

St Michael's Church of England (Aided) Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106350
Local Authority	Trafford
Inspection number	287495
Inspection dates	21–22 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Mr Gordon Alston

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	241
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governors	Mr C W Young
Headteacher	Mrs A Kimber
Date of previous school inspection	October 2001
School address	The Grove Flixton Urmston Manchester M41 6JB
Telephone number	0161 7483669
Fax number	0161 7483669

Age group	3–11
Inspection date(s)	21–22 March 2007
Inspection number	287495

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average-sized school serves mainly White British pupils and a few from other minority ethnic backgrounds. The area has little social or economic disadvantage and the entitlement to free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. No pupils are at the early stages of learning English. In the last two years the school has received a range of awards including the National Healthy School Award, an Action for Nature award and the Basic Skills Quality Mark for the second time. At present it is very close to achieving the Green Flag Eco gold award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

'Loving, caring, kind, supportive, friendly, family-orientated are all words I can use to describe St Michael's school and its staff,' was a typical parental response. This view was reflected in inspectors' judgement that this is an outstanding school in which pupils are exceptionally well cared for and supported. Pupils achieve extremely well as they move through the school, including the more able pupils and those who have learning difficulties and/ or disabilities, building very well on the excellent start in the Foundation Stage. By the time they leave the school, pupils are thoughtful and mature young people with superb attitudes to learning. Attendance is good because pupils greatly enjoy the creativity of lessons and opportunities to express themselves through their work. Relationships are excellent; consequently, pupils are extremely mindful of one another and their behaviour is exemplary.

The fact that the school has judged itself to be good rather than outstanding reflects the view of the headteacher and staff that improvement is an ongoing process with no room for complacency. Together they have developed some major initiatives which clearly demonstrate the school's outstanding capacity to improve. All issues from the previous inspection have been dealt with.

There is now impressive teaching and learning throughout the school resulting in pupils achieving well both academically and personally. Outstanding leadership and management at all levels ensure that all aspects of the school's work are rigorously reviewed on a regular basis in order to maintain the current high standards and quality of provision. A strong feature is the headteacher's knowledge and involvement with every pupil. Standards by Year 6 have consistently been significantly above the national average; pupils' results were the school's best ever in 2006. That said, the school does not rest on its laurels, as demonstrated by the vigorous work undertaken to improve writing, where standards have risen, and a recent focus on improving pupils' problem solving skills. This is just beginning to permeate through into standards in mathematics.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and of their children's work; this impacts positively on pupils' progress. Everyone plays their part and is justifiably proud of the exceptionally high quality of the environment and standards of cleanliness. This contributes greatly to pupils' feeling of well-being and enjoyment of school, preparing them well to be very responsible citizens. Pupils respond exceptionally well to the rich and varied curriculum. They relish the challenge of school and their lessons. Their achievements are testimony to the outstanding value for money provided by the school.

What the school should do to improve further

The school is aware of where improvements are needed and has introduced strategies to tackle them.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Children's overall attainment is broadly average for their age when they start in Nursery class. They make very good progress so that most reach and a number exceed national expectations, particularly in their personal development, by the time they leave the Foundation Stage. The school builds very well on pupils' early skills so that they make exceptional progress as they move through the school. The more able pupils make very good progress and those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve equally well, frequently reaching the levels expected for their age and at times beyond that. Standards have been consistently above average at Key Stage 1, and well above average at Key Stage 2 in English, mathematics and science. The reasons for this high level of performance can be found in the consistently challenging teaching and the thoroughness of systems for checking progress. These also enabled the school to identify reasons for the slight 'dip' to above average standards in 2005, and also in 2006 to challenge its own performance, particularly with regard to aspects of pupils' mathematical skills. Pupils' problem solving skills are not as strong as their computational skills.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. Pupils clearly enjoy their lessons and have excellent attitudes to their work. This is evident, for instance, in the popularity of extra-curricular activities and the above average levels of attendance. Pupils have a keen awareness of personal safety and how to lead a healthy and fit lifestyle. This is because of the excellent work of the school in achieving the National Healthy Schools Award and also in raising the awareness of pupils to environmental issues both in school and beyond.

Pupils contribute exceptionally well to the school community and the locality. There are many opportunities for them to give their opinions and to support new initiatives in school. The school council, eco-team and gardening club members are particularly active in making the school a learning environment of top quality. In addition, the school contributes very positively to projects such as wildlife areas outside school grounds.

