

# Micklem Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117231
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	338973
<b>Inspection dates</b>	4–5 February 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Christopher Gray

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	158
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Gary Oldham
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Michael Fearnhead
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	2 June 2007
<b>School address</b>	Boxted Road Hemel Hempstead Hertfordshire
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They spent the majority of their time looking at learning in classes and pupils' books. They visited 13 lessons and observed all seven of the teachers. They also met groups of pupils, governors and staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at a sample of pupils' work. They also looked at school plans and policies, records of pupils' progress, curriculum plans and the school improvement plan, and analysed 47 questionnaires from parents and carers.

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

- the progress pupils make in every class and whether the higher standards of last year have been sustained
- how well teachers use assessment to meet pupils' needs
- the impact of leaders and managers on raising standards
- pupils' use of information and communication technology in all subjects.

## Information about the school

The school is smaller than most primary schools. There are generally more girls than boys. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups is lower than in most schools, as is the proportion of pupils whose first language is not English; very few are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average, as is the proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs. Of these, the largest groups have moderate learning and speech, language and communication difficulties.

**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

This is a satisfactory and improving school, as shown by the significant rise in standards in Year 6 in 2009. This has been brought about by improved methods of tracking pupils' progress, which ensure that any pupils in danger of underachieving are given timely and effective support. Pupils make satisfactory progress in their time in school and good progress in some year groups in Key Stage 2, especially in Year 6. This meant that the measure of added value by the school was significantly above average for the first time in 2009. Pupils' current work and school records show that a similar performance is expected in the Year 6 national tests this year. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 make slower progress than older pupils, especially in writing. English lessons in these classes do not always move quickly enough and teachers do not have high enough expectations of how much written work pupils can produce. Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved since the last inspection and is now good.

Pupils enjoy school and behave well. There is a calm atmosphere in school because pupils have good relationships with teachers and other children. They receive good care, guidance and support from adults and say that they feel very safe in school. They trust adults to help them if they have problems and say that the 'worry boxes' are a really good way of resolving any difficulties. One parent wrote in the response to the questionnaire, 'We are very happy with the school. There have been lots of improvements in last two years. The children benefit from stimulating activities and excellent pastoral care.'

Teaching is satisfactory overall and good in some older classes. Senior leaders monitor the quality of teaching but this process lacks the rigour and frequency needed to bring about some of the necessary improvements. This is one of the reasons for the continuing below average standards in writing in Years 1 and 2. In all classes, teachers frequently plan different activities for pupils, according to their ability but, in doing this, they do not make enough use of what they know of pupils' prior learning. The result is that activities are not always matched closely enough to pupils' needs and this slows their progress. The curriculum is satisfactory. It is interesting and leads to pupils' good enjoyment of learning, but pupils do not have enough opportunities to use their information and communication technology (ICT) skills in other subjects.

The school's process of self-evaluation is satisfactory. Senior leaders make good use of their analysis of data about pupils' progress to pinpoint issues for improvement. This has led to the rise in standards in Key Stage 2. However, there is not the same rigour in the monitoring of other aspects of the school's work, such as the quality of teaching. This means that the school's capacity to improve further is satisfactory.

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## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in writing in Years 1 and 2 by
  - giving pupils more opportunities for independent writing
  - raising teachers' expectations of the amount of work that pupils can produce in each lesson.
- Achieve greater consistency in the quality of teaching and the progress pupils make in each class by
  - enabling teachers to make sharper use of their knowledge of pupils' learning when planning their next steps
  - applying greater rigour to the monitoring of teaching and learning.
- Give pupils more opportunities to use their ICT skills in other subjects.
- 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 by the end of Year 6 are rising. They had been below average for a number of years until 2009, when they rose to be above average. This means that standards, judged over a three-year period, are broadly average. Evidence shows that this improvement is being sustained. The pupils in last year's Year 6 made good progress since their time in Year 2, but their progress was not consistent from year to year. The same picture is observable in the school's data on pupils' current progress. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2, but there was some underachievement in previous years, especially in writing. In these classes, pupils do not have enough opportunities to write independently or at length. There are no significant differences between the performance of boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve satisfactorily. In common with other groups of pupils, the work they receive is not always sufficiently matched to their needs.

Pupils' good behaviour is evident in the very large majority of lessons and round the school. Occasionally, a few pupils grow restless when the teacher talks for too long in introducing the lesson. Pupils take plenty of exercise in school and outside, though the idea of a healthy lifestyle is not as closely adhered to when it comes to what pupils eat. Pupils see the school council as making a good contribution to school life, but involvement in the community beyond the school is more limited. Pupils consider what is of value in life but have little experience of children from other backgrounds or beliefs.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

**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

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	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	3
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>3</b>

### How effective is the provision?

Teachers work hard to adopt new initiatives. This is shown in the quality of marking in pupils' books, which is now mostly good, following the school's new marking policies. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well and this leads to a positive atmosphere in most lessons. There is less consistency in the effectiveness with which teachers use information from assessment to adapt learning to pupils' needs. A very good example was seen in a Year 6 mathematics lesson on algebra. The teacher explained the work and pupils carried out tasks at their own level. Pupils were then asked to close their eyes and assess how confident they felt about what they had been doing, by putting their thumbs up or down. The teacher altered the grouping as a result to match the main activities more closely to pupils' learning. Such precise tailoring of work to needs does not happen in all classrooms, so that on occasions pupils are given work that is either too difficult or too easy. This could also be seen in pupils' past work.

