

St Michael's Easthampstead Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110010
Local Authority	Bracknell Forest
Inspection number	337421
Inspection dates	30 September –1 October 2009
Reporting inspector	Anna Sketchley

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	236
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Simon Ridgeon
Headteacher	Stephen Litson
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 12 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils and spoke informally to parents on the playground. They observed the school's work, looked at pupils' books and the school's systems for monitoring and tracking pupils' progress, plans for improvement, notes of visits from the local authority and 91 questionnaires returned by parents.

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

- the strategies to improve attainment and progress of higher attaining pupils, especially boys, in Years 1 and 2, particularly in mathematics
- the use of tracking to identify weaknesses in achievement of girls and boys in Years 3 to 6
- the strategies used to address the inconsistency in attainment
- how well the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage achieve
- the quality of community cohesion and how well it promotes national and global links

Information about the school

St Michael's is an average size primary school, with some mixed-age classes. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, provision is in one Reception class and in one class of mixed Reception and pupils from Year 1. It is a popular school and heavily oversubscribed. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average and the majority of these have behavioural difficulties. Others have speech and language and moderate learning difficulties. Since the last inspection, there has been significant disruption to staffing, especially in the senior leadership: the headteacher has now returned to school after serious illness and a new deputy headteacher is in post. Recent awards gained by the school include 'Eco Schools' and the 'School Travel Plan', both at bronze level; the Healthy Schools Award; the Active Mark for sport; and full extended services status. There is a privately run nursery and an after-school club on the school site.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. It is a happy and successful school where pupils enjoy learning. An interesting curriculum and good teaching are key reasons why pupils achieve well. The Christian ethos of the school is threaded throughout all its work and secures very good relationships across the whole school community. Pupils' spiritual development is particularly strong and excellent examples of quiet reflection times demonstrate how this underpins their thoughtfulness and care towards each other. This culture creates a positive atmosphere in which to learn and play; pupils show through paired and group activities that they collaborate well together. When learning about how to use speech marks and how to speak with expression, pupils in Year 3 supported each other well in small groups.

Pupils settle really quickly into school life and get off to a very promising start in Reception. The Early Years Foundation Stage is a strength of the school. Children make good progress, especially in their personal, social and emotional development; communication, language and literacy; and in problem solving, reasoning and numeracy. This encourages positive attitudes and behaviour for the future and is a good basis on which to build further skills as they move into Year 1.

After the last inspection, the school responded immediately with a comprehensive action plan to improve the progress of higher attaining pupils in Years 1 and 2. Results show that this was successful in literacy mainly because of the effective teaching of letters and sounds. However, in 2009 there was a dip in attainment. Few pupils reached the higher levels, especially in mathematics; standards were average and progress was only satisfactory from pupils' starting point in Year 1. The school has acted swiftly again and dealt with this and inspection evidence shows that pupils currently in Year 2 make good progress in reading and writing.

In 2008, there was a dip in standards in Year 6. This was partly due to a third of the boys having significant special educational needs and, despite their making good progress from their own starting points, this affected the school's test scores. Leaders and governors identified that higher attaining pupils in this group did not do as well as they might, particularly in mathematics and science. This was tackled successfully and the most recent results in Year 6 show that standards were above average and that higher attaining groups did particularly well. However, some middle and lower ability pupils do not do as well as they might in mathematics. Senior managers and governors have been quick to realise that more can be done across the school to remedy this and have created a new action plan to address the issue. Although the plan has not been fully implemented, it demonstrates the school's good self-evaluation procedures and capacity to improve further. The school has robust systems for tracking progress and

carefully analyses results. However, in the past, assessment information has not always been used quickly enough in mathematics to target different groups of pupils to ensure that they make the best possible progress. While marking in English is focused upon improving pupils' work, it is not so helpful in mathematics; pupils do not receive enough guidance as to the next steps they must take in their learning. The presentation of pupils' work in mathematics hampers progress because in some cases it is causing them to make careless mistakes.

