



St Michael's Church of England Voluntary Aided Junior School
Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115197
Local Authority ESSEX
Inspection number 290162
Inspection dates 10–11 January 2007
Reporting inspector Martin Beale

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

Type of school	Junior	School address	Barnard Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Galleywood, Galleywood
Age range of pupils	7–11		Chelmsford, Essex CM2 8RR
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01245 472682
Number on roll (school)	203	Fax number	01245 474114
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Trevor Meacock
		Headteacher	Mr Christopher Beazeley
Date of previous school inspection	28 January 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
7–11	10–11 January 2007	290162

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Michael's is an average sized Church of England junior school. All but a very few pupils are of White British heritage. Free school meal entitlement is below average. One pupil has a statement of special educational needs. Attainment on entry is broadly average, as is the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. The headteacher left at the end of the autumn term. The deputy head is currently leading the school until the new headteacher takes up the post at the start of the summer term.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The inspection endorses the school's view that its effectiveness and the value for money it gives are good. St Michael's is going through a change of headteacher against a background of falling pupil numbers in the area. Good leadership and management means that the school has secure systems in place to cope with the challenges it faces. It is well placed to build on its improvement since the last inspection. One key factor is that there is a shared commitment from a strong staff team to search for ways to improve their performance. Governors fulfil their responsibilities well and are playing a crucial role in supporting and assisting the acting headteacher at this time of change. Parents are largely in support of all that the school is doing for their children.

Pupils are prepared well for the next stage of their education. A dip in 2006 in the improving pattern of test results has been tackled well and standards have returned to the above average position they were in before this slight setback. Achievement is good because teaching is good. Lessons are planned carefully so that the needs of all pupils are generally met. Classroom assistants make a substantial contribution to the progress of the pupils with whom they work. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are catered for well. They make consistently good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans. The few pupils learning English as an additional language also make good progress. More able pupils reach levels above those expected by Year 6, but they are not consistently challenged in some classes. Furthermore, the school does not provide sufficient additional programmes to broaden and extend gifted and talented pupils of whom it has several.

On entering the school, the visitor is taken by the harmonious atmosphere and sense of purpose. Pupils go about their work diligently and take their many responsibilities seriously. They are lively, confident, friendly and helpful. Their personal development is good. They talk with pride about their school, make a considerable contribution to its success and happily accept responsibilities as they get older. When asked, the pupils can think of very little they would change. Pupils' enjoyment of learning is obvious. As one pupil said, 'Teachers make learning fun'. They report that bullying is rare and dealt with very effectively if it should occur. As a result they are happy, confident and secure. They report that there is always someone to turn to if they have a problem.

The good levels of care, support and guidance are much appreciated and valued by parents. Whenever necessary, the skills and expertise of external agencies are utilised to support the pupils' academic and personal development. Marking and the way teachers use assessment information to guide pupils' learning have received much attention, but opportunities for pupils to respond to assessment and their teacher's marking are not consistently exploited. The good curriculum is enhanced by many interesting additional activities and features such as 'Culture Week'. This year pupils are learning about many aspects of life in India. Pupils also have many opportunities to learn the importance of diet and exercise for a healthy lifestyle.

What the school should do to improve further

- Enrich the learning and development of the most able pupils and those with particular talents more consistently by providing greater challenge in lessons, extending their thinking and broadening their experiences.
- Give pupils more opportunity to respond to marking and act on their teachers' guidance to improve the quality of their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The dip in performance in the 2006 tests followed two years of considerable improvement during which time pupils made good progress from their average attainment on entry in Year 3. Pupils are again making good progress and standards are above average by Year 6. Test results were above average in 2005, but broadly average in 2006. Most pupils still reached nationally expected standards in English, mathematics and science with a reasonable number exceeding this level. Several Year 6 pupils missed their reasonably challenging targets in 2006 but most are now in line to reach and in many cases exceed these. English results fell because performance was weaker in writing than reading. A small number of pupils did not do as well as expected in the writing test and marginally failed to reach their targets as a result. The school has taken effective action to improve and extend the range of pupils' writing and carefully monitor progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils thoroughly enjoy all that is provided for them and participate in large numbers in the wide range of additional activities. They behave well, move around the school safely and are polite to each other and all adults. Attendance is regularly well above average. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils reflect on their ideas and the consequences of their actions. They take responsibilities seriously and contribute considerably to the life of the school through the house system, the school council and when acting as playground leaders. They work together well, learning how to share tasks as part of a team. These characteristics and their good levels of basic skills prepare the pupils well for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Most lessons are taught well, engage and interest the pupils and support their good progress. Some have outstanding features based on the teacher's high expectations of the pupils' work, contribution and behaviour. Interactive whiteboards are used

