

St John's CofE (C) Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124297
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	359629
Inspection dates	14–15 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Gerald Griffin

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	353
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Blake
Headteacher	David Rowley
Date of previous school inspection	15 April 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 18 lessons taught by 15 teachers. They observed assemblies, break times and held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. Inspectors spoke informally with parents and carers at the school. They observed the school's work, and looked at progress records, teachers' lesson plans, pupils' work, school improvement plans, policies and reports. They analysed completed questionnaires returned by 100 pupils, 75 parents and carers, and eight staff.

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

- Do girls make enough progress in Key Stage 1?
- Do pupils make good enough progress in mathematics in Key Stage 2?
- Does teaching sufficiently challenge pupils, especially those who are more-able?
- Do improvement plans have sufficient rigour to ensure progress is accelerating for all children and pupils?

Information about the school

St John's is a larger than average sized primary school. Nearly all pupils come from White British families. A small minority of pupils are from Ghurkha families based at the nearby army garrison. The remainder come from a wide range of minority ethnic heritages. A few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. Most of these have dyslexia, moderate learning difficulties or behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. A below-average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. The number of pupils who join the school other than at the normal time is above average. The Early Years Foundation Stage provision comprises two Reception classes. The school has recently gained a number of awards including the Dyslexia Friendly Quality Mark. Recently the school has experienced some leadership difficulties caused by a higher than expected turnover of these personnel and recruitment problems.

The childcare provision on site is privately managed and inspected separately.

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?**3****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****3**

Main findings

This satisfactory school is improving strongly. It provides a safe, stimulating and happy atmosphere in which pupils grow into mature and articulate young people. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school and they are polite to adults and to each other. They enjoy school and are cared for well. Children get off to a good start in the Reception classes where they progress well. The large majority of parents and carers are happy with the quality of education the school provides. Typical of many, one comment to an inspector was, 'My child is very happy and thoroughly enjoys school. She is looked after very well. I am well informed about her progress and events at the school.'

The school's leadership difficulties caused progress to slow in recent years, especially in mathematics at Key Stage 2. Now that the leadership is stable the school has successfully tackled this shortcoming through effective improvement plans. Under the determined leadership of the headteacher, progress has improved strongly and is satisfactory. Since the last inspection, provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved and is now good. The school has sustained pupils' broadly average attainment and good personal development. The school continues to provide its pupils with a good level of care, guidance and support. Other aspects of the school, while satisfactory, are improving strongly. For example, measures to raise attendance have been successful. It has been steadily rising recently and is now above average. However, it is too early to judge if this level will be sustained. The leaders' drive to make the school better is clearly articulated and enthusiastically embraced by staff and the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve further. Leaders monitor rigorously most aspects of the school's performance and this provides them with largely secure and accurate information for self-evaluation. However, their use of data to evaluate the pupils' progress in different subjects and by different groups across the school is not always sharp enough to pinpoint exactly where further improvements can be made.

Teaching is satisfactory and there are many signs that it is improving. In lessons relationships are positive. Teachers use resources well to engage pupils and develop their learning. Teaching is not yet good because planning does not always use assessment data effectively to plan work that matches closely each pupil's needs. As a result, pupils are not always fully challenged. The curriculum supports aspects of pupils' personal development well. The school's strong creative tradition continues and the opportunities for them to express their ideas through the arts add to their enjoyment of school. Staff use their detailed knowledge of each child sensitively to provide them with good pastoral care.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Secure good progress by ensuring that the difficulty of the work given to each pupil matches their needs closely so that each is fully challenged.

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- Ensure leaders make good use of progress data to:
 - accurately judge progress across different subjects and groups of pupils in Years 1 to 6 and areas of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage
 - identify where further improvements can be made.
- Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next Section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Attainment on entry to the school in the Reception classes varies but is typically in line with age-related expectations. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language, enjoy learning and their achievement is satisfactory. However, improvements in provision mean that the achievement of pupils in Year 2 and of some more-able pupils in Years 5 and 6 is good. While pupils make satisfactory progress, some good learning was seen in lessons during the inspection. Pupils take pride in their work and try their best. They were curious and enjoyed answering teachers' questions, which were effective in promoting their self-confidence, communication skills and understanding. Mostly, pupils concentrate well, even when they find the work hard. Their proficiency as independent learners is developing effectively, particularly when they work with their peers in solving problems for themselves and making decisions about the direction of their investigations. They are beginning to make good use of self-assessment to judge the quality of their work and to understand how it can be made better. However some older pupils say that they find it difficult to take a good measure of responsibility for their learning because they are not sure about their rate of progress.

In mathematics at Key Stage 2, progress has accelerated because pupils' skills at solving mathematical problems have improved strongly. Furthermore, greater opportunities to use mathematical games and practical investigations are making the subject relevant and enjoyable and this, too, is contributing to improving progress. Progress in reading is improving strongly, especially for younger pupils, because they are becoming skilled at linking letters to the sounds they make. Writing is improving as pupils use an increasingly wide range of vocabulary to express their ideas in stories, accounts and letters. Progress is not yet good because pupils do not consistently use the correct verb tense or punctuation in sentences to make their meaning clear.

Last year the progress of girls in Year 2, while satisfactory, was slower than that of the boys. The school correctly identified that it was Nepalese girls that made below expected gains. To improve their progress, the school has provided them with individual coaching to raise their attainment in the basic skills. Additionally the school is advising their parents and carers about how they can support their child's learning at home. It is too early to judge the success of these strategies, but early signs are encouraging and show that the girls' progress is quickening. Girls currently in Year 2 are making similar good progress to the boys.

