

St John's CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109271
Local Authority	Bath and North East Somerset
Inspection number	356513
Inspection dates	12–13 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Ian Hancock

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	350
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kay Harvey
Headteacher	Carolyn Banfield
Date of previous school inspection	26 November 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. The inspectors observed 15 teachers, visited 19 lessons and held discussions with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation including the school's analysis of pupils' attainment and the progress they make, data on attendance, evidence of leaders' monitoring and evaluation, plans for improvement, and policies such as safeguarding. Inspectors analysed 108 questionnaires completed by parents and carers, as well as 108 questionnaires from pupils and 41 from staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- The extent to which pupils' attainment and progress are improving across the school.
- The capacity of leaders and managers at all levels to sustain improvements since the previous inspection report.
- The extent to which teaching is of a consistent quality and sufficiently challenging throughout the school.

Information about the school

The school is a larger-than-average primary school located close to the centre of town. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage and there are very few pupils who speak English as an additional language. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The school has a privately-run nursery on-site that is subject to a separate inspection.

The school holds several awards and accreditations including: the Healthy Schools Plus Status, Food for Life Gold award and the International Schools award.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

St John's Primary is a good school. It has a number of outstanding features. The rich and vibrant curriculum stimulates pupils' curiosity, promotes their creativity and instils a strong awareness of the arts. Regular opportunities for gardening and cooking have contributed to pupils' well-developed understanding of how to be healthy. The importance the school places on being a caring community, where each pupil is an individual, leads to a strong sense of belonging and safety. An example of this can be seen in the exemplary welfare provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Pupils thoroughly enjoy their learning and are active participants in an unusually wide range of projects and clubs. Their keenness to learn is reflected in the high attendance rate.

The school has improved steadily since the previous inspection. Pupils' attainment has risen and the progress they make has improved across the school, although the proportion of pupils attaining the expected levels in writing is not sufficiently high in all year groups. All areas for development identified in the previous inspection report have been successfully addressed. These improvements stem from the high-quality leadership of the headteacher, well supported by an ambitious team of senior leaders. This shared vision and drive has accelerated the pace of change and demonstrates the school's good capacity to sustain further improvement.

The overall quality of teaching is good. Engaging lessons are characterised by stimulating resources or giving pupils problems to solve. Levels of activity and enjoyment are high. While some lessons are outstanding, some are satisfactory. In these lessons, pupils' progress is slower and they are not sufficiently supported in evaluating their own work.

Parents and carers and pupils are overwhelmingly positive about the school. High-quality relationships and pupils' good behaviour create a harmonious atmosphere in lessons and assemblies. Attractive displays and impressive art work make the school an aesthetically pleasing and dynamic environment in which to grow and learn.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in writing by:
 - providing regular opportunities for pupils to respond to teachers' comments on how they could improve their writing
 - giving clearer guidance and support so that all pupils can identify examples of where their writing has met the teachers' expectations for that lesson.
- Reduce the variability in the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - spreading the identified good practice across the school

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- ensuring that procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching cover all subjects.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils enjoy lessons and achieve well because they find learning exciting. They are stretched by tasks and report they learn a lot in lessons. Both boys and girls are equally active in lessons and are interested by the unusual objects that often accompany a writing task. As one pupil reported, 'They inspire us to write.' Despite this, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected levels in writing in some year groups is not as high as it should be. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected levels in mathematics and the higher levels in English and mathematics has risen and now exceeds the national average. Both were identified as areas for improvement at the time of the last inspection.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities generally make good progress in lessons as a result of the skilful and sensitive support they receive from adults. However, their overall progress is satisfactory because the school's records show that a small number of pupils with less acute needs do not make consistently good progress over time. The school has recognised this and put in place an appropriate set of actions.

The wider personal development and well-being of pupils are strong. Pupils behave well in lessons and when moving around the school. Assemblies are characterised by an exceptional sense of community and thoughtful reflection. In lessons, pupils discuss important issues with respect and sensitivity. For example, in a Year 6 lesson, pupils talked knowledgeably about life as a young Jew in Britain today, identifying artefacts associated with Judaism and speculating on the Second World War experiences of Jews in Germany.

Pupils adopt mature and well-informed attitudes towards improving their own health and that of others. They have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including managing the potential risks associated with new technology.

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

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

The curriculum provides a well-thought-out approach to teaching key skills across broad areas of learning. Regular opportunities to grow and cook food are central to pupils' exceptional knowledge of a healthy diet. Programmes of learning are very well adapted to pupils' specific needs and interests. Lessons are active and provide exciting and memorable learning experiences. A striking example occurred in a Year 2 lesson where pupils developed their understanding of connectives and adjectives while the Great Fire of London crackled and flickered in the background.

