

**St Michael's Primary School
Port Glasgow
Inverclyde Council
23 October 2007**

Contents	Page
1. Background	1
2. Key strengths	1
3. What are the views of parents, pupils and staff?	2
4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?	2
5. How well are pupils' learning needs met?	4
6. How good is the environment for learning?	4
7. Leading and improving the school	6
Appendix 1 Indicators of quality	8
Appendix 2 Summary of questionnaire responses	9
How can you contact us?	10

1. Background

St Michael's Primary School was inspected in June 2007 as part of a national sample of primary education. The inspection covered key aspects of the work of the school at all stages. It evaluated pupils' achievements, the effectiveness of the school, the environment for learning, the school's processes for self-evaluation and innovation, and its capacity for improvement. There was a particular focus on attainment in English language and mathematics.

HM Inspectors examined pupils' work and interviewed groups of pupils, including the pupil council, and staff. Members of the inspection team also met the chairperson of the School Board, representatives of the parent-teacher association (PTA), a group of parents¹ and others who made regular contributions to the work of the school.

St Michael's Primary School is a denominational school serving the Woodhall, Kelburn, Mid Auchenleck and Devol areas of Port Glasgow. At the time of the inspection the roll was 273. In 2004, the education authority merged Holy Family Primary School with St Michael's Primary School and refurbished the St Michael's building. It reopened in 2006. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was well above the national average. Pupils' attendance was below the national average.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- Pupils' enthusiasm for learning and their effective use of information and communications technology.
- Friendly, courteous and well-behaved pupils, mutually respectful relationships between staff and pupils and the quality of staff teamwork.
- The school's culture of inclusion and commitment to pupils' care and welfare.
- Excellent partnerships with parents and the wider community, in particular, the quality of the support provided by the parents who ran the school library.
- The leadership of the headteacher.

¹ Throughout this report, the term 'parents' should be taken to include foster carers, residential care staff and carers who are relatives or friends.

3. What are the views of parents, pupils and staff?

HM Inspectors analysed responses to questionnaires issued to a sample of parents, P4 to P7 pupils, and to all staff. Information about the responses to the questionnaires appears in Appendix 2.

Parents, pupils and staff were very positive about almost all aspects of the school. Parents thought that the school had a good reputation in the community and was well led. They felt that their children enjoyed being at school, and that there was a high degree of mutual respect between teachers and pupils. Pupils thought that teachers explained things clearly and helped them when they had difficulties with their work. A significant number thought that arrangements for selecting pupils to take on extra responsibilities could be fairer and should involve more pupils. Staff liked working in the school and appreciated the frequent celebration of pupils' successes. They thought that communication between senior managers and staff was effective and that the school was well led.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Pupils' learning experiences and achievements

The very good curriculum provided pupils with a suitably broad and balanced experience. It gave appropriate attention at all stages to developing pupils' skills in enterprise and citizenship. Pupils' work had won the education authority's gold award for enterprise. The school had improved programmes in English language and mathematics and this was helping to raise pupils' attainment. Pupils benefited from new approaches to active learning through play at P1 and P2. The school was successfully increasing the time allocated to physical education (PE) to two hours each week for all pupils. Well-planned visits and contributions from visitors enriched pupils' learning. The quality of teaching had important strengths. Teachers organised lessons well and gave clear explanations and instructions. They interacted well with pupils and were extending their use of questioning to develop and challenge pupils' thinking. They were developing helpful approaches to sharing with pupils what they were expected to learn and how to achieve success. In taking this forward, teachers were well placed to build on examples of existing good practice in using learning aims to make pupils aware of the skills they were developing.

The quality of learning was very good. Pupils demonstrated successful learning across a wide range of activities, and shared what they had learned with others at assemblies. They worked conscientiously with minimum supervision and were enthusiastic about their learning. They collaborated well in paired and group tasks. At P1 and P2, pupils interacted well and helped each other during creative role play activities, and in finding solutions to practical problems. Pupils at P5 worked together productively to compile a comprehensive display on travel to demonstrate what they had learned from their enterprise topic. At all stages, pupils' effective use of information and communications technology (ICT) in a variety of contexts was a key strength. They produced a range of spreadsheets and databases, word processed stories, poems and reports well and used the Internet effectively for research. They used interactive whiteboards confidently to

enhance their learning. Pupils worked well with teachers to maintain a good pace of learning.

