

Michaelchurch Escley Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116714
Local Authority	Herefordshire
Inspection number	338876
Inspection dates	24–25 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Anna Coyle

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	54
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Christopher Saville
Headteacher	Mrs Deborah Barker
Date of previous school inspection	6 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 12 lessons and observed four teachers. They also held meetings with the headteacher, senior staff, governors and groups of pupils and parents. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents including assessment and tracking data, the school development plan, monitoring reports and pupils' workbooks. The inspection questionnaires were analysed, including 25 from parents, six from members of staff and 30 from pupils.

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

- whether teachers' expectations are high enough in mathematics and writing for pupils in Years 1 to 6 and in the Reception year
- the use of assessment to pinpoint learning and set challenging targets for pupils
- how well the school promotes links with national and international communities.

Information about the school

This is a small school situated within a rural area. The vast majority of pupils are White British. A very small proportion of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds and all speak English fluently. A high proportion of pupils has special educational needs. The school has achieved the Activemark award and Healthy Schools status.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

The school judges itself to be satisfactory and the inspectors agree. The headteacher and staff work hard to make sure that the pupils are kept safe and happy whilst they are learning. A good curriculum, which enhances pupils' enjoyment of learning, and good procedures for the care, guidance and support of pupils are particular strengths of the school. All pupils are valued equally and, as a result, they behave well and have good attitudes to learning. Pupils know how to stay safe and healthy and they form good relationships with each other. They contribute well to the school and local community, but there are few links with the wider world to help them extend their knowledge of different cultures in the United Kingdom and abroad.

Pupils make satisfactory progress in the Reception year and at Key Stages 1 and 2, building steadily on their knowledge and skills so that they attain standards that are broadly average by Year 6 in English, mathematics and science. The recent decline in standards in mathematics has been tackled successfully through improvements to the curriculum and recent training for teachers. All pupils now achieve satisfactorily in this subject. In contrast, writing is inconsistent across the school and there are weaknesses in pupils' spelling, handwriting and their use of vocabulary. Children in Reception do not have enough opportunities to develop their early writing skills through role-play and free-choice activities. Pupils with special educational needs do particularly well and make good progress in learning due to the good support they are given by teachers and teaching assistants who work together as an effective team.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory, and sometimes good. Pupils have clear targets to help them learn but marking does not always make it clear how they can improve their work. Nevertheless, they are adequately prepared for the next stage of their education and transfer to the local secondary school with confidence.

The school has developed its provision satisfactorily since the last inspection because it now has better provision for information and communication technology and it has improved its procedures for monitoring pupils' performance. Based on its sound track record and accurate self-evaluation, the school has satisfactory capacity for improvement. The headteacher provides effective leadership and governance is satisfactory. The school provides sound value for money.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate progress and raise standards in writing throughout the school by:
 - providing more child-initiated activities for children in Reception to help them

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improve their communication, language and literacy skills within a designated area of the classroom

- ensuring that teachers have higher expectations of their pupils at Key Stages 1 and 2 and provide greater challenge for the most-able pupils
- improving pupils' spelling, handwriting and use of vocabulary
- Strengthen the use of assessment by:
 - making sure that teachers' marking gives pupils clear information about how they can improve their work
- Promote pupils' knowledge of the wider world by:
 - providing more opportunities for them to learn about the multi-cultural aspects of modern society
 - extending the links with communities in the United Kingdom and abroad.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Standards have fluctuated over the last three years at Key Stages 1 and 2, as shown in the 2009 standardised test results, partly due to the very small numbers in each cohort. There was a steady decline in mathematics over the same period but this has now been halted successfully and pupils are currently achieving satisfactorily in the subject, including the middle groups and the most-able pupils. For instance, pupils in Years 3 and 4 worked hard to find patterns in the odd and even numbers they were exploring. Pupils with special educational needs do particularly well and make good progress. They achieve well in literacy and numeracy skills because they have good support for their learning. In writing, however, progress is uneven across the school, especially at Key Stage 1 where standards are slightly below average because there are gaps in pupils' learning and few attain the higher levels. Weaknesses in spelling, handwriting and the use of vocabulary limit pupils' progress. Even so, pupils in Years 1 and 2 enjoy finding out about animals and their habitats such as koala bears, crocodiles and mice. They understand scientific terms such as 'predator' and 'mammal', and make satisfactory use of literacy and numeracy skills to help them.

Behaviour is good and pupils attend school regularly. They have good attitudes to learning and a satisfactory understanding of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of life. Pupils know right from wrong and get on well together, although their awareness of different cultures is limited. They say that they feel safe at school and that there is no bullying although they know to whom they should go for help if they are worried. They have a good understanding of how to stay fit by eating healthy food and exercising regularly. Pupils contribute well to the school and local community by taking on responsibilities on the school council and eco club and litter-picking in the local village. They enjoy running cake stalls at the local fete and raising money for charities

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such as the Red Cross and Children in Need. However, pupils' contributions to the wider world are limited and senior staff are keen to develop this aspect of learning to enable pupils to extend their knowledge and skills.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
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	3
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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Teachers and teaching assistants work together well as a team so that pupils are well-controlled and disciplined. Learning is structured appropriately to make sure that pupils build steadily upon their knowledge and skills in mathematics, and they make satisfactory use of computers to help them. However, although learning objectives are clearly set out in lesson plans, teachers' expectations are sometimes too low in English and questioning is not sufficiently open-ended to elicit detailed answers. Consequently, pupils' learning in writing is inconsistent across the school, especially for some of the most-able pupils who are not always challenged sufficiently. Even so, adults have good relationships with pupils and they value their contributions to discussions. For instance, pupils in Years 5 and 6 enjoyed talking about 'The Pied Piper of Hamelin' when they studied the poetry of Robert Browning and German fairy tales from the Brothers Grimm.