Good teaching ensures that lessons are fun and pupils learn by doing as often as possible, for example by using drama or responding to challenges. Learning tasks are often carefully matched to meet the needs of individual pupils, teacher explanations are short and movement around the class is well managed. Pupils make good use of statements to decide how successful they have been at a task. Teachers' comments in books inform pupils how they are doing and suggest improvements. Progress in lessons is good, but is satisfactory in a few lessons when these features are not present or when pupils are insufficiently supported to improve their work.

There is a high level of care for all pupils, particularly those whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Detailed individual plans ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported in lessons. Their confidence is high and they take pride in their work. Pupils' responses show they believe the school cares for them.

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

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Pupils overwhelmingly believe that senior leaders do a good job. The headteacher has successfully instilled a shared sense of purpose so that leaders and managers at all levels are increasingly playing their part. Aspirations are high and resolve is strong. Detailed information is collected on the progress of individuals and groups of pupils. Prompt action is taken in response to those who are not making the progress they should. For example, plans are already in place to ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make consistently good progress over time. The school's strong attention to promoting equality and overcoming discrimination is reflected in the steady improvements in pupils' achievement. For example, there has been a successful focus to raise the attainment of boys.

The governing body is well informed. Governors successfully support the school's improvement and share in setting its direction. They are increasingly challenging senior leaders and holding them to account. Self-evaluation is honest and accurate. However, the school does not have a sufficiently detailed view of the quality of teaching in all subjects. This is because monitoring has focused almost entirely on the teaching of English and mathematics.

Procedures for keeping pupils safe are robust and well supported by regular training. Record keeping is thorough and well maintained. Issues relating to pupils' safety and well-being are given a high priority. The school has a clear understanding of its context and ensures that pupils are able to interact with a range of communities in the immediate locality and beyond.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage settle in well due to the secure routines and excellent care they receive. They start with skills broadly expected for their age and make good progress because of the high quality assessments made. Most activities build appropriately on children's understanding and develop their personal and social skills well. They are increasingly confident and will, for example, record their names under the picture of the staff member who is leading the activity. Children benefit from good access to outdoor learning, and plenty of robust physical activities help them to be healthy. They are safe and secure within the Early Years Foundation Stage unit. Their welfare is given the highest priority and is of an exemplary standard. All children are included and the uniqueness of each child is celebrated. The teaching is good with pupils making especially good progress in their early reading skills and letter sounds.

Leadership is good. The school has clear policies and leaders work hard to involve parents and carers fully in their child's learning. Aspirations are high and plans for improvement are appropriate. For example, aspects of mathematics are already a focus for further development. The team works together well and effectively reflects on its practice in striving for excellence.

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

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

The vast majority of parents and carers responding to the questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive about the school's work. The school's actions to ensure that pupils enjoy school, are kept safe and learn to make healthy choices were singled out for particular praise, as was the way in which the school prepares pupils for the future. Inspectors' judgements confirm these positive views.

A very small number of negative comments or specific concerns received from parents and carers were checked by the inspection team and brought to the school's attention. Where appropriate, they are reflected in the report or were resolved to the inspectors' satisfaction.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St John's Church of England 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 108 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 350 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	74	69	34	31	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	78	63	34	31	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	59	55	41	38	4	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	59	55	45	38	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	68	63	39	36	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	54	50	49	45	3	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	73	68	33	31	1	1	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)	56	52	49	45	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	49	45	52	48	2	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	47	44	49	45	6	6	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	48	44	46	43	5	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	70	65	33	31	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	73	68	32	30	1	1	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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

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.



14 October 2010

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of St John's Church of England Primary School, Midsomer Norton
BA3 2JN**

My colleagues and I thoroughly enjoyed meeting you when we came to inspect your school. Thank you for coming to talk to us and completing the questionnaire. We have listened to your views and read every response. I would like to share with you what we have learned about your school.

St John's is a good school and there are some things about your school that are very good. Here are some of the best things about your school.

- In lessons, you make good progress because you are being active, the work makes you think carefully and you know what you are learning.
- Learning is often fun and exciting, which enables you to produce your best work, particularly in art.
- Everybody in school makes each person feel welcome and a part of the school.
- You know very well how to keep yourselves safe and make healthy choices.

We have asked your teachers to help even more of you reach the levels expected for your age in writing. They will do this by giving you opportunities to respond to their comments and helping you improve your own work. We have also asked your teachers to ensure that all your lessons are as good as the best ones.

You all have a part to play by working hard and encouraging everybody to get better each day. I wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Ian Hancock

Her Majesty's Inspector

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