The school promoted pupils' wider achievements very effectively. At all stages, pupils demonstrated a range of skills and developed high levels of confidence and self-esteem. At P5, pupils performed at two concerts with Scottish Opera in the Port Glasgow town hall, using skills developed during coaching workshops. In addition, pupils at P3 to P7 had achieved success in recitation and singing at the Greenock Festival and Burns Competition. The effective pupil council and junior road safety officers helped pupils develop good citizenship skills. Pupils' involvement in playground initiatives, games and activities had helped the school win the Provost's Playground Award in 2006. The efforts of the enthusiastic Eco group and gardening club, and other pupils from across the school had contributed significantly to the school's silver Eco School Scotland Award. Many pupils developed their fitness and team-working skills by participating in a variety of after-school sports activities. At P7, pupils developed a range of personal and team skills further during an outdoor education week.

English language

The overall quality of attainment in English language was very good, and had improved over the past two years. Pupils made good progress in their classwork. Most attained appropriate national levels in listening, talking, reading and writing. At most stages, an increasing number of pupils achieved these levels earlier than might normally be expected. Across the school, pupils listened attentively to each other and teachers. They provided full answers during class and group discussions. Pupils' attainment in talking was very good and the majority exceeded expected national levels. At P6, pupils discussed a range of topics confidently and built well on each other's ideas. At all stages, pupils read a good range of fiction and non-fiction regularly, and spoke enthusiastically about favourite books and authors. They wrote frequently for a range of purposes and audiences. At P2, P5 and P7, for example, pupils wrote 'mini books' which they shared with pupils at other stages. Across the school, a strong feature of pupils' writing was its well-chosen vocabulary. This set the scene and created characters and mood effectively in personal and imaginative writing. At all stages, pupils presented their work neatly and accurately.

Mathematics

The overall quality of attainment in mathematics was good and had improved in the last two years. Most pupils achieved appropriate national levels of attainment. Increasing numbers attained these levels earlier than might normally be expected, particularly at P2 and P3. Almost all pupils were making good progress in their classwork. Across the school, pupils organised and presented information in graphs and tables accurately. At P4, for example, pupils planned a camping trip using spreadsheets to calculate costs. At P5, they used databases and computer-generated bar graphs well in their gardening topic. At all stages, pupils were confident in written and mental calculation and demonstrated a good understanding of number, money and measurement. They were less secure with decimals and fractions. Across the school, pupils had a good understanding of shape, position and movement. At the early stages, pupils identified and discussed the properties of common two- and three-dimensional shapes. Across the school, pupils were developing good skills for solving problems. Pupils used their

mathematical skills regularly across the curriculum. Examples included the calculation of costs, target sales and profits within enterprise, and graphs of the rate of cooling water as part of a science investigation.

5. How well are pupils' learning needs met?

The school had very good arrangements to meet pupils' needs. Teachers used their knowledge of pupils well to target support for individuals and groups. They varied teaching approaches and resources well, including the use of ICT, to meet different learning needs. Pupils were benefiting from improved approaches to providing them with focused feedback. Teachers had also begun to involve them in assessing their own and each other's work. These activities were helping pupils to understand their strengths and identify ways to improve. Classroom assistants and auxiliaries for pupils with additional support needs provided very effective support for pupils and teachers. The nursery nurse supported the development of pupils' literacy, numeracy, problem solving and social skills very well. The school had effective approaches to help to develop pupils' reading skills. These included a paired reading programme and a very good range of support provided in the school library. The specialist assistance of visiting teachers for pupils with specific additional support needs, including profoundly deaf pupils, helped them to make very good progress. Staff from the East Inverclyde integrated community school and educational support agencies provided effective assistance for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural problems.

6. How good is the environment for learning

Aspect	Comment
Pastoral care	Staff were highly committed to pupils' care and welfare. They were sensitive to pupils' individual needs, particularly those of more vulnerable pupils. They followed the school's clear and appropriate arrangements for pastoral care, including child protection, the prevention of bullying and early morning attendance checks. The school's approaches to pupils' personal and social development included a suitable emphasis on alcohol and substance misuse and personal relationships. Pupils in the school nutrition group helped to ensure healthy choices at the tuckshop. Healthy lunch options, easy access to water and a breakfast club further supported pupils' health and wellbeing across the school. Catering staff rewarded pupils' healthy choices with 'food points' as part of the school's awards scheme. The school had very good arrangements for pupils entering P1 and for pupils in P7 transferring to St Stephen's High School.

