

St John's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116400
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	357957
Inspection dates	1–2 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Andrew Saunders

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	217
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Terry Ayres
Headteacher	Hayley Clayton
Date of previous school inspection	22 November 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 16 lessons delivered by eight teachers. They met with senior leaders, groups of pupils, staff and members of the governing body, and spoke to parents and pupils informally. They observed the school's work and looked at analysis of data about pupils' performance, records for tracking pupils' progress, pupils' work and teachers' lesson plans. They scrutinised school policies and procedures, records for monitoring of teaching and learning, school development plans, minutes from meetings and questionnaires received from 93 parents and carers, as well as responses from pupils and staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How well Key Stage 1 results, boys' writing and the progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities have improved.
- The effectiveness of assessment to inform teaching, providing pupils with appropriate challenge and additional support when it is needed.
- How accurately school leaders know the school and bring about changes to improve outcomes for pupils, particularly in Key Stage 1 and in writing.

Information about the school

This is an average-sized school in an urban area of Basingstoke. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. There are a few pupils who speak English as an additional language; a very few are at an early stage of English language acquisition. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. These pupils include those with specific or moderate learning difficulties; behavioural, emotional and social difficulties; speech, language and communication needs; and autistic spectrum disorder. The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises a single Reception class. The school runs an after-school club. The headteacher took up the post in April 2010. The school has gained the BBC Breathing Places award and won silver gilt awards for its garden areas. It has also achieved the Activemark.

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

The new headteacher has quickly established a clear understanding of the strengths of the school and identified the key areas for development. Ably supported by the senior leadership team, she has rapidly brought about improvements to the organisation of the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, to teaching and learning, and to the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Teaching is now mostly good and occasionally outstanding. Consequently, the rate of progress for pupils' learning has increased and is now good. On occasions, teachers spend too long on explanations so that pupils have too little time to do their tasks properly. In recent years, attainment has been broadly average, although in lessons seen, this is increasing and pupils were often working above the levels that might be expected for their ages. It is too early for the full impact on attainment to be evident in national tests, particularly in writing. Following recent improvements, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar, good progress to their peers. Pupils with English as an additional language are also well supported so that they make excellent progress in relation to their starting points. The school has had a focus on improving attendance; this has been very successful and attendance is now high. Along with accurate self-evaluation by school leaders and the governing body, these improvements demonstrate that the school has good capacity to sustain its ongoing improvements.

Pupils were enthusiastic in saying how much they enjoy being at school, because the teachers make the work fun, the topics they study are interesting, and there are lots of opportunities to explore interesting ideas and activities beyond the lessons. They develop good skills on computers and have increasing opportunities to use writing and their mathematical skills across all subjects. They said they feel very safe, because they know they are well cared for and there is always someone they can speak to if they are worried. A small minority felt that behaviour is not always good, but most pupils felt that the school's expectations were high and that they are rewarded for good behaviour. Inspectors found that behaviour is excellent and is a significant factor in the good progress of pupils.

Parents and carers hold very positive views about the school and almost all appreciate the recent changes that have already been implemented. They commented on the excellent communication between home and school, the good progress of their children, and the increased rigour in work, appearance and expectations of behaviour. As a parent said, 'We are very fortunate to be able to send our children to such a lovely school.' They also said that the new headteacher 'has made a positive impact in her short time at the school'. Staff agreed that changes have been positive.

Teachers know the pupils very well and pastoral care is particularly good. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is given a high priority, and the close links with the local

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church and dedication of the staff mean that this is a considerable strength of the school. The use of personal targets has been introduced and these have helped to improve progress. However, they are not yet used consistently by teachers or fully understood by pupils across the school, particularly in writing.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in writing by increasing the rigour and consistency in the use of personal targets for pupils.
- Increase the pace of lessons by reducing the length of time spent on teacher input, allowing pupils to work on the tasks more quickly.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge which are broadly similar to those expected for their age. The good support they receive, high expectations and clear routines help them to quickly develop good independence and a love of learning so that they make good progress. The school instigated a free-flow approach to learning in Key Stage 1, but this hindered the progress of pupils. The school quickly recognised this and has returned to more directed learning. As a result, a dip in attainment has been addressed and the progress of these pupils has improved.

During Key Stage 2, lessons observed during the inspection show that good teaching and the pupils' excellent attitudes to learning ensure good progress continues. For example, pupils in Year 5 were engrossed by an emotive film clip, and made impressive progress in developing ambitious sentences. By the end of Year 6, attainment has been broadly average with a rising trend. Attainment in writing was not as good as other areas, in the most recent national tests and teacher assessments, particularly for boys. Strategies to tackle this include the use of targets; where used well, they have improved the progress of boys' writing so that it is similar to that of the girls. There are good opportunities to write extended pieces of work or to use numbers in a range of subject areas. Pupils are proud of this work in their learning journals.