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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The satisfactory use of assessment enables staff to plan interesting activities for the pupils which take account of their previous experiences. Pupils have clear targets to help them strive for success. However, although the quality of teachers' marking is satisfactory, it varies unduly and does not always identify what pupils need to do next to improve their work.

The school's good curriculum is broad and balanced, and is enhanced by a wide range of extra-curricular clubs and activities such as tag-rugby, football, art, cookery and educational visits to London's Covent Garden and Oxford. The school focuses well on promoting pupils' personal, social and health education as well as literacy and numeracy. In addition, pupils have good opportunities to learn French and music from visiting specialists, and participate in 'Forest School' activities. All these activities enhance pupils' enjoyment and experience of school and extend their learning effectively. Strong links between subjects are good features of the curriculum, and the school plans to expand its provision further by developing a more creative curriculum.

Staff care for the pupils well and make sure that they are safe. The school provides good support and guidance for them through the effective deployment of teaching assistants. In particular, pupils with special educational needs receive plenty of support to help them so that they achieve success. The procedures for monitoring attendance and following up absences are effective. Pupils transfer to senior school with confidence at the end of Year 6 due to good transition arrangements and strong links with Fairfield secondary school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
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?

The headteacher provides clear leadership and direction for the school and is the driving force behind improvements. The school development plan is based on an accurate evaluation of provision and correctly identifies areas for improvement. For example, the school rightly pinpointed falling standards in mathematics as an issue and provided further training for staff. This has had a beneficial effect on teaching and learning so that standards are now beginning to rise again. Subject leadership is securely established, and the monitoring of teaching and learning has improved to a satisfactory level since the previous inspection. The governing body fulfils its statutory duties. The Chair of Governors is a regular visitor and works hard for the good of the school, particularly in relation to securing its future after the recent threat of closure. Policies

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are updated and reviewed regularly, and the procedures for safeguarding pupils are fully in place. All adults value the pupils equally and work hard to ensure there is no discrimination. Staff know them and their families well. As a result, relationships with parents and carers are good and staff involve them well in their children's learning. The school promotes community cohesion satisfactorily. There are strong links with the local community, businesses and the local pyramid of schools including the 'Golden Valley' group, but limited extended links to enhance pupils' understanding of different cultures in the United Kingdom or overseas.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
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	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make satisfactory progress and attain the nationally expected goals by the end of the Reception year. They begin school with skills that are mainly typical for their age although early writing skills are as not well developed as other areas. Children settle quickly when they arrive and play well together. They listen attentively and follow instructions well, taking on responsibilities happily and showing good attitudes to learning. Early reading and numeracy skills are developed appropriately and children communicate effectively with each other; for example, they share their experiences willingly when tasting foods and finding out about bitter and sweet substances such as honey and lemon. They participate eagerly in creative and physical activities indoors and outside such as when painting or searching for woodlice, slugs and other mini-beasts. They know how to take care of themselves and stay safe. Teaching is satisfactory and assessment is used appropriately to help staff plan interesting experiences for the

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children. Adults work well together as a good team. They are calm and kindly towards the children and take good care of them so that all are valued equally.

Leadership and management are satisfactory and ensure that the learning and welfare requirements are met. Plenty of adult-led activities are provided but children do not have enough opportunities to choose activities for themselves from resources such as book corners, writing tables, role-play and dressing-up clothes. Due to the constraints of the building, there is no easy access to a separate outdoor area for children to move in and out freely and the indoor accommodation is limited because, although they happily share the Key Stage 1 classroom with older pupils, children do not have a designated area in which to learn and play. Nevertheless, staff work hard to help them enjoy learning and prepare them for the next stage of their education.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

The majority of parents and carers are positive about the work of the school and are pleased with the education provided for their children. Many parents believe that this is a friendly, safe and happy school that is well led and managed. A small number of parents would like more communication from the school and its governors, and greater challenge for the more-able pupils. The inspectors agree with most of the above comments but confirm that there is good communication between parents, governors and the school. They agree that the most able are not always stretched enough in lessons.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Michaelchurch Escley 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 25 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 54 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	16	64	9	36	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	14	56	11	44	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	13	52	10	40	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	15	60	7	28	2	8	1	4
The teaching is good at this school	15	60	8	32	0	0	2	8
The school helps me to support my child's learning	14	56	6	24	4	16	1	4
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	13	52	9	36	3	12	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)	14	56	10	40	1	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	14	56	8	32	3	12	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	14	56	8	32	2	8	1	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	12	48	10	40	3	12	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	12	48	10	40	1	4	2	8
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	17	68	6	24	0	0	2	8

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



26 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Michaelchurch Escley Primary School, Hereford, HR2 0PT

Hello everyone! We really enjoyed seeing you all when we came to visit your school recently. Thank you for helping us to learn about all the things you do. Here are some of the things we found out:

- you make satisfactory progress in your learning and attain the expected standards by the time you leave Year 6
- you told us that you enjoy coming to school and like learning new things
- you behave well and enjoy taking on responsibilities in the school council and eco club, as well as litter picking in the village and helping at the local football club
- everyone understands that eating healthy food and having plenty of exercise helps you to grow strong and healthy
- the adults who look after you are kind and caring, and they make sure that you are kept safe while you are at school.

We have asked the school to help you improve your writing, and make sure that teachers give you clear ideas on how to improve your spelling, handwriting and vocabulary when they mark your books. We have also asked the headteacher to provide an exciting place in the classroom for the Reception children where they can choose activities for themselves, and extend the school's links with other communities so that you can all learn about different cultures in the United Kingdom and abroad. You can help by continuing to enjoy school and making sure that you always do your best, especially in writing.

Yours sincerely

Dr Anna Coyle

Lead inspector

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