

St Michael's Church of England Primary School, Steventon

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123160
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	340296
Inspection dates	12–13 July 2010
Reporting inspector	Alison Cartlidge

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	135
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Hilary Otterburn
Headteacher	Judith Spiller
Date of previous school inspection	10 July 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspection team observed 10 lessons taught by 6 teachers. Meetings were held with governors, parents, staff and pupils. Pupils' books, information on pupils' progress, safeguarding policies and other documents were evaluated. Questionnaires from 53 parents and carers and 74 pupils were scrutinised.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work, looking in detail at the following:

- how well teaching meets differing needs
- how well marking is supporting pupils in the development of writing
- the development of outdoor activities in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- the way responsibility is being delegated and the impact of leaders on provision and progress
- how well the school supports pupils in taking responsibility within the community.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is low. The school has a below average number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. These pupils have a range of needs including moderate learning, speech or behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The school has received several awards including Healthy School status and the Activemark.

A member of staff was appointed acting headteacher in September 2009 following the resignation of the substantive headteacher.

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 improving school provides pupils with a satisfactory standard of education. Good care, guidance and support and safeguarding arrangements help pupils to feel safe and to take responsibility well. Pupils' attendance is exemplary, showing how much they enjoy coming to school. The school has good links with outside agencies and these enrich the curriculum and help the school to move forward.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make a sound start to their education because they settle into school life and enjoy finding things out for themselves. Assessments carried out when children first start school are not fully accurate and this makes it more difficult to measure progress or to ensure that indoor and outside provision is even across the curriculum. In Years 1 to 6, teachers plan an interesting curriculum. However, they do not always ensure that work is matched closely enough to the pupils' differing needs or that all pupils are fully involved and learning quickly throughout each lesson. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make satisfactory progress so that attainment by the end of Year 6 is broadly average in English, mathematics and science. Teachers mark pupils' work frequently but do not always ensure that comments are used to move learning forward swiftly.

There are satisfactory procedures for self-evaluation which enable the acting headteacher, other leaders and governors to have a realistic understanding of what needs to be done next to improve the school. The acting headteacher has carried out a great many responsibilities this year and there are appropriate plans to share responsibility more fairly so that all leaders can help to increase the proportion of good teaching and learning. Improvements in attainment and progress over the past year and a commitment to make learning more even across the school, demonstrate the school's sound capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the majority of teaching is good or better by:
 - using questioning to engage and involve all pupils
 - matching tasks to differing needs
 - maintaining a crisp pace throughout lessons
 - making sure that marking consistently moves learning forward
- Even out attainment across all areas of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:

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- ensuring attainment on entry assessments are more accurate
- using assessment information to help plan activities to support learning across the curriculum.
- Develop the role of senior leaders so that responsibility is shared more evenly and leaders can demonstrate their impact on teaching and learning.

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

Pupils' enjoyment of school is evident in their outstanding attendance. As one pupil said, 'I enjoy school because you learn something and see your friends.' In a literacy lesson in Years 3 and 4, pupils benefitted from the reminders about punctuation because the 'Kung Fu' actions were an amusing, physical aide-memoire. In most lessons pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, build steadily on what they already know and make satisfactory progress. Pupils work together well in small groups. For example, during the inspection, more able pupils in Years 5 and 6 were enthusiastic about finding the smallest possible surface area of an open topped box made from small cubes. In some lessons learning slows when work is not matched closely enough to pupils' differing needs and pupils are not sufficiently involved.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Attainment is broadly average by the time pupils leave the school, although attainment in the current Year 6 is above average and higher than in recent years. The gap between reading and writing is closing due to some successful interventions and improvements in marking. Behaviour is satisfactory because while pupils are polite and friendly, they are not always good at listening and working briskly throughout a lesson. Pupils' sound literacy and numeracy skills and generally good personal development prepare them satisfactorily for the next stage of education and later life.

Pupils have a good understanding about how to stay safe and know that members of staff will keep them safe at school. One pupil spoke for others by saying that school was 'similar to home' in terms of making him feel safe. Pupils take responsibility well. For example, older pupils are proud that they run sports clubs for younger pupils at playtime and that the eco-warriors remind others to recycle things. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is good. Pupils understand the difference between right and wrong, raise funds for charity and take part in community events. They are happy to thank each other for acts of kindness and to apologise when they have done something wrong. Pupils enjoy keeping active at playtime and in 'wake up and shake up' sessions and mostly enjoy healthy snacks and lunches. Pupils feel well supported emotionally and develop sensitivity when discussing their concerns about 'change' during circle time.

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	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	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
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	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers have good relationships with the pupils and use praise well to develop confidence. They make good use of resources to provide some interesting tasks. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 were enthusiastic about being detectives by making observations from 'evidence' to find the kidnapper of Mabel the sheep. In Year 2, pupils were excited about discussing the deer skull and wanted to know if it had white teeth because it had not eaten sweets. Teaching is not consistently good, because there are occasions when not all pupils are involved in an activity or when tasks do not match their differing needs well enough and the pace in the lesson slows.

