

St Michael's CofE (C) First School

Horton, Leek, ST13 8RU

Inspection dates 10–11 July 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The exceptional enthusiasm, drive and vision of the headteacher, well supported by staff and an outstanding governing body inspire pupils to thrive in all aspects of their academic and personal development.
- Leaders ensure that teaching and learning are outstanding across the school. Teachers demonstrate excellent subject knowledge and promote learning exceptionally well and consistently.
- Pupils are treated as individuals and, as a result, all pupils, including those eligible for the pupil premium and those with special educational needs, achieve well and are extremely well-prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 and by Year 4, when pupils leave for middle school, are above those usually found in reading, writing and mathematics.
- High-quality marking celebrates pupils' achievements and ensures that all pupils know what they need to do next in order to improve.
- Support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is excellent.
- Pupils' exemplary behaviour contributes strongly to the outstanding quality of learning in lessons. Pupils say they feel safe in the school. They are aware of different forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying, how to avoid it and what to do should it occur.
- From an early age, pupils enjoy coming to school and this shows in their eagerness to learn and their improving attendance rates.
- Rigorous assessment and tracking systems ensure the progress of individual pupils in reading, writing and mathematics is exceptionally well monitored. However, the school does not formally analyse pupils' progress in other subjects
- Staff are caring and supportive, and, with governing body members, volunteers, and visitors to the school, they create an exceptional place for learning.
- The headteacher is passionate about ensuring that all pupils do as well as they possibly can and sets very high expectations for all staff.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They develop into confident, articulate and reflective individuals who are very well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed nine lessons, three of which were jointly observed with the headteacher.
- Meetings and discussions were held with groups of pupils, staff, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspection took into account the 13 responses to the online questionnaire for parents and carers (Parent View) and the outcomes from the school's recent consultations with parents.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own data on admissions and pupils who leave, pupils' current progress, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Clive Lewis, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is a very small, rural school serving the village of Horton and a wide area around it. The overwhelming majority of pupils are of white British heritage and no pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils eligible for free school meals and other specific groups) is below the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is below the national average. However, the proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above the national average and particularly high in some year groups.
- The school has recently entered into a collaboration arrangement with another local small primary school, Castle Primary at Mow Cop. The headteacher of St. Michael's has become the executive headteacher of both schools although the two governing bodies remain separate.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop a more formal system of assessing and tracking pupils' progress in other subjects to match the rigorous systems already in place for reading, writing and mathematics.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Results at the end of Year 2 have been significantly above the national average since the previous inspection, with the exception of 2012 when standards were in line with national averages. School data confirm that this exception was a cohort-related issue and that these pupils still made very good progress. Current Year 2 standards are once again well above average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Children's experiences and skills on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage vary from year to year but are generally below those typically found for this age group. Children get off to a good start in the Reception class and make outstanding progress during their first year in school.
- An eagerness for learning ensures pupils make outstanding progress overall through Key Stages 1 and 2. This exceptional progress was reflected in the high quality of learning in lessons observed during the inspection, and confirmed by the work in pupils' books. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar and sometimes very rapid progress because the school's programmes of support and additional help, from highly effective support staff, ensure that their individual needs are fully met.
- Outstanding teaching across the school ensures that pupils make very rapid progress. In Key Stage 1 pupils quickly learn the sounds that letters make, to support their reading and writing, and the mathematics skills they need to complete simple calculations. Pupils in Key Stage 2 continue to build on these excellent achievements and, by the time they leave the school at the end of Year 4, attainment in English and mathematics is much higher than expected.
- There were not enough pupils known to be eligible for free school meals in 2012 to comment on their attainment without identifying them. The school uses the funding very well to provide carefully-matched additional adult support, for example, through frequent small-group or one-to-one work. This helps eligible pupils to make faster progress. It also allocates extra resources to ensure that they can join in additional activities made available to all other pupils.
- Pupils make particularly good progress in developing their reading skills. This starts by teaching younger pupils to read by linking letters to the sounds they make in daily phonics lessons. The teaching of reading, through phonics lessons and guided reading activities, continues through all age groups. As a result, pupils throughout the school read exceptionally well and older pupils read fluently and with a good understanding of their texts.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Much of the teaching is outstanding and it is never less than good. Where teaching is outstanding, this is due to very well-planned and resourced lessons, rapid pace and the use of a variety of activities that greatly interest and enthuse pupils. Good links are made between different subjects and to previous learning.
- Teachers and support staff make high quality learning an extremely positive experience in lessons, and classrooms are stimulating places in which to learn. Success is celebrated and pupils are confident to 'have a go' even if they make mistakes. Pupils' work is regularly marked in considerable detail to provide personalised comments and extra tasks.
- In one outstanding literacy lesson, pupils in Year 3 made exceptional progress when learning

about different styles of poetry. The teacher demonstrated very good subject knowledge and very high expectations of the pupils, discussing the format of haiku, cinquains and kennings poems and challenging pupils to spot homographs, homophones, synonyms, alliterations and onomatopoeia. She made very good use of questioning to gauge and guide pupils' understanding. Pupils were given challenges that exactly matched the stage they were at. Good opportunities were provided for pupils to understand their own learning. Good teamwork between the teacher and teaching assistant ensured that all pupils were enthusiastically engaged in their challenges and made excellent progress.

