

St John's Catholic Primary School, Trowbridge

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126429
Local Authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	340977
Inspection dates	22–23 June 2010
Reporting inspector	David Shepherd

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	307
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Hughes
Headteacher	Marian Morgan
Date of previous school inspection	28 February 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Fourteen lessons taught by 12 teachers were observed. Inspectors met with parents informally after school. They met the Chair of the Governing Body briefly at the beginning of the inspection. They also held meetings with the vice-chair of the governing body and the chair of the curriculum committee. They met a representative of the Diocese and spoke on the telephone with the Director of Schools and Colleges of the Clifton Diocese. They talked to pupils in the playground and in lessons. Two meetings were held with groups of pupils and three meetings with teachers. Inspectors observed the school's work, including looking at the school improvement plan, reports of visits by staff from the local authority and documentation relating to safeguarding. Ninety three parent and carer questionnaires were analysed, together with those returned by pupils and members of staff.

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

- why attainment in mathematics and science is lower than in English, especially for boys of average ability and girls of above average ability
- why attainment in science did not improve last year
- the impact of the National Strategy's 'Assessment of Pupils' Progress' initiative, and that of other tracking systems, on raising attainment and accelerating progress
- the impact of the changes in leadership and management on raising attainment
- the impact of external support on raising attainment.

Information about the school

This primary school is larger than average. There are two Reception classes in the Early Years Foundation Stage. There are three mixed-age classes for pupils in Years 1 and 2, Years 3 and 4, and Years 5 and 6. Most pupils are White British. Currently, the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average. The majority of these pupils have speech, language and communication difficulties. The school has achieved the Healthy School Award, the Active Mark for Physical Education and the Bristol Standard for Foundation Stage Practice.

The school is experiencing some uncertainty at the present time. Parents and carers are being consulted about the possibility of it forming a federation with another Catholic primary school. Parents' meetings and in-school surgeries have taken place and written responses from parents have been received. Four teachers, including the headteacher and one teaching assistant, have left the school during the past two years. There is currently an acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher.

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?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

4

Main findings

In accordance with section 13(3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

Strengths in care, guidance and support have a positive impact on pupils' personal development. Pupils are friendly and very polite, for example in holding doors open for each other, staff and visitors. Relationships are good between pupils and between pupils and adults.

Pupils' attainment in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6 is broadly average and these pupils have made satisfactory progress in these subjects since they were in Year 2. This represents an improvement in mathematics from last year. However, this is not the case in science where attainment remains low and progress is inadequate.

The key weakness in teaching and learning is that while teachers plan together in teams, their planning is not linked firmly enough to pupils' prior learning. It focuses too much on activities rather than on the learning outcomes expected of pupils at different levels of ability, especially the more able. Work is sometimes unmarked and, as a result, too many pupils are unsure of their next steps in learning.

With the support of the local authority, the acting headteacher has identified accurately the strengths of the school and some areas of weakness. Improvements in provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage can be seen as a result. The school uses the Wiltshire system for tracking pupils' progress and has recently introduced the National Strategy's 'Assessing Pupil Progress' initiative but the information gained from these is not used effectively in planning to ensure pupils make good, rather than satisfactory, progress in literacy and numeracy. The school's self-evaluation has failed to identify attainment and provision in science, and assessment and marking of pupils' work as key priorities. The key issues from the school's previous inspection relating to improving progress in science and in the use of assessment, including marking, have not been addressed. These weaknesses, together with the fact that actions taken as a result of monitoring and evaluation by leaders are not focused enough on raising attainment and accelerating progress, mean that the school's capacity to improve is inadequate.