Pupils are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of their education, having achieved excellent skills in basic subjects of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology and outstanding qualities of leadership, independence and teamwork.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The quality of teaching and learning is consistently at least good and often outstanding. A particularly strong feature is the good tracking and analysis of learners' needs which guide teachers' planning. As a result, the work provided is well suited to the needs of pupils of all abilities. Teachers expect and ensure that pupils work hard and learn at a brisk rate so that they make good progress. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well supported by all staff. Conscientious teaching assistants play an important role in this. Excellent relationships promote pupils' willingness to try hard. Teachers' classroom management is very good and pupils display excellent behaviour and attitudes to work. They are encouraged to work independently, and also cooperatively, often with pupils of different ability. Well marked work helps pupils know what to do next to improve. Challenging literacy and numeracy targets have made pupils and teachers aware of what individuals should try to achieve, thereby raising expectations and the quality of teaching and learning. There have been new ideas introduced in teaching problem solving skills and pupils are becoming sharper in these aspects.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school provides a rich range of experiences for pupils, starting from the youngest age groups onwards. The strong focus on literacy and numeracy ensures excellent links between subjects that promote basic skills. The curriculum is enriched by a focus on environmental issues and making an impact in the drive to live in an ecologically sustainable way. There are special projects, for example in science, music and art, which give all pupils much to enjoy and especially appeal to the most talented pupils. The curriculum makes an outstanding contribution to the fitness of pupils not only through physical education but also through a very wide range of extra clubs and coaching opportunities. In addition there is an excellent range of activities other than sports that contribute to pupils' personal development, for example a choir and recorder groups, French and computer clubs (one specifically for girls) as well as residential experiences. Pupils enthuse about the many visits and visitors they have and how this makes their learning fun and exciting.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Outstanding systems to promote the personal development of pupils are key strengths of the school. A parental comment, 'The school always goes the extra mile', is a fine summary of the school's approach. For example, the school promotes the safety of pupils through several initiatives, such as promoting the 'Walking Bus' and cycling training, and their emotional development through teaching specific programmes. The tracking of pupils' personal and academic progress is excellent. It identifies pupils in need of additional support and, as a result, all groups of pupils achieve to their potential. Both parents and pupils have an excellent understanding

of how well the pupils are doing and what they need to do to improve. All aspects of child protection, safe recruitment of staff, risk assessment, and health and safety are in place, meeting requirements.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide outstanding leadership and have set a very clear direction for the school. They maintain high expectations for standards and the quality of provision, ensuring that there is strength in the school's capacity to improve. All staff members, governors and parents share that vision and contribute fully to the school's continuing success and, because of its inclusiveness, the school is now at the heart of the community. Improvement since the previous inspection has been outstanding. The headteacher, well supported by staff, successfully steered the school since its last inspection and has firmly embedded outstanding teaching, achievement and quality of care. The headteacher knows the academic and personal qualities of every pupil, further ensuring that their potential is reached. Self-evaluation is rigorous, though too modest in some of its judgments, given what has already been achieved. The school is justifiably recognised by the parents as 'an excellent place for children to be'. Governors understand the school's strengths very well and are equally clear about where the school can do better. They are developing their role in school self-evaluation.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

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.

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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

Annex B



22 March 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Michael's Church of England (Aided) Primary School, Manchester, M41 6JB

After spending two days in your school, I want to thank you all so much for making the experience a very enjoyable one. We came to see how well your school is performing and you had a very important role in this, just as your teachers had. You did not let the school down in any way. In fact your excellent behaviour and relationships are a credit to you all and helped us to judge just how well you and your school are doing.

Well, what did we think after these two days? I hope our report will help your teachers feel all their hard work is worthwhile. I always ask children for their views of the school and one boy said, 'I can't wait to get to school some days – it's like one big happy family.' He was right; your school is an outstanding school. You have a very committed headteacher who leads your school very successfully and has your well-being at the centre of all she does. She and all the staff make learning very interesting, which helps you achieve such high standards. Your results in national tests are much better than many schools. The staff try to make school enjoyable and exciting with the many visits you go on and lots of visitors to school. We were pleased to see how hard you work, but equally important is how well you all get on. We saw lots of pupils who have responsibilities and do them very well, particularly 'Wake Up Shake Up' and the 'Fair Trade' project. We were also very pleased to see all the clubs you have. You take regular exercise, and sport is important to you.

You are doing really well in all the subjects you are learning. One area where you could perhaps do even better is to improve your mental and problem solving skills in mathematics. In working in lessons with you I know many of you felt this was something you felt you could improve yourselves and your teachers are already putting new ideas in place to do this.

Finally, we would like to thank you again and, if you and your teachers work as hard as when we were in school, we are sure you and your school will continue to do well.

Best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Gordon Alston
Lead Inspector