

St Michael's Church of England First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123768
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	340422
Inspection dates	11–12 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Colin Lee

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	142
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kate Atkins
Headteacher	Anna Boulton
Date of previous school inspection	30 April 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 11 lessons and observing five teachers and one teaching assistant. They held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at the data the school has collected on pupils' attainment and progress, the school's development plan, lesson and curriculum planning and procedures for keeping pupils safe. Sixty-seven parents' and carers' questionnaires were returned and scrutinised by the inspection team, who also spoke with a number of parents and carers.

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

- the impact of teaching on pupils' attainment
- teachers' use of assessment information to check pupils' progress and set their learning targets
- the effectiveness of school's policy, planning and actions for developing community cohesion.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than average and pupils leave the school at the end of Year 4. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average and the range is wide, including physical disability, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and moderate learning difficulties. The school makes provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage in the Reception class. There is provision on site for children of pre-school age but this provision is not managed by the governing body.

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 school. Some of its features are outstanding, including many of the pupils' personal development outcomes, aspects of leadership and management and the high quality care provided for pupils. Pupils achieve well. They start school in the Early Years Foundation Stage with attainment well below the levels expected at this age. They leave the school with attainment at least at the level expected nationally by the end of Year 4. This is good progress and means they are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Leaders' self-evaluation is good. Planning for school improvement is carried out collectively by staff and all staff show drive and ambition to do the best for the pupils. The headteacher's good leadership gives direction to the work of the school and together with good governance plays an important part in the good capacity to improve. Since the last inspection, the school has improved well. The tracking of pupils' long term progress has become very rigorous. Class teachers meet the headteacher regularly to review how well pupils are doing and they decide on actions to increase pupils' progress. Rates of progress are increasing in each year group.

All aspects of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are impressive, none more so than their exemplary behaviour and the way that they care for one another. Pupils say that they feel safe at school. They know that they are valued and contribute much to the school community. They love physical activity and have an outstanding understanding of its importance, together with healthy eating.

A strength of the good teaching and learning is the interesting curriculum and the school's promotion of equal opportunity and tackling discrimination is outstanding. Pupils say that 'learning is fun'. Teachers plan learning activities that are very well matched to pupils' different needs and abilities. In lessons they occasionally miss the chance to check how well pupils are doing at tasks. This means that occasionally it is too long before a teacher knows when a pupil needs help. Also, occasionally work is completed very quickly and there are missed opportunities to further challenge pupils. The targets set for pupils at the end of each year are challenging, but teachers' expectations are not as high as they should be in helping to lift achievement, attainment and learning from good to outstanding.

The outstanding features in leadership and management include the exemplary safeguarding procedures and the effectiveness of partnerships with others to help pupils to learn well and have suitable support for their particular needs.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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

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- Lift the quality of teaching and learning to outstanding by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of achievement and the levels of attainment that can be achieved by the end of each year
 - ensuring that teachers consistently check pupils' progress during lessons to identify wherever help is needed or new challenges should be provided.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Parents and carers are confident that their children make good progress and the inspection shows achievement to be good. In literacy and numeracy lessons observed across the school, pupils worked conscientiously and with real enthusiasm for their work. This was particularly evident when pupils showed pleasure not only in getting answers right but, more importantly, in being able to explain clearly how they arrived at the answer. Enjoyment was very obvious in many other lessons, such as the sheer delight of Year 3 pupils when they sang, and the spontaneous applause in a Year 4 gymnastics lessons when pupils demonstrated their work to the class. By having many opportunities for speaking, reading and writing across the curriculum, pupils acquire suitable basic skills. For example, by Year 4 many pupils are accomplished writers producing lengthy prose that demonstrates good spelling and punctuation and includes a broad, imaginative vocabulary.

All groups of pupils achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. These include the school's significant proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Their consistently good progress owes much to the good quality of support from teaching assistants and teachers working on a wide range of programmes designed to address their needs and difficulties. For example, a small group of Year 2 pupils were seen responding very well to activities designed to improve their listening skills.

Pupils are eager to contribute to school life. Those with specific responsibilities, such as playground friends and play leaders carry out their duties very conscientiously. Pupils have a very good understanding for their ages of other cultures and faith groups. They talk extremely knowledgeably about the importance of healthy eating and are keen to take regular exercise.

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

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is carefully monitored by the headteacher and this has identified how teaching can be made more effective. Pupils' good quality of learning is aided by teachers' use of information from assessment to plan the next stages in pupils' learning. Lessons with the oldest pupils are frequently punctuated with the teacher and the pupils assessing how well they have done at each activity. They are therefore constantly thinking about their own progress and what can be improved. This approach was observed in a Year 4 numeracy lesson where it gave the lesson a brisk pace and maximised the progress that pupils made. Such strategies are not as consistently evident in other classes.