The interesting curriculum links subjects together well and includes a breadth of enrichment opportunities including visits and creative activities. There are good opportunities for pupils to enjoy taking part in physical activities, demonstrating why the school has Healthy School status and achieved the Activemark award. The curriculum has recently been enhanced to include some successful intervention strategies to stretch more able pupils and to support those who are struggling with their writing.

Pupils are cared for, guided and supported well, enabling them to gain confidence and feel valued. Pupils make positive comments such as 'the teachers are friendly and you can talk to them' and 'if you are upset you can count on the teachers', demonstrating the confidence they have in members of staff. Academic guidance is improving well, although it is not yet consistent enough to always move learning forward swiftly.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
	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 acting headteacher has a clear understanding of what the school does well and how it should be improved and, together with governors and senior teachers, has halted the recent decline in attainment. Information about pupils' progress is being used more rigorously than in the past to identify pupils who are falling behind and to take effective action. The school has plans to extend leadership roles from September so that responsibility is shared more evenly. Clear evaluation and development planning are being used to embed ambition and to drive improvement. Provision and pupils' progress are improving, although small pockets of underachievement remain. Leaders promote equal opportunities and tackle discrimination consistently. For example, circle times are used well in classes to help pupils appreciate and respect each other. □ □

□ Governors are becoming increasingly more proactive and are aware of strengths and areas for development. At the time of the inspection, the school's safeguarding arrangements were found to be good and most parents agree that pupils are kept safe at school. Pupils who are finding life difficult for personal reasons are supported especially well. The partnership between the school and external agencies is good, enabling leaders to respond well to advice and support during the recent time of change. While the school has some good activities for pupils to learn about life in Spain and Germany through exchange visits, the promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory because provision has not been fully evaluated.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
	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	3
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

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	
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
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

The large majority of children join the Reception class working within the levels typically expected for their age. Children make at least satisfactory progress and attainment is broadly average by the time they enter Year 1, with particular strengths in personal development and numeracy. Members of staff promote these skills especially well. They form good relationships with the children and their parents and carers, enabling children to settle into school routines quickly. Numeracy is promoted well through activities such as the 'spider skittle' game where children add up their own scores. Children enjoy a balance of adult-led activities and tasks they have chosen for themselves. The use of the outdoor area is being expanded well to provide greater opportunities for learning across the curriculum. For example, during the inspection, children enjoyed exploring the properties of water by washing toy spiders down drainpipes and several children were enjoying mark making on a new chalk board. Some opportunities are missed when children are working independently to ask questions that will challenge them to develop their ideas.

Children cooperate with each other sensibly, although a few lose concentration during whole-class sessions if they are not involved enough. Leaders identify what needs to be developed further. They are aware that assessments carried out when children first start school are not sufficiently accurate to make it easy to measure progress or so that areas of comparative weakness can be tackled straight away.

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

There was a good response to the parents' questionnaire. Most parents and carers are pleased with the school, especially that their children are happy and helped to lead a healthy lifestyle. The inspection team agrees with parents' and carers' positive views.

A very small minority of parents and carers did not agree that unacceptable behaviour

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was dealt with well and a few would like more help in supporting their children's learning. The inspection team found that behaviour was satisfactory overall because there are a few pupils who can be silly at times, although teachers dealt with this appropriately. Inspectors found that pupils are given suitable amounts of homework and that some curriculum information is made available each term. The school has plans to extend information when the new website is up and running in the autumn term.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Michael's Church of England 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 53 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 135 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	34	64	15	28	3	6	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	32	60	14	26	4	8	1	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	23	43	20	38	5	9	4	8
My child is making enough progress at this school	26	49	18	34	6	11	3	6
The teaching is good at this school	31	58	15	28	4	8	3	6
The school helps me to support my child's learning	23	43	18	34	7	13	4	8
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	26	49	24	45	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)	30	57	15	28	2	4	4	8
The school meets my child's particular needs	26	49	19	36	6	11	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	13	25	27	51	6	11	6	11
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	24	46	18	35	4	8	4	8
The school is led and managed effectively	28	53	16	30	2	4	7	13
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	32	60	14	26	4	8	3	6

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.



14 July 2010

Dear Children

Inspection of St Michael's Church of England Primary School, Abingdon OX13 6SQ

We enjoyed coming to see your happy school. Thank you for being so helpful during our visit. Yours is a friendly school which provides a sound standard of education.

These are the best things about your school.

- You enjoy school and make satisfactory progress.
- You are excellent about coming to school regularly.
- You appreciate that you are looked after well.
- Teachers plan activities that match your interests.
- You are polite and friendly but know that not all pupils listen carefully in lessons.
- It is good that older pupils help run clubs for the younger ones.

You are right when you say that the headteacher and other leaders know what needs to be done to make the school better. These are the things we have asked them to do next to make it better.

- Help your teachers to always give you work that is just right for you, ask you questions that help to get you involved and use marking to help you to learn quickly.
- Help teachers in the Early Years Foundation Stage to get a clear idea about what you know and can do when you start school and use assessment information to plan activities that will help you do well in all subjects.
- Share work more fairly between senior leaders so that they can all help to make teaching and learning better.

Thank you once again for telling us about your school and letting us see your work. You could help your teachers by always listening in class.

Yours sincerely

Alison Cartlidge Lead inspector

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