The support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has been reviewed recently and there is now a very clear structure and guidelines about each of the strategies available. Learning support assistants are particularly appreciative of these guidelines and therefore provide well-informed support in lessons and, where needed, on an individual basis. As a result, the progress of these pupils has improved and is now good. Pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, or with other specific needs, are also well supported by knowledgeable staff, as well as other partnerships where needed, and are enabled to participate fully in the curriculum. As a result, they also make good progress.

Pupils get along very well and enjoy excellent relationships among different groups, and with adults in the school. They know how they can be healthy and have been able to implement strategies towards this, such as the 'walking bus' to get to school in the morning. Their enthusiasm for sports means that they enjoy participating in local tournaments, with considerable success. They participate in a wide range of activities, including popular sports and hobby clubs, some of which are run by pupils themselves,

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giving them good opportunities for responsibility. This helped the school to achieve the national Activemark.

Pupils are very confident about how to keep themselves safe, for example when using the internet, or getting to and from school. Pupils respond sensitively to opportunities to reflect on spiritual matters and they regard the wider world with awe and wonder alongside their great interest. They are sensitive to the needs of others and regularly undertake fund-raising for those in difficult situations, such as their successful appeal for Haiti. They help new pupils to settle in quickly, particularly those who speak English as an additional language, because some of them have been trained as young interpreters.

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	3
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	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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?

Strategies to improve teaching have been introduced and are well understood by the staff. For example, in lessons, inspectors observed use of good questioning, work that is closely matched to the ability and needs of the pupils, a range of ways of presenting material, and sharing of learning objectives with the pupils. However, some teachers spend too long on explanations, which restricts the amount of time pupils have to do the tasks set for them. Systems to keep track of pupils' progress are now well established and mean that staff have an accurate view of pupils who may need extra support or challenge to reach their potential. This also informs them about the effectiveness of the strategies they implement. Marking is of a high quality and gives pupils helpful advice on what they need

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to do to improve. In best practice, pupils are expected to respond to these comments, but this is not consistent through the school.

The curriculum is well planned and adapted to the interests and needs of pupils and makes good use of the school grounds and local environment. This helped the school to gain silver gilt awards in the South and South-East-in-Bloom competitions, and the BBC Breathing Places award. The thematic approach includes input from the pupils about topics they are interested in and what they already know. This approach is being refined to improve the curriculum further. As a result, pupils enjoy their tasks a great deal and work well independently. The curriculum is enriched through themed weeks, such as the maths week, which was praised by pupils and parents. The residential trip is also a highlight for many and the school works hard to ensure all pupils can participate.

Staff are dedicated to ensuring the personal development and well-being of each pupil as an individual. Arrangements for support at times of transition are good and take into account particular needs pupils may have. Systems to ensure pupils are kept safe are robust and kept up-to-date. Staff are well trained in safeguarding procedures. The organisation of records is being refined and improved so that pupils' needs are anticipated and accurately met. The after-school club is highly regarded and pupils enjoy the variety of activities available. Parents are pleased that this provides a homely atmosphere where their children are well cared for.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

With the new headteacher at the helm, the leadership team are well informed and have rapidly established a strong vision to bring about the necessary changes to improve outcomes for pupils. Where needed, they have taken robust action to ensure improvements take place. As a result, all the staff are clear about the priorities for the school and are working together to bring these about; there is a strong sense of teamwork. Improvements in teaching, the impressive rise in attendance, and the increased rate of progress all confirm this. Alongside the accurate self-evaluation and high aspirations held by senior leaders, this means that the school's capacity for further improvement is good.

The headteacher is very highly regarded by staff, pupils, and parents and carers, who say she has increased communication between parents and carers and the school tremendously. For example, the parent voice meeting has been a very successful way of finding out about stakeholders' views, and parents and carers appreciate the excellent opportunities to learn about their children's education. The school ensures that everyone

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in the school has equal opportunities and that any discrimination is tackled effectively. The strategies to support boys' writing mean that this is now similar to that of the girls.

There are good opportunities for pupils to learn about the beliefs and lifestyles of those who may be different to themselves, particularly within the local community, where different faiths are appreciated and celebrated. Increasingly effective links with national and global partners are widening pupils' understanding of the beliefs and lifestyles further afield.