creatively to make learning interesting and aid the teaching of difficult ideas. Teachers ensure that pupils understand the purpose of the work, but do not consistently make their expectations clear about what pupils, particularly the more able, are expected to achieve. Valuable opportunities are provided for pupils to evaluate their own work and that of others, which they do constructively to improve their work. This is not always the case. Pupils are not consistently given the opportunity to act upon suggestions teachers make to improve the quality of subsequent work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The broad and interesting curriculum supports well both the pupils' academic and personal development. Their experiences are extended by a wide range of extra-curricular activities, clubs and trips. The curriculum meets the needs of most pupils and provides specific programmes for pupils who are falling below nationally expected standards. However, it does not provide sufficient planned programmes to enrich and challenge the experiences and thinking of gifted and talented pupils. Links with local secondary schools are exploited well to extend the pupils' experiences particularly in sport. Specific activities such as 'Culture Week' help to give the pupils an understanding of how others live. Music and art feature strongly in the school's daily life and in yearly musical productions.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Parents justifiably feel very confident that their children are safe and well cared for. Health and safety procedures are all fully in place and conscientiously observed. Child protection procedures are clear and widely understood. As a result, pupils feel safe and secure. Pupils with specific medical conditions are catered for well and monitored very thoroughly. Arrangements assist a smooth transition into the school in Year 3 and then as pupils move on to secondary schools after Year 6. Thorough systems for tracking the progress of pupils enable intervention programmes to be deployed where they are falling behind. Pupils generally know how well they are doing and what they should do to improve, but this is not consistent across all classes.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Robust management systems mean that the school is well placed to maintain recent improvements during changes in leadership. The acting headteacher had played a significant role in many recent improvements and is ensuring that the drive for further progress is continued along with strong support from the staff team. The direction is clear, understood by all and focused successfully on meeting the academic and personal needs of all pupils. The school has a very clear understanding and accurate judgement of its qualities, based on a thorough monitoring programme and the careful evaluation of assessment data. This leads to appropriate and rapid action to improve performance,

as in rectifying the dip in standards in 2006. However, the school's planning, while based on appropriate priorities, is not always explicit enough about how the actions to be taken will have a positive impact on pupils' learning. Governors challenge the school to improve and have acted rapidly to deal with budget constraints caused by falling pupil numbers in the area and to secure good value for money.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

11 January 2007

Dear Pupils

St Michael's Church of England VA Junior School, Barnard Road, Galleywood, Chelmsford, Essex
CM2 8RR

I am writing to thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave to the inspectors when we visited your school. You were all very kind and helpful and showed how proud you are of your school. We enjoyed talking with you and your teachers and watching you learn, particularly during the activities in 'Cultural Week'. There are many aspects of your school that we thought were good. You, your parents and teachers are right in thinking that you go to a good school.

You make good progress during your time at St Michael's. Most of you achieve well, and many of you exceed, the standards expected by the time you move on to secondary school. You thoroughly enjoy school, attend regularly, work hard and behave sensibly. You settle in well when you join in Year 3 and are prepared well to move on after Year 6. The care and support you receive is good, particularly when you find learning difficult. You are learning the importance of diet and exercise for a healthy lifestyle. You take your responsibilities seriously and make a considerable contribution to the life of the school.

Your teachers and governors are trying hard to make the school even better. There are some areas where we judge that improvements could be made. Those of you capable of high standards need to be challenged more consistently in lessons and through other planned activities. We are also suggesting that some of you are given more opportunity to act upon suggestions your teachers make to improve your work. We are sure you and your teachers will work hard to make this all happen.

We wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Martin Beale

Lead inspector