

# John Donne CofE Lower School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	109615
<b>Local authority</b>	Central Bedfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	377952
<b>Inspection dates</b>	8–9 March 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Susan Thomas-Pounce

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	96
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Julian Forbes-Laird
<b>Headteacher</b>	Judi Johnson-Clarke
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	25 September 2008
<b>School address</b>	High Street Blunham Bedford MK44 3NL
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<b>Age group</b>	3–9
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	8–9 March 2012
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## Introduction

Inspection team

Susan Thomas-Pounce

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed eight lessons taught by four teachers, together with a number of shorter observations. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, staff and members of the governing body. The inspector took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. The inspector visited two assemblies, observed the school's work, listened to pupils read, and scrutinised pupils' books, monitoring and assessment information and teachers' planning. Additional discussions were held with pupils about many aspects of school life. Responses to inspection questionnaires from staff and pupils were scrutinised, as well as 37 received from parents and carers.

## Information about the school

The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school, and the vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs varies from year to year but is lower than the national average. The proportion of pupils who have a statement of educational need is above the national average. Their range of needs includes specific learning difficulties, language difficulties and behavioural and emotional difficulties. Pupils transfer to several local middle schools at the end of Year 4.

Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed. The school has recently added a purpose-built space for Early Years Foundation Stage provision. This was opened in the autumn of 2011 and the school is appointing an additional member of staff as the number of children attending is steadily increasing. The school has achieved National Healthy Schools status and a number of external awards including the School Sports Active mark.

**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

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Key findings

- This is a good school. It is not yet outstanding because there are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and the pace of learning across the whole school. Pupils are confident, friendly and polite. They work hard and have very good attitudes to learning. This is reflected in consistently above average attendance.
- Pupils' achievement, especially in writing, has greatly improved since the previous inspection. Pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, make good progress from their starting points and achieve well. By the time they leave in Year 4, attainment in English and mathematics is above average. A high proportion have reached the higher levels in all subjects at the end of Year 2. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make satisfactory and improving progress in all areas of learning.
- Overall, good teaching is at its best in Years 1 to 4. Here, teachers' high expectations ensure that learning takes place at a brisk pace. Pupils are fully involved in assessing their own work, although they are not always given enough time to respond to teachers' marking. More opportunities are needed for teachers to share the existing good practice. Although adults ensure that children have an enjoyable introduction to their full-time education, assessment of attainment on entry is not always completely accurate and this has slowed progress for some.
- Behaviour and safety of pupils are good. Pupils enjoy school and say that misbehaviour is uncommon. There is a strong emphasis on pupils' personal development which gives them confidence to move to their next stage of education.
- The school is well led and managed. Leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas to improve, Professional development opportunities for staff have been well targeted so that the quality of teaching

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has improved and leadership skills, particularly in the leadership of teaching, have been effectively developed.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
  - sharing more widely the good practice that exists within the school so that all teaching is good
  - ensuring that all pupils are given sufficient time to respond to the good advice they are given on how to improve their work.
  
- Build on the work already started to improve the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage so that more children attain above age-related expectations by:
  - improving the assessment and recording procedures on entry so that staff always have high expectations of what children can achieve.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Children enter the Nursery with skills that are just in line with those expected for their age. They make expected progress through to the Reception and are ready for the challenge of Year 1. As pupils progress through the school, their learning is accelerated so that, by the end of Year 4, pupils reach attainment levels that are above the national average in English and mathematics. Current work seen during the inspection shows that this has been maintained.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, although achievement is improving, learning is not yet always as purposeful and coherent as it is in the other key stages. In a few lessons at this stage, activities are not customised precisely to meet children's academic and social needs because systems to carefully assess their starting points are not completely robust. The school has identified this issue, and teaching at this stage is improving as a result of recent strategies put in place to re-enforce pupils' understanding of sounds and letters. Younger pupils are quickly learning letter sounds and how to blend them together, so they can tackle new words confidently.

Observations in lessons show that pupils tackle their tasks eagerly, work hard, cooperate well with classmates and staff and present their work with care. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 responded with enthusiasm as they explored how many different ways they could make up a given number. In this lesson, more-able pupils were challenged to solve problems that they had constructed. Small group work ensures that disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are very well supported and any potential barriers to learning are minimised. Reading skills

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are very well promoted, with regular small group reading sessions and attractive resources including a well-stocked library. Attainment in reading is above average by the end of Key Stage 1. Pupils in Year 4 read with evident enjoyment and they talked confidently about authors whose work they enjoy. In Years 1 to 4 a strong focus on writing has significantly improved pupils' enthusiasm for writing and the quality of written work. Most parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire agree that their children make good progress.

### **Quality of teaching**

Almost all pupils and the vast majority of parents and carers think that teaching is good. Inspection evidence confirms this. In the best lessons observed, lessons were consistently well planned and effectively met the needs of pupils of different ages and abilities in each class. Teachers use a wide range of strategies and the well-planned curriculum, to make learning interesting and enjoyable and to provide lessons that stimulate pupils to learn. In the lessons seen, pupils were motivated and developed their independence as learners and reflected thoughtfully on their own and others' efforts. For example during a Year 1 art lesson, pupils stopped their work on still life drawings of a medieval banquet to go and evaluate each other's work. The teacher supported them well as they carefully looked at the textures and shapes drawn. A good level of discussion followed and this enabled pupils to return to their own drawings with fresh motivation and enthusiasm.

