

St John's Primary Academy

Inspection report

Unique reference number	137794
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	393401
Inspection dates	12–13 January 2012
Lead inspector	Kenneth Thomas

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	404
Appropriate authority	The board of directors
Chair	Susan Manders
Headteacher	Susan D Tuck
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
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Age group	4–11
Inspection date(s)	12–13 January 2012
Inspection number	380001

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Introduction

Inspection team

Kenneth Thomas

Additional inspector

Ann Taylor

Additional inspector

Colin Lower

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 16 teachers in 27 lessons including four joint observations with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors carried out three learning walks incorporating a further 24 lessons and held meetings with senior leaders and other staff, groups of pupils, and the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Board of Directors. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the academy's work, and looked at the tracking of pupils' progress, performance data, pupils' work, academy development plans, numerous policies and other academy documents. Completed questionnaires from 65 pupils, 182 parents and carers and 25 staff were received and analysed.

Information about the school

This is larger than the average sized primary school. Virtually all pupils are of White British heritage. About four percent of pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average, as is the proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. The proportion with a statement of special educational needs is below average. The school meets the current floor standard, whereby the government sets the minimum expectations for attainment and progress. The academy holds the Artsmark Gold award and national Healthy School status. The school became an Academy in January 2012.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good academy. It is one in which attainment is above average and all groups of pupils achieve well. They enjoy coming to the academy and benefit from an attractive, welcoming and supportive learning environment.
- Outstanding provision for the Arts makes a significant contribution to pupils' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They feel safe and valued because staff know them really well and provide good levels of care. This underpins their good personal development.
- Pupils' good progress is due to much good and some outstanding teaching and the planning of learning tasks that meet the needs of all pupils in the class. However, in some lessons progress slows because pupils spend too much time listening to lengthy introductions or explanations and the learning tasks are not suitably challenging for all attainment levels.
- The achievement of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is good because of the accurate and early identification of need coupled with effective targeted support given to each individual.
- In the best examples of the marking of pupils' work, teachers provide written comments in their books on how to improve. However, this practice is not consistent and in some instances pupils are not provided with enough guidance on what they must do in order to improve the quality of their work.
- The headteacher has successfully developed a strong sense of teamwork and ambition amongst all staff. There is a clear sense of direction and a shared commitment to strive for further improvement.
- Several middle leaders are new to their roles and have yet to develop their monitoring and evaluation skills so that good teaching and learning practice can be identified and shared more widely.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that:
 - learning tasks are appropriately challenging for all groups of pupils
 - lesson introductions and teachers' explanations are not too long so that full advantage is taken of pupils' capacity for independent learning

- there is consistency in the marking of pupils' work so that they are given clear guidance on the standard they have reached and how to improve, and that they respond to the advice given.
- Strengthen leadership and management by ensuring that middle leaders have the skills needed to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility and contribute fully to the academy's improvement.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children's skills on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage are generally in line with expectations for their age. They make satisfactory progress and attainment on entry to Year 1 is broadly average. However, progress in the development of reading and mathematical skills is stronger than in writing and remains so throughout the academy. Attainment is above average overall by the end of Year 6. Attainment in reading is above average at the end of Key Stage 1 and when pupils leave the academy. Staff are implementing a number of well considered strategies to raise attainment in writing and classroom observations and the work seen in pupils' books show that these are proving successful and the difference in progress between reading and writing is shrinking. Reliable academy assessment information and other inspection evidence show that there are no significant differences in the progress of different groups of pupils. This is consistent with the view of most parents and carers that their children are making good progress.

Pupils quickly get down to learning at the start of the academy day and enjoy their lessons. Their willingness to learn makes a significant contribution to the purposeful learning atmosphere. Pupils respond well to interesting and challenging activities and demonstrate the ability to work effectively, both independently and collaboratively. This is particularly seen in the creative arts where achievement is high, and in the later stages of Key Stage 2, where there are more examples of good and outstanding teaching. This was exemplified in a Year 5 lesson where the historical differences between Athens and Sparta were explored. Pupils' discussions generated plenty of ideas and all made rapid progress in understanding historical perspectives and in developing their research and writing skills because they were actively engaged throughout the lesson. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress. This is because their needs are carefully assessed and they are sensitively supported with good challenge in class, or receive specialist individual or small group support. Their rapid progress means they are narrowing the gap on all pupils nationally.

Quality of teaching

All lessons are characterised by excellent relationships between teachers and pupils. In the very best lessons, pupils make rapid progress because assessment information is used well to guide the planning of learning tasks. Pupils are expected to work independently, stretching themselves and others as they talk things through. Teaching promotes the development of pupils' communication skills well. Pupils'

verbal responses in lessons are often highly imaginative. They speak clearly and confidently and their oracy is a strength. Perceptive questioning is used to extend pupils' thinking and encourage the use of more varied vocabulary in their answers. The topic-based curriculum is carefully planned to provide pupils with a range of visits and experiences that motivate and engage pupils and effectively support their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This was seen in an outstanding Year 6 lesson, for example, which followed a visit to the local Holocaust Centre. Pupils had clearly been moved by the experience and rapid progress was made in understanding the nature and impact of prejudice and discrimination. This led seamlessly into extending pupils' understanding of how the imaginative use of words can convey emotion and enhance descriptive writing. This contributes to the improvement seen in writing, particularly that of boys, because pupils are writing in meaningful contexts.