The curriculum is enriched significantly by visits, visitors and extra-curricular activities. These extend the pupils' experiences and are among the major reasons why they enjoy learning. Basic skills are taught effectively by teachers, who demonstrate good subject knowledge. Opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy skills are well developed, for example, through their work on the Greeks. However, there are fewer opportunities for them to practise mathematical skills. The school has realised this and the curriculum is under review.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve attainment and progress in mathematics for middle and lower ability pupils across the school by:
- implementing, without delay, the new action plan prepared by the deputy headteacher to assist with improvement in mathematics
- improving marking so that pupils understand the next steps in their learning in mathematics as well as they do in writing
- improving pupils' presentation to avoid careless mistakes
- increasing the opportunities for pupils to practise their mathematical skills across the curriculum.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils respond well to the interesting lessons prepared for them and want to do well. They enjoy learning through games to improve their mental mathematics skills; Year 4 pupils, for example, participated with great enthusiasm when trying to guess the number the teacher was thinking of, helped by the teacher's excellent questioning and mathematical reasoning. Recent initiatives in the teaching of letters and sounds for younger pupils are beginning to have a successful impact. Evidence from school data and standards observed in lessons during the inspection show that pupils in Year 2 work at an above-average level in writing and reading and make good progress. In a lesson in Year 2, all pupils rose to the challenge and concentrated really hard and were successful when using their knowledge to spell words with a silent 'h' and 'magic e'. In 2009, pupils in Year 6 exceeded all the challenging targets set for them. Work in Year 5 pupils' writing books is well presented and shows that more able pupils in particular have a secure grasp of punctuation and spelling and use interesting vocabulary and complex sentences. These pupils are already achieving above average levels in writing. However, assessments in mathematics are not always used thoroughly to ensure that tasks are

consistently challenging for pupils of differing abilities; therefore some groups make better progress than others in lessons. Those with special educational needs make good progress and are well supported, but middle and lower ability pupils do not always do as well as those of above average ability. Pupils do not take as much pride in their mathematics work as they do in their writing books and, consequently, this leads to careless mistakes

Pupils are polite and a pleasure to talk to in lessons, in the dining room and in the playground. They get on well together. Attendance is good and pupils told inspectors that they enjoy school, that teachers make lessons fun and that they really enjoy all the extra activities the school offers. They were keen to say that all adults help them when they are 'stuck' with their work or have a problem, and they are clear about the academic targets set for them. They enjoy having responsibilities in and around the school. Pupils have a good understanding about keeping healthy and safe, for example having healthy packed lunches, always wearing cycle helmets and not talking to strangers. There are strong links with the local community, especially the local church, and the Eucharist is regularly celebrated in school. Pupils were keen to talk about their links with a school in Germany and about the importance of rights and respect in all their relationships. They have a good understanding of other faiths.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2

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

The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**2****How effective is the provision?**

At the beginning of lessons, teachers ensure that pupils know what they are to learn and throughout the lessons they ask searching questions to check pupils' understanding. In the best lessons, very clear explanations and demonstrations using the interactive whiteboards hold pupils' attention. The pupils are enthusiastic, listen well and are keen to answer. While learning to classify polygons, pupils in Year 4 were encouraged to show what they already knew; this helped them to build on prior learning.

Well-prepared resources mean that pupils settle quickly to work, although in a small minority of lessons, time is wasted while pupils transfer from one task to another. Teaching assistants ably support pupils with special educational needs and ensure that those with behaviour difficulties settle to their tasks quickly and do their best. The result of this is that these pupils make good progress. Work is marked conscientiously and pupils have targets to meet. However, whereas marking in English books helps pupils to improve, there is not as much guidance in mathematics. There are good opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills across a range of subjects but the use of mathematical skills is less well developed.

The curriculum is under review and becoming more topic-based in order to support learning further. However, links across subjects and opportunities to use a variety of skills are not thoroughly embedded, especially across Years 3 to 6. This is particularly noticeable in mathematics and information and communication and technology (ICT), although this weakness is clearly identified in the school's plans for improvement.