The curriculum is broad and engages pupils' interests. It is enriched by visits and extra-curricular activities, which are well attended by all groups of pupils. New equipment for ICT is enabling pupils to build up the expected computer skills, but there are not enough opportunities in other subjects to use and develop these skills.

The good care, guidance and support that the school offers results in pupils feeling safe and enables them to build up good self-confidence. They have a good awareness of how to improve, both personally and academically. Good provision in the breakfast club enables the pupils who attend to have a good start to the day.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate</b> Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
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<b>The quality of teaching</b> Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	<b>3</b>
	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

All staff share a determination to make the school better and have responded well to the initiatives introduced by senior leaders. This is evident in the consistency with which all staff approach the analysis of data on pupils' progress and the effectiveness of termly progress meetings. The school does not use similar rigour to ensure consistency in the quality of teaching and the progress pupils make in each class, and senior leaders are aware of this. The school is free from any kind of discrimination and pupils from all groups make similar progress. This shows that the school promotes equal opportunities satisfactorily.

The governing body is well led and has made many improvements recently so that it is more involved in strategic planning. It is working to increase the extent to which it holds the school to account. Some aspects of safeguarding are good, such as the checks on the suitability of adults to work with children. However, a few policies are not fully specific in their content and reviews sometimes lack thoroughness. The school is a harmonious society and there are appropriate links with the local community, but pupils have relatively few opportunities to share the experience of children from different backgrounds. The school has plans to make links with a school in Africa.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b> Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	<b>3</b>
	3
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>

<p><b>Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate</b> Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms</p>	
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

At the last inspection, provision was judged good in the Nursery and satisfactory in Reception. Since then, a fall in numbers has led to the merging of the two classes into a single unit. Children make good progress from the time they enter until they join Year 1. Provision is now good. Children start Nursery with skills below those expected for their age, especially in communication. By the time they leave Reception, standards are as expected in most areas and above in the key aspects of linking sounds to letters, using numbers, dispositions and attitudes. These improved standards can be seen over the last two years.

Teaching is good and caters well for the range of abilities and ages. A small group of higher attaining Reception children were busily engaged in practising writing at the very start of the day and asked the inspector to join in. They ably showed him how to form letters and where each one must be started, naming the letters as they worked. Resources and planning are good and lead to well chosen activities inside and out, with a good balance of free choice and direction from adults. Frequent observations on children's achievements are made in this well-run provision and used to plan next steps and to give evidence of progress. The standard of welfare is high, and results in the confidence and speed at which the new entrants settle in. Children show great concern for each other and are keen to offer help when they can.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
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 very large majority of parents and carers are content with the experiences their children have in Micklem Primary School. A minority of parents and carers think that the school is not well led, that it does not take account of their views and that unacceptable behaviour is not dealt with effectively. However, inspectors judged behaviour to be good and found that teachers deal well with any misdemeanours. Virtually all pupils respond well to this. The school works hard to engage parents and carers in many aspects of its work, but few respond on a regular basis. Inspectors judged that the school's leadership and management are satisfactory.



## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Micklem 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 47 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 158 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	25	53	18	38	2	4	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	20	43	20	43	5	11	1	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	18	38	21	45	3	6	2	4
My child is making enough progress at this school	16	34	26	55	5	11	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	19	40	23	49	5	11	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	14	30	24	51	7	15	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	13	28	32	68	1	2	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	30	26	55	4	9	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	16	34	25	53	2	4	2	4
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	10	21	24	51	6	13	6	13
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	11	23	24	51	5	11	6	13
The school is led and managed effectively	16	34	17	36	11	23	3	6
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	18	38	21	45	3	6	2	4

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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



8 February 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Micklem Primary School, Hemel Hempstead, HP1 2QH

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and for being so polite and friendly. We enjoyed meeting you and looking at your work in lessons. It was also good to speak to groups of you. You told us how much you like your school and what the things are that it is important to learn. One of you said, 'Listening is important, otherwise, when you get a job, you might not know what to do.'

Your behaviour is good and the oldest pupils set a good example to younger ones. You told us that you feel very safe in school and enjoy taking exercise. You do not all follow the guidelines for healthy eating, however.

Your school gives you a satisfactory education, and one that is getting better. Last year's Year 6 pupils reached higher standards than many pupils in other schools and this year's class looks like doing the same. You make good progress in some classes, but not as good in others, so we have asked the school to ensure that you do just as well all through the school. Younger pupils have daily literacy lessons, as you all do, but sometimes they do not produce as much writing as they should. We have asked the teachers to make sure that they get more chance to write on their own.

You said that you enjoy nearly all your lessons. You learn computer skills in ICT lessons and we saw some of you using them in a literacy lesson. We think you need to have more opportunities to use computers in all sorts of lessons, so we have asked the school to organise this.

The youngest children have a good start to their schooling and make good progress in the Nursery and Reception. I really enjoyed talking about handwriting to a small group and decided that I will try to make my own writing neater.

I hope you continue to enjoy your time at Micklem Primary School.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Gray

Lead inspector

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