Pupils say they are supported to do as well as they can, so they work hard and want to do their best. In most lessons, questioning is used effectively and adults are developing their skills at asking questions that not only assess what pupils have understood but challenge them to move on in their own learning. Work in Years 1 to 4 is generally pitched at the right level to provide appropriate challenge for all abilities so that all pupils learn at a good pace. This is because information on pupils' attainment and progress is generally used effectively to plan lessons matched closely to pupils' needs. Although improving, the quality of teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage does not yet exhibit the same very high standard.

Pupils across the school regularly evaluate their own learning in lessons. Marking is up to date and constructive, and usually offers advice on next steps in the development of learning. However, pupils are not always given enough time to consider or respond to marking so it does not consistently help them to improve their work. Information and communication technology is used well, particularly to support learning and motivate pupils. Strategies introduced in the last few years to make learning in reading and writing even more effective are followed consistently across the school. Pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development is promoted well. They listen to one another, work well in pairs or groups and are encouraged to be creative and imaginative.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Pupils behave well and show high levels of engagement in their learning. They

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collaborate well and assist each other in their given tasks. Behaviour during lessons, discussions with pupils and school records show that this is typical of behaviour over time. A few parents and carers expressed concerns about the way in which the school deals with bullying. Pupils say that bullying of any sort is uncommon and when it happens it is dealt with quickly and effectively. Inspection evidence shows that incidents of bullying in all its forms, including the use of racist or homophobic language, are rare and confirms the school's good procedures. Most parents and carers believe that behaviour is good. Inspection evidence endorses these views. Behaviour seen in and around the school during the inspection was never less than good and on occasions was exemplary.

The parent and carer survey and discussions with pupils, confirmed that pupils feel extremely safe. Pupils are confident and polite. Older pupils take good care of younger ones in and around the school. These positive attitudes are having a strong impact on improving achievement and are reflected in attendance, which is consistently above average. Pupils in all key stages are well cared for and suitably guided if they seek reassurance or help.

### **Leadership and management**

Since the previous inspection, skills of leadership have been developed and there is a shared drive to tailor the provision to provide the best possible learning experiences for each child in this small but increasing school community. As a consequence equality of opportunity is promoted well and the school ensures that pupils learn in a safe, secure and supportive environment without fear of discrimination. Partnerships with parents and carers are strong. All parents and carers rightly feel that the school takes good care of their children. The vast majority of parents say the school responds well to their concerns and helps them to support their children's learning.

Well planned and thoughtful assemblies give good spiritual and moral guidance and pupils show each other high levels of respect and kindness. The school promotes a curriculum that is broad and balanced that meets pupils' needs well. Pupils learn about different cultures and beliefs in lessons and the school continues to regularly support the education of a child in Ethiopia. This promotes pupils' understanding of and their respect for lifestyles that may be different from their own. The arts are a strong feature of the curriculum. For example, pupils like singing every day and they enjoy the opportunities provided to link subjects through topics such as 'Turrets and Tiaras'.

Leadership is good and all staff, including members of the governing body, take a key role in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. Members of the governing body know the school well and work alongside the headteacher to help support and implement improvements. They have been instrumental in the building project, which has greatly enhanced the learning environment. Safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements and are regularly evaluated. These, together with regularly updated training for all staff and teaching about safety, ensure that pupils are safe in school.

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Self-evaluation is closely linked to professional development for teachers. There is an increasing emphasis on opportunities to share best practice, for example by observing colleagues teaching. However, this is at an early stage of development and has not yet resulted in consistency across all classes. There is rigorous analysis of progress of different groups of pupils through the tracking systems. Termly meetings are held to discuss the progress of individual pupils. Well-targeted interventions are put in place to help those whose progress may be slipping. These factors have brought about demonstrable improvements since the previous inspection. This means that the school has good capacity to bring about further improvements.



## 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](http://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.**



12 March 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of John Donne CofE Lower School, Bedford, MK44 3NL**

Thank you for welcoming me to your school and showing me what you are learning. I really enjoyed talking with you and sharing your lessons.

I agree with you that yours is a good school. Here are some of the reasons why.

- You told me you enjoy school, and your parents and carers, rightly, say that you are happy and feel safe there.
- You behave well around school and get on really well together.
- You make good progress and by the end of Year 4 you reach standards in English and mathematics, which are higher than those of most nine-year-olds.
- Your teachers make lessons exciting and interesting and the teaching in most lessons is good.

I know the younger children are enjoying the new Early Years Foundation Stage building. I have also asked the leaders to make learning even better there by making more use of the information teachers collect, so that they can check the learning and plan more carefully.

So that you all make even faster progress, I have asked the leaders to:

- make all lessons as good as the best ones are now
- give you opportunities to follow up your teachers' marking so you use their advice to improve your work.

Thank you again for being so friendly and helpful on my visit and my best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Susan Thomas-Pounce  
Lead inspector

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