Pupils are exceptionally well cared for on a daily basis and well known to staff. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is well organised and, as a consequence, they are well supported and guided. Individual education behaviour support plans are tightly focused and help pupils to make good progress. Pupils who are especially vulnerable are exceptionally well guided and this enables them to make the same good progress as all other pupils.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Despite a period of instability and disruption, the school continues to drive forward

improvement. Strong governance and the positive partnership developing between the headteacher and the new deputy headteacher enable the school to renew and pursue its vision of excellence for the future with vigour and determination. Governors are very supportive of the school and constantly challenge it to develop; they have excellent systems for the monitoring and quality assurance of its work. They have an excellent understanding of its strengths and areas for development. A new school development plan has been produced in consultation with the whole school community and skilled governors have played a major role in its construction. The quality of teaching and learning is regularly monitored through lesson observations, a variety of assessments, analysis of data and an efficient and detailed system for tracking pupils' progress. The school has very effective partnerships with outside agencies, particularly for pupils with special educational needs or behavioural difficulties. There are good links with other local schools, the nursery on site and health professionals. This promotes the well-being of all pupils effectively and supports their good progress in learning. Promoting equality and tackling discrimination is very well managed. The school takes safeguarding procedures very seriously and these are all fully in place and comply with statutory requirements, ensuring that pupils are safe and secure in school. The school has good local and international links; especially notable are the links with local churches and other faith groups, a Ugandan school for the deaf, and a school in Germany. Links with the wider ethnic diversity of communities within the United Kingdom are less strong.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children start school with skills in line with or slightly below those expected for their age. As a result of good provision, they settle very quickly into school life and make good progress. By the time they enter Year 1, the majority have met or exceeded the standards expected in all areas of learning. Children enjoy a range of stimulating activities both indoors and outside, although the outdoor area is small and cramped and restricts the good curriculum on offer. The school has immediate plans to improve this aspect of learning. Teaching is good and children enjoy learning. Good questioning from all adults supports their understanding. There is a good balance between a teacher-directed emphasis on letters, sounds, counting skills and developing children's vocabulary and activities chosen by the children that extend their learning across all areas. These are carefully assessed and parents are kept well informed and involved in their child's education. Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good and welfare arrangements are excellent, enabling children to make good progress and work and play in a safe and secure environment.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Views of parents and carers

The school engages effectively with parents and a very large majority are supportive of the school. A very small minority feel that communication could be improved, especially concerning dates for future events. A very small minority of parent questionnaires highlighted that they would like more information about their child's progress. The inspectors interviewed some parents personally and those spoken to were happy with the school's arrangements. A very small minority of parents raised bullying as an issue and indicated through the questionnaire that they were not satisfied with the way the school deals with this aspect of school life. However, many pupils spoken to by inspectors and some parents said that this was not an issue at school; pupils felt very safe and that they knew what to do if they were concerned or upset.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Michael's Easthampstead to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 91 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 236 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	50	55	38	42	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	60	66	28	31	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	35	39	49	54	5	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	25	28	54	59	8	9	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	31	34	53	58	3	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	31	34	49	54	9	10	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	37	41	51	56	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	22	24	54	59	5	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	23	25	55	61	8	9	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	17	19	54	59	7	8	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	21	23	54	59	7	8	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	31	34	53	58	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	40	44	46	51	2	2	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



2 October 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Michael's Easthampstead Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Bracknell RG12 7EH

On behalf of the team of inspectors that visited your school recently, I would like to thank you for the friendly welcome you gave us and for spending time talking to us, especially at lunchtimes. We really enjoyed meeting you.

St Michael's is a good school and these are some of the best things we found.

- You all learn well and make good progress.
- You enjoy coming to school, attend well and have a zest for life because you know how to keep healthy.
- You are taught well and there are lots of extra activities in which you enjoy taking part.
- You behave well and get on really well together.
- You are well cared for and told us that you feel happy and safe in school.
- Your headteacher, all other teachers and teaching assistants and governors want you to achieve well and do your very best. They lead your school well.

Your school knows what it needs to do next and from our findings we have asked them to do some things to make your learning even better.

- We have asked your teachers to make sure that each year those of you in Years 1 and 2 always make the same good progress as you did when you were in Reception.
- We have asked the staff to make sure that all of you, right across the school, make good progress in mathematics. We would like your teachers to tell you, when they mark your work, how you can improve it. We would like them to provide lots of opportunities for you to practise your mathematics skills in other lessons. There is something you can do on your own. You can improve the presentation of your work in your books to avoid making careless mistakes.

Please keep working hard!

Yours faithfully

Anna Sketchley

Lead Inspector

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