's continuing high performance and improvement since the last inspection, the accuracy of its self-evaluation and its proven effectiveness in identifying and rigorously pursuing areas for improvement give it outstanding capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Extend pupils' understanding of different cultures in the area by:
 - increasing the opportunities they have to meet and learn with children from a range of different cultural and religious backgrounds.
- Increase the opportunities for outdoor learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - improving the quality of the facilities for outdoor learning
 - increasing children's access to learning outdoors in the different areas.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 6 has been significantly above the national average for 11-year-olds over a number of years in English, mathematics and science. The current Year 6 pupils are on track to meet their challenging targets. From starting points which are broadly in line with those typical of four-year-olds, overall progress is outstanding for all groups of pupils. Pupils learn highly effectively in lessons. All pupils sustain very high levels of concentration and perseverance with tasks. They relish tackling a challenge and love talking about their ideas with a partner, often showing very sophisticated thinking and reasoning in their conversations. Pupils are highly committed to succeeding, especially in English and mathematics, where they seize opportunities to refine and improve their work. Pupils' enjoyment and achievement are outstanding.

Pupils say that they feel very safe in school. Behaviour around school is excellent and pupils take great care of one another. Pupils have excellent knowledge of a healthy lifestyle. They are especially keen to participate in physical activities, including walking and cycling to school, sports clubs and 'wake up and shake up' sessions. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding. The school council makes a significant contribution to the school's work and has a strong influence on decisions about the school's work, for example, fundraising for a partner school in Namibia. The 'eco-rangers' organise themselves exceptionally well and have made significant improvements to the immediate environment by litter-picking and planting wild flowers. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of other cultures through the Namibian links and through the different subjects of the curriculum, but fewer direct experiences to extend their understanding by learning alongside children from different cultural and ethnic groups.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	1
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	1
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	1
How well do pupils behave?	1
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	1
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	2
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	1
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	1

How effective is the provision?

All the staff have a very good knowledge of the pupils and what they need to learn next to secure very rapid progress. Excellent teaching is underpinned by outstanding use of assessment. Teachers have very high expectations of the pupils. They plan lessons with varied activities and work to challenge pupils at all levels of attainment. Classroom organisation is excellent and lessons move along at a rapid pace. This secures pupils' interest and eagerness to learn and their outstanding behaviour. There are very good opportunities for pupils to talk with one another and to pose increasingly sophisticated questions to their peers about their work.

The outstanding curriculum provides a very secure grounding in the basic skills of literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT) and pupils make excellent progress. The curriculum provides a broad experience in the other subjects also and encourages pupils to use their skills, to research and think for themselves and to solve problems. The curriculum is enriched and extended by a variety of links, for example, Year 5 pupils enjoy learning science in a neighbouring high school greatly and artists in school enhance pupils' experiences and skills in using a variety of media to colourful effect. The care which adults show for pupils and their very good relationships with one another mean that adults provide excellent role models to the pupils. The school works well with families and many outside agencies to support all pupils, including those with additional learning needs or in challenging circumstances.

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher leads the school in setting ambitious and challenging targets and has highly-rigorous monitoring and evaluation systems to identify any weaker areas in pupils' learning. Key to the school's success is the rapid and effective way in which it intervenes to improve provision where any weakness is identified. The steps taken to tackle the weakness are then carefully evaluated by the staff and governors to prove their effectiveness and improve further. Leaders at all levels, including those newer to the school, are highly engaged in this and are a strong and highly effective team. Plans for improvement are thorough and rigorous and well-understood and implemented by all. The school is highly effective in promoting equality and tackling discrimination. This is seen in the exceptional progress made by all pupils, with no variations between different groups, and in the high degree of respect that pupils show for others. The school promotes community cohesion well. Pupils' understanding of the school and immediate community is outstanding, but there are some gaps, recognised by the school, in pupils' opportunities to learn with children from different cultures in the wider community. The school has plans to attend to this. Safeguarding procedures are highly effective and pupils' and adults' health and safety are at the heart of the school's work.

Governors are very knowledgeable about the work of the school, highly involved in setting priorities and use their expertise well in financial, premises and curriculum matters. They consult well with staff, parents and pupils and regularly hold the school to account for its work. The school communicates well with parents and is eager to support and involve all parents, but leaders think there is more to do to engage every parent regularly in supporting their child's learning. Partnerships with other schools and agencies are highly effective in contributing to the curriculum and teaching and so in enriching the opportunities provided for pupils.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1

The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children join the Reception class with skills often below those expected for their age. Their progress is consistently good and often outstanding, particularly in communication, language and literacy, and in personal, social and emotional development. Children take part in everything with great enthusiasm, for example, when they examine a patient in the 'doctor's surgery'. They are happily independent and are very confident to tackle challenges, such as reading their writing to the class. Children behave exceptionally well and respond very swiftly to instructions.

The welcoming and stimulating environment provides varied and imaginative activities that meet the needs of children extremely well. Assessment is highly effective and adults have a strong understanding of how young children learn. For example, as children play, adults talk with them and extend their understanding. The staff take great care of the children to ensure their health and safety. Interesting and exciting teaching ensures children are highly eager to learn. The school has good quality plans to improve access to outdoor learning.

Leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage are outstanding. The staff are continuously striving for improvement and manage priorities very effectively. Records, policies and procedures are well-maintained and ensure safe and efficient management. Highly effective partnerships between the staff, parents, children and external agencies ensure a very happy and productive experience for the children.

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school, frequently commenting that this is an excellent school, with helpful and approachable staff. The vast majority feel that the school is led exceptionally well. Most feel that their child enjoys school all of the time and are very pleased with their child's progress. This includes parents of

children with a learning difficulty and/or disability. A very small minority express some concerns about behaviour or work set for pupils to do at home. The inspectors could find no evidence to uphold these views.

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Michael's CE Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. If a parent has more than one child at the school, we ask them to record an answer against all the questions, for each of their children.

The inspection team received 56 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 167 parents and carers registered at the school.

	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Never
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	49	7	0	0

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

- Attainment:** the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
- Progress:** the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
- Achievement:** the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, training or development. This may refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding or desired attributes. Attributes include qualities or personal competencies which are important to the development of the pupil; for example personal, social, cultural, emotional or health.
- Capacity to improve:** the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
- Leadership and management:** the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.



29 April 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Michael's Church of England Primary School, Howe Bridge, Atherton, M46 0PA

Thank you very much for the welcome you gave me and my colleague when we came to inspect your school and to all of you who spoke to us so politely and clearly in lessons or around the school. A particular thank you goes to the school council and eco-rangers who talked to us so well about all the things you are doing to help the school and the community to be safer and healthier.

St Michael's is an outstanding school, which is led extremely well by your headteacher, staff and governors. You make outstanding progress and your concentration and hard work in lessons are exceptional. This is because your teachers know you very well and plan work to challenge you. Even the youngest children in Reception assess how well they have done a piece of work and how to improve it. The way in which you talk to one another about your learning is impressive. This helps the oldest of you to use some very sophisticated language in your speaking and writing. We found, too, that the curriculum is just right for you, because the staff think very carefully about activities that you will enjoy and help to develop and use the important skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT. We found also that the staff take excellent care of you and this is helping you to develop as mature, sensible and responsible citizens.

We have asked your headteacher, the staff and governors to do two things to make the school even better for you. These are to:

- give you more opportunities to meet people from different cultures and religions
- improve the outdoor area for children in the Reception class.

You can help by continuing to come to school as regularly as you do, by keeping up the hard work and by continuing to be so happy and helpful in school.

I wish you every success for the future.

Liz Godman
Lead inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.