

# St Michael's RC Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118756
<b>Local Authority</b>	Medway
<b>Inspection number</b>	326886
<b>Inspection dates</b>	19–20 May 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Jane Chesterfield

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)	406
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>	C Baker
<b>Headteacher</b>	Madeleine Murphy
<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>	Hills Terrace Chatham ME4 6PX
<b>Telephone number</b>	01634 337420
<b>Fax number</b>	01634 407445

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

The school is much larger than average. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and who speak English as an additional language are very high compared with national figures. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above the national average, though the proportion with statements of special educational needs is below average. Pupil mobility at the school is very high, and many pupils who are new to learning English arrive at different stages of the school. The school offers Early Years Foundation Stage provision in its Nursery and Reception classes. Childcare is offered before and after school by an independent provider. The headteacher had been in post for one year and the deputy headteacher for one month at the time of the inspection.

## 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 RC Primary is a satisfactory school. It is highly regarded by pupils and parents. 'There is a very dedicated team at St Michael's that puts the children first,' commented one parent, while another said that 'staff are approachable, friendly, listen and take all queries seriously.' Relationships are very good at all levels and, as a result, pupils feel secure and want to come to school. Their personal development and well-being are good, nurtured by good quality pastoral care. Pupils are well-behaved and mix happily with others whose backgrounds are different from their own. These qualities add to the friendly family ethos which parents value so much and which all staff work hard to promote.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher, although relatively new to their posts, have a good grasp of the school's strengths and areas for development, and understand that raising pupils' achievement and standards is their most pressing priority. Most pupils who enter the school in the Early Years Foundation Stage have a level of skills which is very low for their age. In addition, the frequency with which pupils leave and join the school influences and changes attainment in all year groups. Given these circumstances, and pupils' satisfactory achievement, standards are below average in English, mathematics and science. Those pupils who are learning English as an additional language or who have speech and language difficulties make similar progress to their classmates.

Much work has been done this year to improve teaching and learning in order to raise achievement and standards, particularly in literacy and numeracy. The school has received intensive support from the local authority which is beginning to pay dividends. For example, improved systems for tracking pupils' progress are helping staff to identify those who need extra support. The school is well aware that more work remains to be done in ensuring that teachers have a consistent approach to pupils' learning in the classroom. Teaching is only satisfactory overall, because of these inconsistencies. All teachers have very positive relationships with their classes and manage pupils' behaviour well. However, lessons are not always planned effectively to meet the needs of all learners, particularly those learning English as additional language. Neither is there enough pace in lessons and sufficient challenge in tasks to involve pupils actively in their learning, which means that they are often passive in class.

Pupils receive satisfactory academic guidance to help them improve their work. Target setting is systematic, and there are some good examples of teachers' marking that helps pupils understand the next steps in their learning. Nevertheless, this good practice is not consistent across all classes. The school has begun work to improve its curriculum, which is satisfactory, by increasing links between subjects to generate more excitement and interest for pupils. However, the school does not fully exploit its provision for information and communication technology (ICT) so that pupils use their ICT skills regularly in other subjects.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher have worked very effectively with the local authority over the last year to set a clear direction for the school and to build a leadership team for the future. Subject leaders are developing their role and have made a good start. They are keen to become involved in all aspects of monitoring and evaluating their areas of responsibility, but this work is still at the early stages of development. The governors carry out their responsibilities effectively. They are supportive of the school and the hard work done by the staff, and have a clear understanding of the task that lies ahead in order to raise achievement and standards. Given all these factors, the school has a satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 3

Children make satisfactory progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Nevertheless, given the very low level of children's attainment when they first enter the Nursery, standards remain well below average at the end of Reception. Children achieve best in their personal, social and emotional and physical development. As a result of the good provision for children's welfare, their personal development and well-being are good. Staff build positive relationships with parents, which help children settle quickly and feel at home. Parents are very happy with the Nursery and Reception classes, and enjoy the chance to get involved, for example through the 'stay and play' sessions. The staff create a positive and welcoming environment where children are able to develop their independence and learn to relate well to others.

Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are satisfactory. Monitoring of pupils' progress is thorough and is used to inform future planning. Improved tracking systems are showing evidence of improved progress this year. Provision is effectively planned and covers all areas of learning, though it is relatively more successful in the Nursery than in the Reception classes. For example, planning is more detailed in the Nursery, and has a more focused team approach. Where there are shortcomings in provision, children do not always have enough opportunities to practise their speaking and listening skills, nor enough direction in learning language and forming letters. These missed opportunities sometimes limit the speed with which the children develop their understanding in literacy and numeracy.

### What the school should do to improve further

- increase the amount of pace and challenge in lessons to involve pupils more actively in their learning and help them make swifter progress
- ensure that lesson activities meet the needs of all pupils, particularly those learning English as an additional language, in order to raise achievement and standards
- increase the opportunities for pupils to use their ICT skills regularly throughout the curriculum
- increase the effectiveness of subject leaders by making sure they have the opportunity to monitor and evaluate the strategies used to raise achievement and standards in their areas.