Aspect	Comment
Quality of accommodation and facilities	<p>The education authority had refurbished the school to a very high standard. It provided an excellent, motivating environment for learning. Pupils used computers and interactive whiteboards regularly in their classrooms and the well-equipped computer suite. At the early stages, pupils benefited from well-resourced provision for active learning. The large, bright gymnasium and changing rooms enhanced pupils' experience in PE. All pupils had ready access to the well-stocked library. The Eco group and gardening club had helped make the entrance to the school attractive and welcoming. They had planted shrubs and flowers and set up a bird-feeding area. Picnic tables in the playground provided additional social spaces for pupils. The school had appropriate security arrangements and provided disabled access throughout.</p>
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality	<p>The school promoted a very positive ethos. Pupils, staff and parents identified very strongly with the school and were very proud of its achievements. Pupils were friendly and courteous and parents and visitors felt very welcome in the school. Pupils contributed effectively to school decision making, for example during the school refurbishment programme and through the pupil council. Almost all pupils behaved very well and cooperated with their teachers. Staff teamwork was strong and effective and staff felt valued. They set high expectations for pupils' behaviour, effort and the quality of work they should produce. Staff used praise well in lessons and celebrated pupils' successes regularly, at assemblies and in displays around the school. They motivated pupils effectively by giving a valued 'Thumbs Up' award, a range of certificates and stickers, and a Pupil of the Week award. Staff gave a high priority to inclusion and promoted equality and fairness actively in lessons. Pupils developed their understanding of diversity and equality through their work on anti-sectarianism, the school's support for a leprosy project in Zimbabwe and during a Disability Awareness Week. To support the inclusion of profoundly deaf pupils, pupils and staff at P1 and P2 learned sign language. The school had very good arrangements for religious observance.</p>

Aspect	Comment
Partnership with parents and the community	The school had developed excellent partnerships with parents, the very active School Board and PTA, and the wider community. It kept parents well informed of its work and pupils' progress through, for example, helpful workshops, parents' evenings and a series of interesting newsletters. The headteacher surveyed parents' views regularly on aspects of the school's work. The parents who managed the library provided storytelling sessions, targeted books for pupils who had difficulties with reading and supported pupils across the school in reading as widely as possible. Links with local businesses helped widen pupils' horizons as part of education for enterprise and citizenship. The school made very effective use of its partnerships with former pupils, universities and companies to motivate pupils and raise their aspirations. Pupils represented the school in the community very well through activities such as the country dancing club's performances at local centres. The school had established very productive partnerships with associated schools. The chaplain made regular and valued contributions to the school's work

7. Leading and improving the school

Appendix 1 provides HM Inspectors' overall evaluation of the work of the school.

St Michael's Primary School provided a very effective education for its pupils, which successfully developed their enthusiasm for learning and raised their achievement. Pupils and staff were very proud of the school. Staff were caring and committed to pupils' welfare, and teamwork across the school was highly effective. Pupils' attainment had improved and many achieved national levels earlier than might normally be expected. In addition, pupils achieved success in a wide range of activities within and beyond the school day. The school had won a gold award for enterprise and a silver Eco School Scotland Award.

The headteacher provided very effective leadership. Her clear vision and enthusiasm had won the respect of pupils, staff, parents and the wider community. She had developed very effective partnerships to provide high quality support for pupils' learning, and imaginative and stimulating learning experiences for pupils. She had managed change effectively, following the school's merger and refurbishment, and involved staff and pupils in agreeing school priorities for improvement. The deputy headteacher was held in very high regard and supported the headteacher, pupils and staff very effectively. The principal teacher, in her role as enterprise coordinator, and staff involved in working groups were taking school improvements forward successfully. The school had good arrangements for evaluating the quality of its work.

These included systematic monitoring of learning and teaching by the headteacher and depute who provided teachers with constructive feedback. Senior managers reviewed pupils' work in detail with teachers at class progress meetings each term. These discussions led to well-judged action plans for further improvement and informed a helpful standards and quality report for parents. The school was well placed to build on existing strengths to continue to improve the quality of its provision.

