

St Michael's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104377
Local Authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	377076
Inspection dates	19–20 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Sharona Semlali

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 of pupils on the school roll	243
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rosalie Watkins
Headteacher	Catherine Williams
Date of previous school inspection	10 March 2009
School address	Telford Gardens Merry Hill Wolverhampton WV3 7LE
Telephone number	01902 556368
Fax number	01902 556370
Email address	stmichaelsrcprimaryschool@wolverhampton.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspection team observed 15 parts of lessons taught by 10 teachers. Meetings were held with members of staff, two groups of pupils, parents and carers, a member of the governing body and a representative of the Parent Teachers Association (PTA). They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including policies and procedures for keeping pupils safe, tracking information for different groups of pupils, school improvement planning, samples of monitoring activities and samples of work in pupils' books. The responses in the questionnaires returned by 46 parents and carers were scrutinised.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How effective is the school in narrowing the gap in attainment between boys and girls, particularly in writing?
- How successful has the school been in ensuring that more-able pupils attain the levels they are capable of?
- How successful have all leaders been in improving the curriculum, particularly in information and communication technology (ICT)?
- How effectively do leaders monitor and evaluate their areas of responsibility, and with what impact on pupils' outcomes?
- What mechanisms is the school using to engage and involve parents and carers, and what has been the impact?

Information about the school

St Michael's is now an average-sized primary school, having reduced its level of admissions. The majority of pupils come from a White British background. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is low. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is similar to the national average. The school has gained Healthy Schools Status and the Activemark in recognition of its work.

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 is a satisfactory and improving school. Since the last inspection a period of long-term staff absences has hindered pupils' achievement. However, the headteacher, the newly formed senior team and the governing body have worked diligently in implementing strategies to address this, and their impact is now starting to emerge. There is a clear drive and determination to provide the best for the pupils.

The school has a nurturing family atmosphere which contributes to pupils' sense of security. As one pupil said, 'We have teachers who understand our problems.' Pupils are proud of their school. This is seen by the way that they are keen to take on responsibilities. Pupils are happy to come to school. This is reflected in their above average attendance. Pupils' behaviour is good and they are very polite and courteous. They have a good understanding of the importance of having a healthy lifestyle. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where they make good progress in all the areas of learning. In Years 1 to 6 pupils make satisfactory progress, and they leave the school with attainment in English and mathematics that is broadly in line with national averages. Intervention groups are used appropriately to address any identified underachievement, and this is proving effective in closing the attainment gap between boys and girls.

Good care, support and guidance ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are helped to make the same progress as their peers. The provision for ICT has improved since the last inspection, and it is now used effectively to support learning in different subjects. However, limited planned opportunities for pupils to practise and consolidate their writing skills in different subjects and a general lack of challenge in teachers' use of questioning mean that progress in writing is not as good as in other key subject areas. The quality of teaching is satisfactory but varies across the school. Despite some common strengths such as good use of resources, too many lessons are not conducted briskly enough for pupils to make consistently good progress.

Rigorous and robust systems ensure that pupils are safe. The effectiveness of self-evaluation is satisfactory. The governing body knows the strengths and weaknesses of the school and the challenges that it faces. The headteacher and the senior leaders have been instrumental in shaping the strategic direction of the school and have rightly focused on improving weakness in teaching. The middle leaders are still

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at the early stages of monitoring and evaluating their areas of responsibility, but are becoming more confident and effective. The school has satisfactory capacity for further sustained improvement.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress and raise attainment in writing by:
 - ensuring that teachers encourage pupils to make sufficiently extended and precise answers to questions in discussions, so they express their ideas lucidly to inform their writing
 - providing more opportunities, especially for more-able pupils, for extended writing across different subjects.

- Improve teaching from satisfactory to good by ensuring that:
 - the pace of learning is not restricted by too much teacher talk with too little pupil activity
 - teachers make consistently effective use of questions to probe pupils' understanding and extend learning
 - introductions to lessons match the learning needs of pupils with different abilities with greater accuracy.

- Develop the role of middle leaders so that they play a more prominent role in monitoring and evaluating the school's work, and guiding its strategic direction.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

The overall achievement of all groups is satisfactory. In most lessons they make satisfactory progress and participate well. For example, during a literacy lesson, inspectors observed pupils enjoying touching and talking about the different resources found in autumn such as prickly conkers, smooth conkers and rustic leaves to the rest of the group. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those which the school has identified as underachieving receive carefully targeted support from teaching assistants. Pupils who benefit from these interventions often make good progress. Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge that are broadly in line with those expected for their age.

A strong feature in most of the lessons observed was the positive attitudes held by the pupils and their willingness to learn. For example, in a physical education lesson, pupils were well motivated, keen and highly engaged in concentrating on imagining themselves being a Victorian pupil, playing games in that era.

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Pupils enjoy participating in exercise and know it is important to keep fit. The take-up of after-school sports activities is high. These strengths are reflected in the Healthy School Status and the Activemark award. Members of the school council, house captains and prefects successfully fulfil their roles. They raise the awareness of others to conserve energy and recycle waste. Pupils are keen fundraisers for a range of charities and have made good links with the older residents. Pupils' good spiritual development is based on the strong ethos of the school. They respect the views of others and have a well-developed sense of fair play. Pupils' constructive relationship with others, together with their satisfactory progress and good attendance, prepare them appropriately for the future.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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	2
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	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

In the most effective lessons teachers make good use of the interactive whiteboard to clarify misconceptions and to help to sustain the pupils' concentration and stimulate their imagination. They use a variety of teaching strategies. Pupils have sufficient time to talk with their partners. This was seen in a Year 6 literacy lesson where pupils were given the opportunity to re-tell a story which they had been reading in pairs. This helped to develop their oral and listening skills. Where the pace was brisk pupils were more attentive. In the least effective lessons, too much teacher talk restricts pupils' productivity, particularly in writing. The introductions of lessons do not always cater for the different needs of all pupils. Also, questioning by the teacher does not always probe pupils' understanding so that they can extend their learning. Pupils are beginning to know their targets and often refer to them in

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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lessons.