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

Achievement is satisfactory. The school's assessment information shows that standards are gradually beginning to improve, so that more pupils across the school are reaching levels appropriate to their age. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2, reaching below average standards in reading, writing and mathematics by end of Year 2. Many are new to learning English and those who arrive from abroad often have less experience of formal education at this age. There is a similar picture in Years 3 to 6, where pupils reach below average standards in English, mathematics and science by the time they leave the school, making satisfactory progress from their starting points.

Pupils generally perform better in reading than in writing, mathematics and science. The areas that pupils find most difficult in mathematics and science, such as understanding of ideas,

solving problems and undertaking investigations, are those most affected by a lack of language skills. While some lessons tackle these shortcomings effectively by involving pupils actively in their learning, this is not true of all.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Thanks to the inclusive ethos of the school, pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good. Within this caring and close knit community, pupils feel safe and valued. Their cultural development is satisfactory, but they lack a full insight into life in multi-faith, modern Britain. Pupils enjoy coming to school and their behaviour is good. One pupil commented, 'We know how to stick together and respect one another,' and this awareness is reflected in the care and consideration they show for others. In class, pupils respond well to staff and work quietly on their tasks.

Pupils enjoy opportunities to take on responsibility and make a good contribution to the school and local community. Older pupils are happy to help look after younger ones in the playground at lunchtime, for example, and the school council takes its role very seriously. Members of the council have been actively involved in raising awareness of the need for good attendance. Their work has had a positive impact on the recent improvement in attendance levels, which are now in line with the national average. Pupils have a good understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle, reflected in the school's Healthy Schools Award, and show a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe. Their good social skills, together with their satisfactory achievement in literacy, numeracy and ICT, mean that they are adequately prepared for the next stage in their education.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

There is a clear focus in the school on spreading good practice in teaching and learning and eradicating inconsistencies between classes. All staff manage behaviour well in lessons and have good relationships with their pupils. As a result, pupils are cooperative and ready to learn. In some lessons, good use is made of additional adults in class, and of resources such as the interactive whiteboards to support pupils' learning, but this is not consistently the case. In particular, resources such as visual aids, for example, are not used well enough to support pupils who are learning English as additional language. Teachers often talk for too long without involving pupils and set work that is not targeted closely enough at their individual needs. These weaknesses mean that teaching lacks pace and energy, and pupils are not actively involved in their own learning.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum is satisfactory. The school has focused closely on developing literacy and numeracy over the last year, but has also begun to introduce a commercial scheme designed to increase creativity and links across the curriculum. As this approach is new, its impact has not yet been formally evaluated. For the same reason, the scheme has not yet been sufficiently well adapted to meet the needs of the pupils, or place greater emphasis on practical activity and independent learning.

Good work has been done to increase opportunities for literacy in other subjects, and this is beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' writing skills. The school has identified ICT as an area for development, as it recognises that pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop their skills within other subjects. There are some good examples of curriculum enrichment and these are developing. For example, new lunchtime clubs are very popular with pupils, who also say they would like more themed weeks to support their learning.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

The school's core values focus on providing good pastoral care for its pupils. They appreciate the warm family atmosphere, and all pupils feel that they have an adult to turn to if needed. The introduction of a support worker, who provides liaison between home and school, has helped to improve pupils' attendance and built on the school's already strong links with parents and outside agencies. Child protection arrangements are good and safeguarding procedures meet requirements.

Pupils at risk of underachieving are effectively identified and targeted for extra support. This process is currently being reviewed to ensure that this support is matched as closely as possible to their needs. Targets are set for all pupils, although they do not always understand how their targets link in with their everyday work. There are some good opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own work. However, teachers' marking does not consistently give pupils enough guidance on how to make progress in their work.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The headteacher has made a good start in her role, quickly getting to grips with the need to improve provision and outcomes, and not afraid to make difficult decisions. The school has benefited from a good level of sustained support from the local authority. This help and guidance has enabled senior staff to focus on improving procedures for monitoring and evaluation of provision, tracking pupils' progress, setting challenging targets for improvement, and identifying priorities through the school development plan. These initiatives have given staff and governors an accurate understanding of the school's effectiveness and how to move it forward. There has been a strong focus too on developing leadership at all levels, although subject leaders are new to their roles and have not yet had enough time to make a significant impact on their areas. The school makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion. Work at school and local level is good, while initiatives at national and international level are at the early stages of development.

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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	3

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
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?	3
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 <sup>1</sup> 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	3

<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	3
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

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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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**

21 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Michael's RC Primary School, Chatham ME4 6PX

Thank you for being so helpful and friendly when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed meeting you and talking to you. We found that your school is giving you a satisfactory education. Staff and governors are working hard to make sure that you all do as well as you possibly can.

We were impressed with your good behaviour in class and in the playground, and we know that you and your parents are happy with the school because everyone gets on so well together. The staff take good care of you, and this makes you all feel safe and secure.

The improvements your school has made so far are beginning to make a difference. We have agreed with your school that it is going to make sure that the work in lessons is set at the right level for you, challenges and interests you, and keeps you busy and involved. We have also agreed that you will have more opportunities to develop your ICT skills and use them in different lessons. Finally, those members of staff who look after different subjects are going to check carefully how well you doing.

You can do your bit by letting staff know if the work they give you is too hard or too easy, and by telling them if there is anything you don't understand in lessons.

Best wishes for the future.

Yours faithfully

Jane Chesterfield

Lead inspector