

St John's Upper Holloway CE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	100439
Local authority	Islington
Inspection number	376399
Inspection dates	8–9 February 2012
Lead inspector	Martin Beale

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	218
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jacqui Forrester
Headteacher	Brian Welsh
Date of previous school inspection	14–15 October 2008
School address	Pemberton Gardens Islington London N19 5RR
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Martin Beale

Additional inspector

Sonja Joseph

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Over 11 hours were spent observing parts of 21 lessons taught by eight members of staff, holding discussions with pupils about their learning and hearing pupils read. Inspectors held meetings with staff and members of the Governing Body including the Chair. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. They observed the school's work, and scrutinised pupils' books, assessment data and case studies of specific pupils. They also looked at evidence of the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning. The inspection team analysed 85 responses to the questionnaire returned by parents and carers.

Information about the school

Pupil numbers are rising in this average-size school. Almost three-quarters of the pupils are from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds other than White British and more than one-third speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average as is the proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Their needs are mostly associated with difficulties related to literacy. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a Nursery and a Reception class. The school meets the current floor standard.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher were both appointed in September 2010. Almost half of the teaching staff team are also new to the school since then.

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

Key findings

- St John's is a good school. Its improvement has been rapid and recognised by staff, parents and carers and pupils. The strong leadership of the headteacher has led to the new staff team focusing on driving up the quality of their teaching. As a result, achievement is good and improving.
- Writing has improved considerably because teachers provide interesting and engaging contexts that stimulate pupils' imaginations. More pupils are now working above levels expected for their age in mathematics than previously because they have more opportunity to work on challenging problem-solving activities. Progress in reading is good but inconsistent because teaching is not as secure at Key Stage 1 as in the rest of the school.
- The foundation for the pupils' good progress is that much teaching is imaginative, well structured and develops the pupils' learning rapidly by engaging them in interesting tasks. Lessons are pitched at different levels but assessment information is not always used accurately enough to plan precisely the next steps in each pupil's learning. Furthermore, pupils are not always clear about the action they can take to meet their personal targets.
- The pupils' behaviour is good and improving and is consistently promoted by the staff team. A very strong work ethic permeates all classrooms and generates a purposeful atmosphere throughout the school. Pupils are very considerate, show respect for others and help to mediate any problems if they occur.
- The headteacher has taken decisive action to tackle priorities for action, based on a sharp evaluation of the school's qualities. By quickly uniting the new staff team behind a shared vision for the school based on his high expectations, he has established a strong platform for the school's further improvement.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Introduce a training programme so that by September 2012, the teaching of reading at Key Stage 1 is consistently at least good. This should include:
 - focusing the teaching of the sounds letters make (phonics) and guided reading sessions more sharply on the next steps in each pupil's learning
 - deploying teaching assistants so that they make an effective contribution to the pupils' achievement.

- Implement strategies by the start of the Autumn term 2012 so assessment has a greater impact on pupils' learning by:
 - planning lessons that meet the identified next steps in learning for all pupils
 - making targets for improvement understandable for the pupils
 - bringing greater consistency to marking in all subjects
 - providing time for pupils to reflect on and respond to their teachers' marking and other feedback.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

The views of parents and carers that pupils are making good progress and attainment is average and rising are confirmed by inspection evidence. Year 6 test results are rising and were broadly average in 2011 in both English and mathematics. There are no patterns to any differences in achievement over time by ethnicity. The gender gap is rapidly closing as boys become keen writers and committed readers.

The pupils' learning benefits when they discuss ideas with their 'talk partners' or work together on tasks. This also enables pupils new to learning English to develop in an environment rich in talk and language. Pupils who have special educational needs make good progress because they are supported well through sharply focused activities in lessons, skilled teaching assistants and specific withdrawal sessions.

Children in the Nursery and Reception classes make good progress from skills on entry much lower than expected for their age. Their knowledge of the sounds made by letters develops well. Reception children were observed learning the 'ng' sound before recognising it in words such as 'sing' and 'shopping' and then moving on to read simple sentences. Progress in reading slows at Key Stage 1. Attainment by the end of Year 2 is below average but rising. A great enjoyment of books and reading is fostered across the rest of the school and attainment in reading is broadly average by the end of Year 6.

Pupils are reaching higher levels in mathematics because they learn to apply their skills when solving problems or undertaking investigations. For example, more able Year 2 pupils used their knowledge of multiplication tables to help them identify

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combinations of threes and fives to make 37. In another lesson, Year 6 pupils readily applied their understanding of the area of a rectangle to calculate areas of complex shapes before moving on to consider how to calculate areas of triangles.

Pupils develop their writing using interesting texts in a wide variety of different contexts, often linked closely to the work they are undertaking in other subjects. The theme of 'Space' studied by Year 2 pupils led to stories about trips into space and Year 6 pupils have written some expressive poetry entitled 'Journeys'. Year 3 pupils became very absorbed in writing letters to characters in 'The Legend of Spud Murphy' about their behaviour in the library. Opportunities to improve the presentation of their work by using computers add much to the impact of their writing.