- Teachers manage the behaviour of pupils very effectively, with the result that lessons are calm and purposeful. Pupils work hard and remain on task without the need for constant adult prompting.
- Each pupil's progress in reading, writing and mathematics is checked rigorously and tracked as they move through the school. Regular meetings about pupils' progress are held to discuss the information gained. These meetings ensure that teachers have an excellent understanding of how well the pupils in their charge are doing and the action they should take to support and help them to reach their challenging targets. The school also collects data regarding pupils' progress in the other subjects but this is not currently formally analysed.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- From a very early age, pupils behave exceptionally well together. Behaviour in class, around the school and in playground areas is outstanding. The school promotes positive relationships and tackles discrimination very effectively. As a result, relationships between pupils and between pupils and adults are extremely positive. Pupils cooperate well and contribute eagerly, and this is a major factor in the excellent progress made in many lessons. They respond very well to the many opportunities planned for them to discuss their ideas with other pupils, either with a partner or in small groups.
- An atmosphere of mutual respect pervades the school and this is reflected in the responses to the staff questionnaire, the school's own surveys exploring the views of parents and the views expressed on Parent View.
- Pupils greatly enjoy being in school and are very proud of their school. This is reflected in their improving levels of attendance.
- Pupils are confident that if there is something they cannot sort out themselves, then an adult will be on hand to help. Older pupils readily accept responsibilities such as helping to solve minor disagreements between younger pupils in the playground and operating equipment in assemblies.
- Pupils have a good understanding of different forms of bullying, including any that might be encountered through internet sites. They have a good understanding of how to keep safe and say they feel 'very safe' in school. Through membership of the school council and Eco council they demonstrate their pride in the school community and take their responsibilities very seriously.
- Pupils respond extremely well to the school's excellent promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They have a very clear sense of what is right and wrong.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher provides exceptionally strong leadership. His high expectations are a major factor in the continued improvements made since the last inspection. Thorough checks on every aspect of the school have correctly identified the right areas for further development, including the need for a more formal analysis of data obtained for subjects other than English and mathematics.
- All staff are dedicated and committed to providing an all-round education for pupils. They are extremely well motivated and are committed to improving the school. They share a sense of responsibility and work very effectively together. They regularly take advantage of training to enhance their work.
- Teaching is well led. As a result of regular monitoring and support, teaching is now consistently good or better across the school and continues to improve. Together with careful tracking of pupils' progress, the detailed information about teaching that comes from the monitoring ensures that planning for improvement is founded on good evidence and accurate data.
- A lively and creative curriculum is enhanced by a range of visits, some of which are residential, where pupils benefit from the experience of new and unfamiliar surroundings. French is taught across the school and pupils look forward to their regular visits to the school's excellent on-site Forest School resources.
- The school's promotion of equality of opportunity in all its work is outstanding. It is constantly alert to any variation in achievement and searches for new ways to overcome any weaknesses.
- The school provides outstanding pastoral care for its pupils. The small size of the school ensures that staff know all pupils and families very well. The school's very positive relationships with parents and carers and its excellent links with a wide range of partners contribute considerably to improvements in pupils' achievement and well-being.
- Strong links with local schools, including the new collaboration with Castle Primary in Mow Cop, help to overcome the potential isolation of a small school and these links enable staff to share their expertise and ensure pupils gain wider experiences and broaden their horizons.
- Local authority support has been helpful to the school in strengthening the way it checks on how well it is doing and in monitoring the quality of teaching.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body provides strong support for leaders and managers and challenges them to ensure that the school continues to improve and move forward. It makes certain that safeguarding is secure. It has overseen the arrangements for the use of the pupil premium funding and checked they are working. Governors are clear about the quality of teaching and how it is improved where necessary. They are aware of the arrangements for making sure teachers' pay is closely linked to their performance. They play a full part in the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning. Governors play a central role in shaping the long-term plans for the school and have supported and encouraged the recent collaboration with Castle Primary and the arrangements for joint leadership. Governors make sure they are well trained, and understand the data and what they show about the comparative performance of the school in relation to similar schools. The governing body knows what is happening in the school and is aware that overall provision is exceptional.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	124253
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	412593

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	77
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Helen Stead
Headteacher	David Bell (Executive Headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	21 February 2008
Telephone number	01538 306278
Fax number	N/A
Email address	office@st-michaels-orton.staffs.sch.uk;

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