Pupils have the chance to go on residential visits and enjoy a variety of trips. Year 6 transition arrangements are carefully planned with local secondary schools to ensure that they are appropriately ready and prepared for the next stage of their education. The use of the social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) programme is embedded well into the curriculum, helping to support pupils' personal development. Overall support for literacy and numeracy across the curriculum is satisfactory, and in ICT pupils are gaining more confidence and skills. However, pupils have fewer opportunities for developing their writing at length.

The school's caring and supportive atmosphere enables pupils to learn and feel valued as individuals. Parents and carers are confident that their children are well looked after. One said, 'I can always approach the headteacher and the class teacher if there is a problem and if I need to sort things out.' Strong links are established with outside agencies to support individuals whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable and help them to overcome barriers to learning.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The overall impact of leaders and managers in embedding ambition and driving improvement is satisfactory. This is seen in their success in narrowing the attainment gap between the boys and girls, and in tackling weaknesses in provision and outcomes for pupils. The senior leaders are now confident with the management systems of monitoring and evaluating their aspect of responsibility, but this is still in its early stage of development for the middle leaders.

The effectiveness of the governing body is satisfactory. Its members are visible in the school when helping some of the pupils with their reading, and through informal monitoring walks. It holds the school to account appropriately for tackling important weaknesses such as improving outcomes for the more-able pupils, and seeks the view of the parents and carers through devising its own questionnaires.

The school has a positive relationship with parents and carers, who say they feel informed about the main events in school thanks to text messaging, letters and newsletters. The school's effectiveness in promoting equal opportunity and tackling discrimination is satisfactory. Senior leaders are tracking and evaluating the

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performance of different groups of pupils and individuals and this is enabling them to quickly identify any underachievement. The school satisfactorily promotes community cohesion through developing links with other schools to raise funds in order to develop a school in India. Pupils are made aware of other cultures through their fundraising events for charities.

Safeguarding arrangements are good. The school puts health and safety at the heart of all its work with all pupils. It completely fulfils its statutory duties on safer recruitment of staff. All staff attend regular child protection training and pupils agree that they feel safe in school.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	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	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
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

Children achieve well in the Early Years Foundation Stage because teaching is well matched to their learning needs. Children smile and laugh easily because they find that learning is fun. They make good progress in all the areas of learning, but do particularly well in communication, language and literacy and in personal development as a result of the strong emphasis given to these aspects of learning.

Children settle quickly into the Early Years Foundation Stage. They learn to take turns and to respect the feelings of others, developing into confident learners. Planning is thorough and effective and is based on accurate assessments of children's needs. Adults explain tasks clearly. Their focused teaching of groups is effective. Just occasionally, when children are engaged in child-initiated tasks, adults miss opportunities to intervene to accelerate learning.

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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	2

Views of parents and carers

Almost all of the parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire were positive. They were particularly pleased with the way the school keeps their children safe, the way it is led and managed, and the way it encourages them to adapt to having a healthy lifestyle. A very small number raised concerns about unacceptable behaviour, lack of support for their child's learning, and the closure of the after-school club. Inspectors found that behaviour was good, that there was appropriate support for pupils' learning, and that the governing body had to close the after-school club because it was no longer viable.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Michael's Catholic 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 46 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 243 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	32	70	13	28	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	29	63	17	37	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	20	43	23	50	3	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	20	43	25	54	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	30	65	16	35	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	28	61	15	33	3	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	34	74	12	26	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)	25	54	21	46	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	21	46	24	52	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	23	50	20	43	3	7	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	20	43	25	54	1	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	23	50	23	50	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	27	59	19	41	0	0	0	0

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 all 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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 are for the period 1 September 2010 to 8 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



21 September 2011

Dear Children

Inspection of St Michael's Catholic Primary School, Wolverhampton, WV3 7LE

I would like to thank you for making the inspection team feel so welcome when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed talking with you and meeting some of your parents and carers. What you told us was very useful.

St Michael's Catholic Primary School is a satisfactory school. There are many good things about it. For example:

- you are proud of your school, and particularly the trophies you have won that are on display
- you relish taking on leadership responsibilities
- you enjoy coming to school and your attendance is good
- you have a good understanding about how to keep yourselves healthy
- the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress
- you are well cared for by staff and kept safe.

However, there are also things that we would like to see improved. Teaching is satisfactory but variable in quality, and while you make satisfactory progress in reading and mathematics, you do not do quite so well in writing.

We have asked the school to do the following things to help it improve further.

- Help you to make better progress in your writing by extending your vocabulary and giving you more chances to write in different subjects.
- Improve teaching to make sure that you always do well in lessons.
- Give teachers more time to look at how well you are doing in each subject.

You can help by working hard and telling your teachers if your work is too easy or hard. Best wishes to you all.

Yours sincerely

Sharona Semlali
Lead inspector

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