Curriculum topics are imaginatively planned, with strong emphasis on practical activity and first-hand experiences. Good attention is paid to creating as many opportunities as possible for pupils to apply and develop basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology in topic work. Topics are also enriched by extensive use of educational visits and work in school with visitors such as artists. There is ample evidence of art and music being significant strengths of the school. This was seen in the form of the many attractive displays of highly creative artwork around the school. It was heard in the superb singing by the whole school during collective worship. The outstanding quality of pastoral care, guidance and support has a very positive impact on pupils' personal development. The needs of any vulnerable pupils are fully met and there is extra help and support for these pupils whenever they need it.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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 quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

There is a strong teamwork approach to processes and this reflects clear drive and ambition to raise the quality of teaching and learning. For example, leaders have worked to widening learning opportunities by improving the curriculum and they regularly check lessons to guide teachers in how to improve and develop their skills. All staff are fully involved in ongoing evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for development.

Leaders are ambitious to help all pupils to be fully involved in the life of the school and reach their potential and as such, they promote equality of opportunities very well. Discrimination is not acceptable and not tolerated by leaders or staff and this is evident in the very high quality care for pupils. This care is also strengthened by the governing body ensuring not only that safeguarding arrangements are very thorough but that all staff are well trained and vigilant in their attention to health and safety, risk assessment and child protection issues.

The school benefits considerably from its involvement in several important partnerships. Most influential of these is the Exmoor Coast Federation of local first schools and the middle school. This collaboration is an invaluable source of support, curriculum development and professional development that has excellent impact on outcomes and provision. Another example is the outstanding coordination of provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. There are good links with parents and carers, who appreciate the guidance on how they can help their children's learning.

Community cohesion is good and developing well. Beyond the very strong sense of a school community, the school makes the most of parish links and involves pupils in the life of the town wherever possible. Leaders are working to strengthen pupils' awareness of communities beyond the town. To this end initial contacts have been established with a Bristol school and a Kenyan community.

The governing body has a good awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Its contribution to strategic management is increasing due to its direct monitoring of school development and the initiative it has shown in gathering the views of parents and carers on the school's performance and how it can be improved further.

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	2
	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 the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
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

When children start school, their levels of skill, knowledge and understanding are well below expectations. They make good progress in all areas of learning and although last year nearly half of them ended the year below average, this proportion is diminishing each year and significantly more are on track to reach average attainment by the end of this year. This is because provision is good, with good teaching and a rich curriculum being coordinated by an outstanding leader who is successfully promoting a strong home/school partnership. This leadership has also created a situation where all staff work very closely together and show high levels of concern for children's welfare. They carry out detailed, ongoing assessment of children's learning by recording observations of their successes and areas for development. This information is used very well to plan activities tailored to the needs of individual children. Learning opportunities both indoors and outdoors are generally well planned, with a good balance of activities led by adults and activities that children initiate for themselves. However, outdoor activities are not used sufficiently for promoting children's language development, but this is partly due to lack of resources, for example for encouraging spontaneous writing.

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	1

Views of parents and carers

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

Most parents and carers who returned questionnaires or who spoke to the inspection team are very happy with the school and are supportive. They say their children enjoy school and make enough progress. Inspectors were very impressed by pupils' enjoyment of all that they do at school and saw that all pupils make good progress and attainment is rising. Many of the questionnaires had additional, positive comments. Concerns are specific to individuals, with no pattern of common concerns.

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 First 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 67 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 142 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	46	69	19	28	0	0	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	52	78	15	22	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	36	54	26	39	2	3	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	37	55	24	36	3	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	39	58	23	34	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	41	61	21	31	4	6	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	38	57	29	43	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)	41	61	21	31	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	34	51	30	45	1	1	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	39	58	23	34	4	6	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	3	48	28	42	4	6	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	40	60	21	31	3	4	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	47	70	78	27	1	1	1	1

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 pupils' 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.



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15 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Michael's Church of England First School, Minehead, TA24 5NY

Thank you for making us welcome in your school and for talking with us so willingly. We thoroughly enjoyed joining you in lessons and seeing you at work. Your school gives you a good education and some things are outstanding. This is what we particularly like.

- You make good progress and this helps you to have the skills needed for the future in English, mathematics and science.
- You are taught well and teachers plan an interesting things for you to do
- Your behaviour is outstanding and this makes your school a very happy place that everyone enjoys going to.
- You have an excellent understanding of the importance of healthy eating and exercise.
- You are good at carrying out responsibilities such as being a play leader or playground friend, and this makes a good contribution to the life of the school.
- You say you feel safe in school ' this is because all the adults do an outstanding job in looking after you and making sure that you are safe and get help whenever you need it.
- The headteacher leads the school well and all the adults work well together to help the school to improve.

We have asked the adults to do two things to help make it even better:

- Make more lessons outstanding so that you can do even better in class. You can help with this by working as hard as possible.
- Adults need to check how well you are doing in lessons in order to help you if you find something difficult or give you harder work if you are finding it easy.

We hope you will carry on enjoying learning and helping your teachers to make St Michael's Church of England First School to be an even better school.

Yours sincerely

Colin Lee

Lead inspector

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