The very large majority of parents, carers and pupils feel that the overall quality of teaching is good and this view is accurate. However, in some lessons, work is not well matched to pupils' attainment levels and this slows the progress they make. Progress is also slowed in lessons where teachers take too much time introducing learning, which gives pupils too little time to apply their learning and skills independently. In most lessons teachers give immediate feedback verbally during lessons. However, the quality of written marking is variable, often restricted to encouraging comments rather than detailed feedback on what pupils have done well and what they need to do to improve.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour is good with pupils engaged and enthusiastic in lessons and wanting to achieve. They have a well-developed sense of right and wrong. In lessons, pupils settle very quickly, concentrate on their work, and collaborate well. They clearly enjoy coming to the academy and, as a consequence, attendance is above average and punctuality is good. Records, comments from pupils and responses to the questionnaires from staff, pupils, parents and carers show that similar standards of behaviour are the norm. The academy community is extremely harmonious and pupils were keen to let inspectors know how they feel safe. Also that behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. There have been no exclusions for several years and no reported racist incidents. A very small minority of parents and carers commented about bullying in the questionnaire. Inspectors investigated this thoroughly. They judged that the academy has effective policies and procedures in place with regard to bullying. The rare instances of bullying are dealt with effectively and pupils say that they fully trust the adults in the academy and know that someone will help them if needs arise. In their questionnaire responses, parents and carers indicated unanimous agreement that they feel their children are kept safe in the academy. Pupils show good awareness of how to behave safely particularly in practical lessons such as in design and technology and science. They also demonstrate a good awareness of how to avoid risks, whether on the internet or during their journeys to and from the academy. Pupils are mature, open and able to discuss and relate to sensitive issues that affect themselves or others.

Leadership and management

The headteacher and the Board of Directors share a clear vision of where the academy needs to go and how it will get there. Senior leaders work as an effective team with high expectations and, as a result, the academy is moving steadily towards its goals. This is seen, for example, in the achievement of Academy status and the strong focus on raising attainment which has resulted in improvement in pupils' writing. Equality of opportunity is seen as a priority by the academy. Self-evaluation is accurate and provides a secure basis for improvement planning. Central to self-evaluation are regular conversations with pupils about the learning they have experienced and regular meetings with teachers about pupils' progress. These place great emphasis on the accountability of teachers for the performance of both individuals and groups and illustrate the strong commitment to ensuring the equality of opportunity of all groups. The academy makes every effort to ensure that discrimination is eliminated and that the needs of all pupils are met.

The topic-based curriculum is good and provides pupils with a good range of learning experiences that are well suited to their needs. Provision for modern foreign languages and creative subjects, such as art, music and design and technology, are particular strengths. This is evidenced in the excellent displays of pupils' work that is seen in all areas of the academy. These subjects contribute much to pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There is evidence of professional development for teachers having raised the quality of teaching, but there is also a recognition that all lessons need to be good and more often outstanding to raise standards further and accelerate progress.

Middle leaders are not all actively engaged in identifying and sharing the good practice that exists in the academy, and in tackling weaknesses. Senior leaders are aware that this slows the academy's drive to establish universally good teaching across all year groups. Directors know the academy well and ensure that procedures for the safeguarding of pupils are kept under constant review and that the academy adopts recommended good practice across all areas of its work. Training is of good quality and all academy staff and other adults working with children have the skills and expertise required for dealing with child protection issues. The academy works very well with outside agencies to provide effective support and is well placed to improve further.

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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



16 January 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St John's Primary Academy, Lincoln LN4 2LD

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we inspected your school. Your views were very helpful and we enjoyed our discussions with those of you we spoke to in lessons, in meetings and around the academy. Thank you too, to those of you who completed our questionnaire. The academy provides you with a good quality of education and your attainment is above average at the end of Year 6. You told us how much you enjoy the academy and we saw how you listen carefully to what your teachers have to say and are willing to work hard in your lessons. Your good behaviour is a considerable help to your teachers because it enables them to concentrate on making your work interesting and helping you to learn. This is one of the reasons you are achieving well.

In most of your lessons, you make at least good progress and we have asked your teachers to make sure that you are really stretched in all of your lessons, so that you make the best progress you possibly can. Your teachers also spend a lot of time marking your work and we have asked that, when they do this, they give you clear guidance on what you have to do to improve it. You can all help yourselves to make more progress by making sure that you try hard to follow the advice you are given. You told us how much you enjoy the many opportunities provided to develop and display your creative abilities and we observed how well these opportunities contribute to your excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

You told us how adults at the academy look after you well, so that you are safe and happy. Your headteacher, all the other staff and the Board of Directors are determined to make things even better. To help this we have asked that all staff with middle leadership responsibilities are more closely involved in checking the work of the academy. We think that everyone at St John's can work together to do these things and that you will all want to play your part by continuing to behave well and working really hard in all of your lessons.

Yours sincerely

Kenneth Thomas
Lead inspector

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