The governing body brings considerable expertise together with its loyal support for the school and is clear about the priorities for improvement; governance is good. It is well informed about its statutory obligations and has ensured that, at the time of the inspection, policies and procedures met requirements. Together with the school, it ensures safeguarding policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and met requirements at the time of the inspection. The governing body provides good levels of challenge and is developing a more active role within the school.

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	1
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

The Early Years Foundation Stage provides an exciting learning environment; it is well resourced and staff and children enjoy making good use of all the space available. Most children join the school with skills and knowledge which are similar to age-related expectations, although there is wide variation in some cohorts. Good arrangements to help children get used to routines and activities mean that they settle quickly and develop good skills as independent learners.

Relationships are very good and children's behaviour is well managed. Children readily discuss the 'rules' they have helped formulate and use the signs around the classroom and

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outdoor area to help them stay within these expectations. All areas of learning are well supported through interesting tasks and enriching activities. Children are confident to access resources for themselves and enjoy working together. Staff are skilled at promoting positive attitudes to learning, prompting and supporting rather than telling. As a result, children are inquisitive and keen to investigate, and develop their ideas about how and why things happen.

Children make good progress and, by the end of the Reception class, they are well prepared for the next stage of their learning. Children who may have special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified and the school works well with other partners and parents and carers to develop the support these children need. The input of other parents and carers in their children's learning is not yet as well developed. The close location, shared facilities and resources, as well as close work between staff, mean that the transition to Key Stage 1 is made very smoothly.

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 number of questionnaires received by the inspection team represented around half of the families in the school, above the average response rate. Almost all parents and carers indicated positive views of the school, with a very few indicating negative views. A very small minority felt less sure that their child is making enough progress, that their child's particular needs were met, or that the school takes account of parents' and carers' suggestions and concerns. In line with the view of the vast majority of parents and carers, inspectors found during this inspection that pupils made good progress, and that pupils' particular needs are met. A very few comments indicated that parents and carers were cautious about the pace of the changes which have been introduced. The large majority of the written comments praised the school's initiatives in developing effective means of communication and in enabling parents and carers to have a voice in the running of the school. Inspectors found that there are good opportunities for parents and carers to contribute ideas or discuss concerns with the school, and that such opportunities are increasing. The headteacher is readily available and many parents and carers make use of this. There are notable examples where parents' and carers' views have had an impact on the organisation of the school. Other parents and carers commented on the good progress their children are making, and the rising standards of the school. These positive views were strongly echoed in the informal comments made to inspectors.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

The inspection team received 93 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 217 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	52	56	39	42	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	54	58	34	37	3	3	1	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	41	44	44	47	2	2	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	41	44	46	49	5	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	46	49	43	46	3	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	50	54	41	44	2	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	44	47	47	51	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)	46	49	41	44	2	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	47	51	39	42	6	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	36	39	51	55	3	3	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	42	45	42	45	4	4	3	3
The school is led and managed effectively	54	58	35	38	1	1	3	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	58	62	31	33	2	2	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



3 February 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St John's CofE Primary School, Basingstoke RG21 3JU

We enjoyed talking to you when we visited your school and seeing the work you were doing. We were particularly impressed by your excellent behaviour. You told us you really enjoy being at school, and that you feel very safe because the staff care for you so well. We looked at many things and have judged that you attend a good school.

Here are some of the things we found.

- The new headteacher has quickly found out a lot about the school, and has made some good changes to improve how well you do.
- Teachers know how hard the work needs to be for each of you, and they make sure that lessons are enjoyable. This means that you make good progress in your learning and the standard of your work is improving.
- You like the topics you study, and help to choose some of these. You told us there are always lots of interesting things to do, including lots of clubs and visits. You also have the chance to run some of these clubs.
- Those of you who have learning difficulties are well supported because the teachers and teaching assistants have lots of different strategies to help you, and they use these suitably. As a result, you also make good progress.
- The school has emphasised how important it is to be at school regularly. As a result, your attendance has improved a lot and is now high; you can be very proud of this.
- You are good at choosing the right things to do to stay healthy, and you know what you need to do to stay safe, for example on the internet.

Even though it is a good school, I know that the headteacher and other staff want to make it even better. We have asked the school to do two things.

- Make sure that you know what your targets are, and what you need to do to reach these targets. You can help by doing your best to achieve them.
- Ensure that teachers give you more time to spend on lesson activities and do not spend too much time explaining things to you. You can all help by listening carefully and quickly doing what you need to.

Most of all you, all of you should continue to enjoy learning and being such a positive part of the school. We wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Saunders

Lead inspector

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