Main points for action

The school and education authority should continue to provide high quality and improving education. In doing so, they should take account of the need to:

- continue to improve approaches to monitoring and tracking pupils' progress to help raise their attainment further.

What happens next?

As a result of the high performance, the strong record of improvement and the very effective leadership of this school, HM Inspectors will make no further reports in connection with this inspection. The school and the education authority have been asked to prepare an action plan indicating how they will address the main findings of the report, and to share that plan with parents. Within two years of the publication of this report the education authority, working with the school, will provide a progress report to parents.

Mary Ritchie
HM Inspector

23 October 2007

Appendix 1 Indicators of quality

The sections in the table below follow the order in this report. You can find the main comments made about each of the quality indicators in those sections. However, aspects of some quality indicators are relevant to other sections of the report and may also be mentioned in those other sections.

How good are learning, teaching and achievement?	
Structure of the curriculum	very good
The teaching process	good
Pupils' learning experiences	very good
Pupils' attainment in English language	very good
Pupils' attainment in mathematics	good

How well are pupils' learning needs met?	
Meeting pupils' needs	very good

How good is the environment for learning?	
Pastoral care	very good
Accommodation and facilities	excellent
Climate and relationships	very good
Expectations and promoting achievement	very good
Equality and fairness	very good
Partnership with parents, the School Board, and the community	excellent

Leading and improving the school	
Leadership of the headteacher	very good
Leadership across the school	very good
Self-evaluation	good

This report uses the following word scale to make clear judgements made by inspectors:

excellent	outstanding, sector leading
very good	major strengths
good	important strengths with some areas for improvement
adequate	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
weak	important weaknesses
unsatisfactory	major weaknesses

Appendix 2 Summary of questionnaire responses

Important features of responses from the various groups which received questionnaires are listed below.

<p>What parents thought the school did well</p>	<p>What parents think the school could do better</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They felt very welcome in the school. • Staff were highly committed to pupils' care and welfare and treated pupils fairly. • Staff responded well to any concerns they raised and consulted them on decisions affecting their children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A few parents would like more information on their children's progress.
<p>What pupils thought the school did well</p>	<p>What pupils think the school could do better</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils thought that teachers were good at telling them how they were getting on with their work. • They thought that the school helped to keep them safe and healthy and they felt well looked after at school. • Pupils thought they got on well together and enjoyed being at school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A few pupils felt that the behaviour of a small number of pupils could be better.
<p>What staff thought the school did well</p>	<p>What staff think the school could do better</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All staff thought that pupils were enthusiastic about their learning. • They felt that staff worked hard to promote and maintain good relations with the local community. • They thought that senior managers worked well as a team and that there was good communication across the staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A few support staff thought that standards for pupils' behaviour could be upheld more consistently.

How can you contact us?

If you would like an additional copy of this report

Copies of this report have been sent to the headteacher and school staff, the Corporate Director: Education and Social Care, local councillors and appropriate Members of the Scottish Parliament. Subject to availability, further copies may be obtained free of charge from HM Inspectorate of Education, Europa Building, 450 Argyle Street Glasgow G2 8LG or by telephoning 0141 242 0100. Copies are also available on our website www.hmie.gov.uk.

HMIE Feedback and Complaints Procedure

Should you wish to comment on any aspect of primary inspections, you should write in the first instance to Chris McIlroy, HMCI, at HM Inspectorate of Education, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA.

If you have a concern about this report, you should write in the first instance to our Complaints Manager, HMIE Business Management Unit, Second Floor, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA. You can also e-mail HMIEComplaints@hmie.gsi.gov.uk. A copy of our complaints procedure is available from this office, by telephoning 01506 600200 or from our website at www.hmie.gov.uk.

If you are not satisfied with the action we have taken at the end of our complaints procedure, you can raise your complaint with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). The SPSO is fully independent and has powers to investigate complaints about Government departments and agencies. You should write to the SPSO, Freepost EH641, Edinburgh EH3 0BR. You can also telephone 0800 377 7330 fax 0800 377 7331 or e-mail: ask@sps.org.uk. More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website: www.sps.org.uk.

Crown Copyright 2007

HM Inspectorate of Education

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part, except for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement, provided that the source and date thereof are stated.