

St Michael's CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112332
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	337905
Inspection dates	20–21 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Juliet Ward

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	56
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs J Dickens
Headteacher	Mr Andrew May
Date of previous school inspection	9 September 2006
School address	Bothel Wigton Cumbria CA7 2HN
Telephone number	01697 320632
Fax number	01697 320632
Email address	admin@bothel.cumbria.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited six lessons, observed five teachers, and spent about a third of the inspection time looking at learning, including looking at pupils' work. The inspectors held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils and parents. They observed the school's work, teachers' planning and curriculum documentation, assessment folders and the documentation of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Twenty-four completed questionnaires were analysed from parents and carers, which represented more than half of the children in the school.

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

- whether the school has sufficient evidence to support its judgement that pupils' learning and progress are good, especially that of boys and the more able pupils
- the accuracy of teacher assessment and whether it offers helpful feedback to pupils that ensures good progress for all groups of learners
- how effectively the school's programme of continued professional development supports and guides teachers to ensure they raise the quality of the teaching to that of the best.

Information about the school

This is a small primary school which serves a mixed rural area. A high proportion of pupils join the school at times other than in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is similar to the national average. From September 2009 an experienced teacher took over the full time role of acting headteacher following a similar part time role the previous year when the substantive headteacher was seconded to work elsewhere in the local authority. The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of a mixed class of provision for part time Nursery children and full time Reception children.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good and improving school, and is well placed for the future. This view is confirmed by the overwhelming proportion of parents in typical comments such as, 'We have noticed a great deal of improvement in the school. My children love school and talk openly and very positively about all aspects of the school.' The capacity of leaders to drive improvement is reflected in the way previous weaknesses in the pupils' attainment have been successfully addressed, including improving the challenge for the more able pupils. As a result of this, overall attainment in Year 6 has risen steadily over the past three years. The school's test results for 2009 show that pupils made good progress in English, mathematics and science with most attaining above average levels.

The reason for these improvements lies in the successful teamwork between senior leaders, other staff and governors. They are ambitious for the school and have high expectations of the pupils. Governors are very supportive although are at an early stage in implementing a rigorous monitoring plan, and have more to do to make sure they hold the school fully to account. Staff at all levels respond positively and successfully to opportunities to develop as leaders and managers. The capacity to improve is good.

The harmonious relationships between adults and pupils are a major strength and underpin successful teaching and learning. The great majority of lessons are well paced with good use being made of teaching assistants and appropriate attention paid to pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils are given guidance on how to improve their work and are clear what their group targets are in English and mathematics. Whilst this good practice provides pupils with helpful information, it is not always put to the most effective use: to make sure all pupils maintain a high quality standard of presentation in their workbooks, or are sure of the progress expected in a lesson. Pupils are proud of their school and frequently make excellent contributions to their local community.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Sharpen the impact of day-to-day assessment on the pace of learning by ensuring that the pupils are always clear about the progress they should make in a lesson.
- Introduce a whole school presentation policy to make sure all pupils' workbooks are well kept and a source of pride.
- Ensure the governors strengthen their role as critical friends, are fully involved with monitoring the school's work and evaluating the success of all initiatives, so that they hold the school to account if the pace of improvement slows.

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Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The pupils enjoy school because they trust the adults who work there and respond positively to the good variety of learning experiences provided. All groups of pupils achieve good outcomes. In every class pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to work. They show commitment to the task in hand and work at a good pace. They respond well to teachers' questions, especially when these probe and deepen understanding. However, the pupils' workbooks are not well maintained and the presentation of some of their work detracts from the quality of the content.

As a result of the good work ethos throughout the school, pupils' progress has improved since the last inspection. Although year groups of pupils are small and data needs to be viewed with caution the rising trend of results in Year 6 over the past three years has been sustained in the most recent tests. Classroom observations show that most of the current Year 6 is already working within or beyond the levels expected of 11-year-olds in English, mathematics and science.

