

St Michaels-on-Wyre Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119544
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	327064
Inspection date	31 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Kathleen McArthur

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	98
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	Mr Adrian Phillips
Headteacher	Mrs Cathy Brough
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Hall Lane St Michaels-on-Wyre Preston Lancashire PR3 0UA

Age group	4–11
Inspection date	31 March 2009
Inspection number	327064

Telephone number

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Age group 4–11

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage, how well leaders monitor and evaluate the school's performance and the breadth of curriculum extension and enrichment.

Evidence was collected from the school's self-evaluation, national published assessment data, and classroom observations. Discussions were held with staff, pupils and governors, and parents' questionnaires were scrutinised. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, given in its self-evaluation were not justified.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than most and draws pupils from the village and surrounding rural area. Most pupils are of White British heritage and all speak English as their first language. The area is socially and economically advantaged and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is low. The Early Years Foundation Stage provides a Reception class, and works closely with the privately run nursery sited in the school. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 are taught in three mixed-age classes. Most of the oldest pupils were away on a residential visit during the inspection.

The school holds numerous awards, including Quality Marks, Eco Schools Green Flags and Healthy School status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This outstanding school provides education and care of the highest quality, where pupils of all ages learn and play happily together. The headteacher's dedicated, inspirational leadership has created a very harmonious community with a Christian ethos, very much at the heart of the village. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive, describing the school as 'exceptional'. They say their children love school, that it has a welcoming, family atmosphere and helps children develop a strong sense of moral and social responsibility. The school's commitment to promoting pupils' ecological and environmental understanding is a major strength that permeates and enriches all aspects of the curriculum and is recognised by the local authority as an exemplar for other schools.

Pupils' achievement is outstanding. Pupils make excellent progress throughout the school and standards are well above average. Standards have been consistently high over a number of years. Pupils often exceed their targets and a large proportion reaches the higher level in all subjects. Performance is particularly strong in science; school data for 2008 show that almost three quarters of the pupils reached the higher level in this subject. The staff capture pupils' natural curiosity very successfully and develop the questioning skills pupils need for scientific investigations. Very good support from skilled teaching assistants and suitably adapted work ensures pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make excellent progress in relation to their capabilities.

Outstanding provision for personal development and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development ensures pupils become increasingly mature, thoughtful and reliable. They reflect quietly during worship and show great respect and support for each other, for example, when listening to pupils singing solo during assembly. Excellent attendance, exemplary behaviour and enthusiastic attitudes contribute strongly to pupils' outstanding achievement. Pupils move sensibly in school and the playground, with careful regard for their own and others' safety. They say there is no bullying, that they would use the confidential 'friendship box' to report any problems and know the staff will always listen and help. Pupils have very good knowledge of health matters and are proud of their recycling and gardening activities, saying 'We help the environment'. They share their knowledge with the village community through a newsletter. Pupils are extremely well prepared for the next steps in their education and demonstrate very good awareness and understanding of issues that affect their lives now and in the future.

Teaching is of the highest quality and provides lively, well planned lessons with plenty of challenge. Well targeted, open questions promote pupils' thinking and reasoning skills most effectively. Excellent relationships boost pupils' confidence; pupils described their teachers as 'kind, helpful and caring', so they are very keen to do their best and reach their learning targets. The excellent curriculum is well-balanced, suitably adapted for all learners and provides an outstanding programme for personal and social development. The wide variety of enrichment activities includes visits, visitors, expert tuition and after-school clubs. The gardening club is particularly popular and pupils say they enjoy many sports matches. Environmental and ecological activities extend learning across the whole curriculum. For example, a lesson for Year 1 and 2 pupils on food groups involved literacy, mathematics, science and health issues.

Parents agree that their children are extremely well cared for. All safeguarding arrangements meet current requirements. Strong partnerships with external agencies and local schools provide activities and further support. Academic progress is tracked and monitored very thoroughly.

Pupils know their targets and older pupils have opportunities to check how well they are doing, giving them greater responsibility for their own learning. New procedures to involve younger pupils have yet to be fully established.

Outstanding leadership at all levels has an unswerving focus on improving provision for every pupil; there is no complacency here. Leaders monitor performance through searching and accurate self-evaluation, resulting in well-targeted plans and professional development. Excellent, well-informed governance brings a range of supportive skills and expertise that challenges and holds the school to account. Stringent budget management gives excellent value for money. Exemplary arrangements to promote community cohesion give pupils a very good understanding of different lifestyles; they spoke proudly of their links with a city school in a very different cultural setting and with a school in Nepal. Issues from the previous inspection have been fully overcome. Excellent arrangements for equal opportunities ensure all pupils are fully included in every activity. The school has outstanding capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children enter the Reception class with skills that are broadly typical for their age. They make excellent progress and all attain and more than half exceed the expected levels by the time they enter Year 1. Children's personal development is outstanding. Parents say their children quickly show respect and care for each other. Sensitivity to children's individual needs and excellent relationships ensure children feel safe, secure and have confidence. They learn how to be healthy through vigorous exercise and healthy options at lunch time. Excellent teaching provides a well-planned balance of teacher and child-led activities. A very good range of practical, purposeful and fun activities, indoors and outside, really captures children's imagination and enthusiasm. The children are cooperative and friendly, happily taking turns and sharing equipment. Adults make very good use of the local environment to enhance learning, for example, children paint the map of their village walk. Excellent assessment procedures enable staff to plan work that challenges the more able and gives good support to those who need it. Outstanding welfare arrangements include excellent procedures for introducing children to school through close links with the on-site nursery, pre-school visits to the Reception class and home visits. These ensure children settle quickly and develop very good attitudes from an early age. Parents play a full part in their children's learning and appreciate the informative weekly newsletter. The Early Years Foundation Stage is led and managed very well.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend the existing excellent monitoring procedures to involve all pupils and particularly the younger ones more fully in the assessment of their own learning.

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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?	1
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?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
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?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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?	1
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?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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**

1 April 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Michael's-on-Wyre Church of England Primary School, Lancashire, PR3 0UA

Thank you for giving my team and I such a warm welcome when we inspected your school. You were all so friendly, polite and helpful. We could see that you love school and your parents agree. It was good to hear the singers and musicians during assembly and we enjoyed visiting lessons and talking with members of the Eco-Committee. We hope pupils in Year 5 and Year 6 enjoyed their visit to Borwick Hall.

Everything about your school is outstanding!

- The leaders, staff and governors.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Your personal development and the way the school guides and cares for you.
- The way the excellent curriculum is extended and enriched.

You make excellent progress all through the school and reach standards well above those usual for your age. You all work very hard and are keen to try everything the school offers. You are caring, considerate pupils who are very aware of the needs of others. Your excellent behaviour is a real credit to you, your school and your parents!

One thing that really impressed my team was how you protect and sustain the environment. St Michael's is one of the first schools to have solar panels on the roof and you certainly know all about recycling, composting and growing vegetables. I know you take part in many activities with the church and the village and you told the inspectors how much you enjoy meeting children from schools in different communities. I have asked the school to help you become more involved in assessing how well you are doing in your work.

With very best wishes to you all

Kathleen McArthur

Lead inspector