A number of parents and carers expressed concerns about the leadership and management of the school, the lack of information about their children's progress and the lack of effective communication with the school. Inspection findings endorse their concerns.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in science and ensure consistency in provision in all classes by the end of the autumn term 2010.
- Improve the consistency of teaching and learning so that 50% of lessons are good by the end of the autumn term 2010 and 80% by the end of the spring term 2011 by:
 - assessing and marking work consistently and informing pupils what is good about it and what they need to do next to improve
 - making sure that pupils at different levels of ability know what they are expected to achieve by the end of a lesson.
- Raise expectations to ensure that all leaders and managers concentrate on raising attainment and accelerating progress by the end of October 2010.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

4

Pupils are keen to do well, particularly at the start of lessons. They apply themselves diligently, settle quickly and work well in pairs. In Years 1 and 2, when asked questions by the teacher and teaching assistant, pupils responded eagerly as they learned about the capacity of different containers. Year 3 and 4 pupils were engrossed in solving problems in mathematics that linked to the World Cup. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 were engaged in estimating and measuring angles in an activity that was based upon scoring goals. However, progress for some was impeded because of lack of confidence in using protractors. The boys in particular found the lessons about the World Cup stimulating. Pupils relish the many opportunities to talk in pairs and larger groups. Sometimes there is a buzz of working conversation between pupils in lessons, for example as they solve problems about buying tickets for matches. Pupils make good progress when they are working with the support of their teacher or teaching assistant. However, when working independently, the pace of learning slows, especially when pupils are not clear about what they are expected to achieve by the end of the lesson. More-able pupils do not always make the progress of which they are capable in lessons. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress because of the effective support provided by teaching partners for these pupils.

Pupils enjoy school. They are polite and well mannered. They behave well in lessons, around the school and at lunchtimes. They feel safe and receive good levels of care and support from all staff and this promotes their positive attitudes to school. Pupils enjoy taking part in physical activities and understand about healthy eating and the importance of exercise. The school council and an eco council help pupils make a good contribution to the smooth running of the school. They raise funds for charities such as Children in Need and CAFOD, and sing in local care homes. They take part in the school fete and the parish bazaar. Attendance has declined during the past year because of unavoidable long term absences. It is now only satisfactory.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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 teaching observed during the inspection was satisfactory. However, scrutiny of pupils' work shows that over time the impact of teaching is inadequate. Teaching generally engages pupils, especially when lessons are practical, topical and include discussion in pairs. Relationships are good and these promote positive responses from pupils. In lessons, questioning by teachers and teaching assistants probes pupils' knowledge and understanding effectively. Time is managed well. However, lesson planning is not linked to prior learning often enough. This is because much work is unmarked and teachers do not know the levels pupils have achieved before preparing the next lesson. Marking is often indicated by a tick at the end of pieces of work and does not enable pupils to know how well they are doing or what they need to do next to improve. As one parent commented, 'Work is marked with a tick or a house point ? not comments.' In their responses to the questionnaire, 28% of pupils (20 out of 72) stated that they do not know how to improve their work. Marking in science is particularly weak. Lesson planning focuses too much on activities and not enough on learning outcomes for pupils at different levels of ability. Activities are planned for pupils at different levels of ability but teachers' expectations of pupils, particularly those that are more able, are not high enough to ensure good progress.

The whole-school curriculum plan indicates that pupils receive their entitlement to the curriculum. This is supplemented by 'Creative Fridays', themed weeks on topics such as

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India, mathematics and culture, and by extra-curricular clubs. Spanish is taught in Years 5 and 6. The delivery of the curriculum is not consistent in each of the parallel classes. For example, science is not taught equally well in each of the Year 5 and 6 classes.

The school is effective in its care, guidance and support for all pupils. The needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are met well. In consultation with the local authority and medical services, the school ensures these pupils make satisfactory progress in their learning and good progress in their personal, social and emotional development. This is because of the effective support and guidance they receive from the teaching assistants allocated to them. Transition arrangements from Reception into Year 1 are good, as are those for pupils leaving to start their secondary education.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	4
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	4
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The acting headteacher, acting deputy headteacher, staff and governing body are all ambitious for the school and for its pupils to be doing better. Leaders know the school's strengths and some of its weaknesses. They have wisely enlisted support and guidance from the local authority to help bring about improvements. Some improvements are noted, for example the procedures for assessing and tracking pupils' progress in literacy and numeracy. These are relatively new to the staff, some of whom do not yet have enough expertise to use the information to accelerate progress and raise attainment. The weaknesses that have not been identified and acted upon effectively enough are the consistently low attainment in science and the lack of the use of assessment and marking to enable teachers to plan effectively and let pupils know what they need to do to improve. Leaders at all levels are not focused enough on improving teaching and learning. The governing body has challenged the school's leaders about the low attainment in mathematics last year but not about the low attainment in science. It has not focused strongly enough on improving the issues identified at the previous inspection.