Pupils say they feel safe, secure and valued. Behaviour is consistently good: pupils are polite and courteous. Observations of vulnerable pupils, such as those with learning or social and emotional difficulties, show that they are well cared for and helped to develop independence, and to play a full part in the life of the school. Pupils have a good appreciation of what it means to live a healthy life. They enjoy physical education lessons, especially dance and swimming. The school's analysis shows that most take part in the very good variety of after-school sports and exercise clubs, and residential visits, such as camping and youth hostelling, provided by the school.

Pupils enjoy the responsibilities associated with their school council and are regularly involved in suggesting and supporting curricular improvements such as the current focus on the next 'Rock Challenge'. The pupils have successfully taken part in this local challenge involving several schools in writing, producing and performing dance and drama before an audience of over a thousand members of the community. There are excellent links with church and local communities such as senior citizens, the village gardening and women's institute groups, but pupils' understanding of the contribution they can make to the national and global communities is less well developed.

Pupils attend regularly and punctually; attendance is consistently high and much better than found nationally. Their well-developed basic skills and strong personal qualities mean they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
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	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Senior leaders and other staff have successfully focused on improving the teaching of literacy, and in particular writing, since the last inspection. Consistent approaches across subjects to the teaching of handwriting, spelling and letter sounds ensure pupils get off to a good start in literacy. Equally important, however, is the school's recognition of the need for motivating activities and a curriculum that will encourage pupils, and boys in particular, to want to write. Wise investment in staff training has given teachers confidence in encouraging writing through sensible links between different subjects and by making the most of pupils' interests. The effective use of information and communication technology enables pupils to make excellent use of word processing and demonstrate their methods solving number problems. During one lesson older pupils developed an accurate ability to identify adjectives based around a favourite story, and applied their good language skills to plan text of their own. All pupils enjoyed the lesson and boys achieved as well as the girls.

Teachers' assessment and tracking of individuals has also improved. Pupils are clear what their group targets are in English and mathematics, although they are less sure about their personal targets for improvement and the progress expected in a lesson. Work is marked thoroughly and teachers' comments tell pupils how to improve, but little attention is paid to ensuring their workbooks are maintained to a high standard. Teachers question shrewdly, and this often deepens pupils' understanding. A strength is the way the teachers involve the pupils in each aspect of the lesson, for example, encouraging them to explain how they came to the answers and conclusions they did. Occasionally the lesson slows near the end of the introduction when time is not used

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well enough.

Teaching assistants frequently make important contributions in supporting learning, especially for vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. At its best, the impact of this work is considerable, enabling pupils such as those with low self-esteem and poor concentration to work alongside others and enjoy success in meeting their targets. The school has maintained a good culture of care and support so that all pupils, including those new to the school midway through a year, are encouraged to quickly make friends and learn effectively.

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?

Staff morale is very high and leaders and managers at all levels are strongly committed to ensuring improvement and the best possible outcomes for pupils. This is because of effective approaches to leading the school that offer everyone a stake in its development. The views of parents regularly inform the planning process. Governors are frequent visitors to the school and some hold specific responsibilities, for example, for checking the robustness of the safety, child protection, care policies and procedures. As a result there is shared understanding of the priorities of the school's improvement plan, commitment to the actions necessary for these to be realised and a growing track record of success. The school improvement plan provides a solid basis for guiding improvement. However, the targets for success are not easily measurable. There is still some way to go for governors to be totally effective in their monitoring and evaluation.

Good investment in staff training has developed leadership at all levels. It results in staff's strong sense of accountability for what is happening in their particular areas of responsibility. The team has a good oversight of recent initiatives, for example, to improve the teaching of reading and writing. The narrowing gap in the achievements of girls and boys in writing is a good example of how the school takes concerted action to promote equality of opportunity. There is similar success in the inclusive education of several pupils with learning difficulties. Harassment of any form is not tolerated.

The school adopts thorough approaches to all aspects of the safeguarding of pupils. Policies meet current government guidelines. The school works productively with other agencies such as health, police and education welfare to support the specific needs of individual pupils and their families.