Quality of teaching

Parents and carers are strongly of the view not just that teaching is good but also that the particular needs of their children are met. This is borne out by inspection evidence. A Year 5 English lesson typified much of the most effective teaching seen as the pupils prepared, drafted and assessed their writing, giving advice to authors of books they were reading. Learning moved forward rapidly as the teacher varied the methods, probed the pupils' understanding through skilled questioning and timed her interventions and comments astutely. The teacher promoted the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well by giving them the opportunity to reflect on their thinking and to use their imagination. As in this lesson, activities are usually pitched at different levels. However, teachers do not always use assessment information to ensure that their lessons build on from pupils' prior attainment. Furthermore, in spite of improvements in marking, pupils do not always have time to respond to their teacher's comments or understand their individual targets and the steps to take to achieve them.

Planning in the Nursery and Reception classes is based on a clear assessment of the next steps in each child's learning. The well-resourced activities both inside and out enable the children to explore their own ideas and work constructively together. Formal sessions to teach letters and sounds are typically fast-paced and complemented by all adults taking every opportunity to develop the children's speaking skills.

Guided reading lessons are effective in teaching reading in Years 3 to 6. These develop in pupils an enjoyment of books and stimulate an interest in exploring the work of different authors, as shown by their thoughtful book reviews. The impact of sessions aimed at developing letters and sounds at Key Stage 1 and guided reading activities is less marked and only satisfactory. Phonics sessions are not always focused closely enough on the needs of pupils of different abilities and teaching assistants are not deployed to promote more effective learning during these lessons.

Teachers adapt the planned curriculum carefully to ensure the interests and abilities of pupils are met more closely. Individual reading to an adult and short brisk number

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activities help pupils to catch up if they fall behind with their reading and mathematics. Through careful and sensitive support, pupils who have more difficulty in managing their own behaviour are helped to modify their behaviour so that they can access lessons and learning.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Inspection evidence supports the view of parents and carers that the good behaviour seen during the inspection is typical for the school. They, and their children, commented on improvements and that incidents of unacceptable behaviour are decreasing. All members of staff are seen to be fair and consistent by pupils in their management of behaviour. Pupils strongly agree that bullying in any form is not a concern for them and that any incidents of inappropriate behaviour are dealt with swiftly, firmly and constructively.

Pupils are very polite and welcoming. They show great respect for their teachers and other adults, contributing greatly to the harmonious atmosphere throughout the school. Pupils also take responsibility for helping others to manage their behaviour. Trained playground helpers settle amicably any conflicts and ensure the inclusion of any pupil feeling left out. Lessons flow smoothly and pupils say they are rarely interrupted by inappropriate behaviour. Only very occasionally do a small number of pupils become restless when teaching lacks the spark to grab their interest.

Parents and carers are in overwhelming agreement that their children feel safe in school. Pupils not only say how safe they feel but also that they are helped to look after themselves and identify and tackle risks they might face such as when visiting drama groups share ideas with older pupils about road safety.

Leadership and management

The new staff team are fully behind the headteacher's vision for the school and the challenging targets he has set for them and the pupils. His relentless drive to improve teaching is ably supported by the deputy headteacher in providing individually tailored coaching and mentoring programmes for teachers. As a result, teaching is good, improving and leading to rising achievement. By developing their leadership skills under the headteacher's guidance, the new team of middle leaders is gaining experience and taking an increasingly pivotal role in driving forward improvement in their areas. Governors effectively hold the headteacher and his staff accountable for the pupils' achievement and the school's performance. These are all factors in the school's good capacity for further improvement.

The good curriculum and events such as assemblies, trips and visitors contribute greatly to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Activities such as the Year 5 discussion on the topic 'Is God always with you?' encourage pupils to reflect on their own religious beliefs and the beliefs of others. 'Science Week' has

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clearly fired the pupils' imagination and provided many memorable experiences for all year groups. Pupils learned how to plan and undertake investigations as when Year 1 pupils looked at the best materials for an umbrella or Year 6 linked work on reversible and irreversible changes to the water cycle.

The staff team promotes equality and tackles discrimination well by narrowing gaps in learning and ensuring that the school is a harmonious and tolerant community. The headteacher has sharply focused staff not just on individual pupils who might be in danger of falling behind their targets but also on providing the actions required to improve the achievement of particular groups. Parents and carers are in strong agreement that the school is improving under the headteacher's leadership. Workshops focusing on reading, phonics and mathematics have enabled teachers to share strategies to enable parents and carers to support their children better at home. Governors have established clear policies to protect and safeguard the welfare of pupils and staff, but have not developed procedures by which they can independently monitor their impact.

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.



10 February 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St John's Upper Holloway CE Primary School, London N19 5RR

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspection team when we visited your school recently and to the Year 6 pupils who kindly showed us around. We saw that you work hard, and inspectors were impressed by your confident answers to their questions. We can see from the work on display how much you enjoyed the recent 'Science Week'.

We found that St John's is a good and improving school. These are the things we found to be strengths.

- As you told us, the headteacher, staff and governors do their utmost to help you all to succeed, to take care of you and make sure you are kept safe.
- Your positive attitudes to learning and good behaviour contribute significantly to making the school calm and happy.
- We agree with you that you are taught well. Teachers make lessons interesting and help you to make good progress.
- Your writing has improved considerably because you are given opportunities to develop your skills in a wide range of subjects.
- You are also clearly developing a great enjoyment for reading and more of you are working at higher levels in mathematics.
- Those of you who find learning difficult are given effective support so that you make the same good progress as others in your classes.

We have asked the school to improve learning further by ensuring that teachers make better use of assessment information and make the teaching of reading in Years 1 and 2 even better. You can all play your part in helping the school to get even better by continuing to work hard.

Yours sincerely

Martin Beale
Lead inspector

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