Too many pupils do not achieve as well as they should and, as a result, equality of opportunity is inadequate. The school promotes community cohesion well in its local community but not well enough with regard to the national and global dimensions. Safeguarding procedures are implemented robustly and ensure that pupils are safe and secure in school. The governing body meets all of its statutory duties in relation to safeguarding and child protection.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	4
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	4
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	4
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	4
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children start school with attainment that is below expectations for their age across all six areas of learning. Attainment is lowest in emotional development, communication, language and literacy and problem solving, reasoning and numeracy. Children make satisfactory progress in their learning and start in Year 1 with attainment that is broadly average. Attainment is highest in personal, social and emotional development and lowest in reading, writing and calculation. Girls attain more highly than boys in most areas. The exceptions to this are in problem solving, reasoning and numeracy and knowledge and understanding of the world, where boys and girls reach similar levels of attainment.

Children enjoy their time in Reception. They are keen and enthusiastic about what they are doing and willingly discuss it with an adult. They move around the classrooms and outside area sensibly and this helps to keep them safe. The equipment and toys are safe to use and in good condition. Children are looked after well by the staff. They enjoy being able to go outside on a free-flow basis. They wash their hands before having a snack or lunch. They behave well and enjoy tidying up after their activities. They are prepared well for transition into Year 1.

The assessment and recording of children's achievements in 'My Learning Journey' and 'My Book of Discovery' are good. Most examples of children's achievements are ascribed appropriate levels using national guidance. One teacher is new to the Early Years Foundation Stage and the other new to coordinating this area. Both have benefited from training provided by the local authority. More training is needed in order to improve provision and outcomes for children further. Partnerships with parents and carers are good. Parents and carers speak positively about the induction procedures into the Reception classes.

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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	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Although the parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire were supportive of the school in a number of ways, a number expressed concerns about aspects of the school's work. Most parents and carers agree that their children enjoy school and that they are looked after safely. They feel their children are taught about leading healthy lifestyles and that the school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour. More than half feel that the school is not led and managed effectively. A third feel they do not know enough about their children's progress and that their children do not make enough progress. Parents and carers feel they are not given enough guidance to help their children at home and that the school does not respond well enough to their suggestions and concerns. They do not think the teaching is good, that their children's needs are being met or that their children are being prepared well for the future. Inspectors endorse the views and concerns expressed by parents.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St John's Catholic 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 93 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 307 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	46	49	43	46	3	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	50	54	41	44	2	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	15	16	46	49	32	34	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	18	19	39	42	24	26	7	8
The teaching is good at this school	19	20	39	42	27	29	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	17	18	45	48	28	30	2	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	29	31	56	60	5	5	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)	20	22	48	52	19	20	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	18	19	39	42	23	25	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	34	37	44	47	11	12	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	21	23	33	35	25	27	5	5
The school is led and managed effectively	12	13	20	22	40	43	18	19
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	21	23	49	53	16	17	3	3

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	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 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.



24 June 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St John's Catholic Primary School, Trowbridge BA14 9EA

Thank you for making inspectors so welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you, especially those who were keen to show us your work. We enjoyed talking to groups of you about how you feel the school is preparing you for the future. At the moment, your school is not doing as well as it should be and we have placed it into what we call special measures. As a result, other inspectors will visit your school on a regular basis to check on how well the school is doing in order to improve.

There are a number of good things about the school that we liked:

- you enjoy school and work hard
- your behaviour is good and you get on well with each other and your teachers and teaching assistants
- you feel safe and well looked after
- you like helping at school and parish events, such as the school fete and parish bazaar.

There are a number of important actions your headteacher, teachers and the governing body have to do to make your school better. These are to:

- raise attainment in science and make sure science is taught equally well in all classes
- make sure you understand how to improve your work, especially through better marking
- ensure that all leaders and managers concentrate on raising attainment and helping you all make good progress in your learning.

I know you will continue to enjoy school and work hard.

Yours sincerely

David Shepherd Lead Inspector

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