The school is very well regarded by parents and the immediate community. Parents

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have taken tremendous steps to demonstrate their delight and support for the staff by organising and cooking a Christmas lunch for all the school and the community groups involved in school life. Plans to promote community cohesion are appropriate and reflect a very good understanding of the local context. The school has an appropriate plan to expand pupils' knowledge and appreciation of the world beyond rural Cumbria.

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	3
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 entering the Nursery make a good start to school. Well-considered termly induction arrangements, including home visits by the staff, together with a phased start to full time attendance ensures that children successfully acclimatise to school. As a result they have already forged close and trusting relationships with the staff and arrive happily with their parents each morning. Many are already showing confidence in daily routines. They hang up their own coats and bags and settle swiftly to purposeful play. Friendships are developing well and children are starting to play imaginatively in pairs and sometimes larger groups. This confidence is particularly clear when the children from the Reception Year join the pupils in Years 1 and 2 each afternoon.

Staff plan thoroughly and ensure a successful blend of activities across all areas of learning in both indoor and outdoor classrooms. The outdoor area, however, is not yet fully complete to enable children to move freely between indoor and outdoor areas. This inhibits their choice of activities at times. There is a good balance of activities that children choose for themselves and those that adults lead. All adults contribute information to children's individual learning records. Those for last year's Reception children present a compelling illustration of the good level of overall achievement

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attained across the areas of learning by almost all children from levels mostly lower than typically expected for their ages. The profile of the current cohort is similarly mixed. Whilst many meet and exceed the levels of skills, knowledge and understanding expected nationally of four-year-olds, there are children with specific needs who require greater support from the start of the Reception Year, particularly if they have not joined the Early Years Foundation Stage in the Nursery.

The Early Years Foundation Stage leader and team are building a good knowledge of the children in their care and ensure that they feel safe and secure. They work very effectively, tracking individuals, identifying learning needs and ensuring that their interventions support good progress.

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

The vast majority of parents and carers are happy with their children's experience of school. Several parents noted the significant improvements in the school over the past year. Inspectors agree with the many positive views expressed through questionnaires and in formal and informal conversations during the inspection. One concern relating to insufficient opportunities to meet with teachers was not found to be accurate; parents are welcomed every morning before school in addition to the parents' meetings and curriculum evenings the school holds.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Michael's CofE Primary School 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 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 24 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 56 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	18	75	6	25	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	17	71	6	25	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	19	79	4	17	1	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	15	63	7	29	1	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	18	75	5	21	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	16	67	6	25	2	8	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	19	79	4	17	1	4	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)	12	50	8	33	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	14	58	9	38	1	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	13	54	8	33	3	13	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	17	71	3	13	2	8	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	18	75	4	17	1	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	17	71	6	25	0	0	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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.



22 January 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Michael's CofE Primary School, Wigton, CA7 2HN

I am writing to thank you all for making me so welcome when I inspected your school. I did enjoy my visit. Yours is a good school with many strengths, and I agree with you when you told me that 'teachers are really nice'. Here is a list of some of the things that I judge are good about your school.

- The school looks after you well and you all make good progress in your learning.
- Your behaviour is good and you get along with each other well and feel safe in school.
- You all have good ideas on how to make things better and the teachers always listen to what you have to say.
- You understand well how to live healthily.
- You find lessons interesting and enjoy school.
- There are plenty of exciting things for you to do in school and on visits and in clubs.
- The school is well led and managed.

I know that the Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 enjoyed their 'Rock Challenge' and are looking forward to the next one. I enjoyed watching the DVD and thought the make-up deserved the award you won. The school quite rightly has many plans on what it needs to do to improve next. I have asked the teachers to make sure that you know how to improve your work even more and be much neater in your books! I would like the governors to keep an even closer eye on how well the school is improving to make sure it keeps on making progress.

You can help by finding out from staff how you can make your work better and by improving the way you present your work so it is neat and tidy.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Juliet Ward

Lead inspector

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