Pupils enjoy school, and this is reflected in their rapidly improving attendance. Pupils are safe in school and feel confident that the rare cases of bullying will be quickly dealt with by the school. They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, for

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example on the internet. Pupils understand the benefits of a healthy lifestyle but a significant minority have chosen not to adopt one. They have a clear understanding of the dangers of drug abuse and smoking. Pupils readily take responsibility in school as monitors and as members of the school council. They are keen to help elderly people in the local area and generously collect money for charity. Average standards in the basic skills and positive attitudes means that pupils' preparation for secondary school is satisfactory. Pupils reflect maturely on their actions and those of others. Their good behaviour is underpinned by a strong moral code. They work productively in groups and are quick to help others. They have a well-developed understanding of the diversity of British culture.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
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?

Teachers use computers, educational games and interactive whiteboards imaginatively to make work interesting and relevant. Teaching assistants help pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities concentrate on their work. They provide them with individual help to improve their basic skills, which is accelerating their progress. They keep records of pupils' progress which are passed to the teacher; these make a valuable contribution to planning challenging next steps. Marking and other feedback is improving and in Year 6 it is good. This is helping pupils to understand clearly how they can improve their work. However, information from marking and assessment is not always used

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effectively enough to tailor work in lessons to the needs of pupils of different abilities. Additionally, lesson introductions sometimes last too long, which slows the pace of learning.

Many lessons and assemblies provide good opportunities for pupils to reflect on their behaviour and that of others. Lessons are not yet providing pupils with all the information they need to ensure that they adopt healthy lifestyles. The wealth of popular clubs and educational visits broaden horizons and add to pupils' enjoyment of school.

Pupils confidently approach any member of staff with a worry knowing their concern will be quickly resolved. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are provided with sensitive support. This is especially so for those with dyslexia and this is reflected in the school's national award. The school works closely with outside agencies to assess specific needs and set up learning programmes to match them closely. The school has an above-average proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities because its reputation as a dyslexia friendly school means that it is the first choice of school for some parents and carers who live outside its normal catchment area. The school provides a warm welcome for pupils who join part-way through their primary education, which means they settle quickly and happily into the routines of school. Pupils who do not speak English as an additional language are provided with good support from teaching assistants, some of whom are bilingual. The school's targeted support for pupils whose circumstances have the potential to make them vulnerable is effective.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The school's leaders articulate clearly its challenging targets. Their checks on individual pupil's progress are very regular and effective. They ensure appropriate work is quickly provided for any whose progress slows so that they can catch up with missed work. Leaders, backed up by productive partnerships with the local authority, have provided successful training that has sharpened teachers' skills, for example in planning problem-solving activities in mathematics lessons. The school sharply analyses data in relation to levels of attainment, the quality of marking and attendance. It tends to give less emphasis to measuring progress made by groups of pupils and classes in relation to their starting points to measure the success of plans and to see where progress needs to be better. The governing body works hard on behalf of the school. Its growing understanding of data means that it is starting to challenge the school robustly over its effectiveness.

The school is committed to equal opportunities and tackling discrimination. The improving progress of some Year 3 girls shows that its policies are starting to have a positive impact.

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Safety and safeguarding are given a high priority. Child protection procedures are robust, regularly updated and fully meet current safeguarding requirements. The checks that the school makes on the suitability of adults to work with pupils are rigorous. Lessons on safety and safeguarding provide pupils with a strong understanding of how to keep themselves safe. The school is a happy and harmonious community in which pupils from all backgrounds integrate well. Its promotion of wider community cohesion is developing strongly. For example, it supports a mother and toddler group and helps local people gain qualifications in the basic skills. The school is developing links with communities abroad to extend further pupils' understanding of diversity.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

Pupils make good progress in the Reception classes in all areas of learning. This is especially so in reading where pupils are making rapid gains in linking letters to the sounds they make. Children behave well, readily share apparatus and help each other. Children are well cared for, very safe and enjoy school. Parents and carers are pleased with the arrangements that ensure children settle quickly and happily into the routines of school and the advice they are given so that they can support their child's learning at home.

The good teaching provides work that children find exciting and relevant. Teaching ensures work matches closely the needs of each child so that all the class are stretched. Planning provides a good balance of adult-led work and child-initiated activity. For example, in one lesson a group was making good progress in writing about pirates under the teacher's supervision. Another group had chosen to prepare pirate food in the class restaurant and were making good gains in their speaking through role play. During the

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inspection, the outdoor area was under-used to develop, for example, pupils' understanding of the world, physical development and gaining of independence.

Leaders are successfully improving the early learning skills of adults in the setting, which is accelerating children's progress. The school's plans to make better use of data to strengthen its evaluation of progress, and to identify where further improvements can be made, are appropriate.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	2
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

An average proportion of parents and carers returned a questionnaire. Their comments say that their children are safe, enjoy school and are very well cared for. Several made positive comments about communication and the advice they are given about how they can help their child learn at home. A few parents and carers thought that their child's progress was not good enough. The inspection found that there has been some slow progress in the past, especially in mathematics by older pupils, but that progress in this subject is now satisfactory.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St John's CofE (C) 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 75 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 353 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	40	53	33	44	2	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	40	53	34	45	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	26	35	44	59	4	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	28	37	40	53	6	8	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	27	36	47	63	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	31	41	38	51	4	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	31	41	42	56	2	3	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)	18	24	46	61	2	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	20	27	52	69	2	3	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	27	36	41	55	4	5	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	25	33	44	59	4	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	23	31	50	67	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	24	32	49	65	1	1	1	1

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.



16 February 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St John's CofE (C) Primary School, Stafford, ST16 3RL

Thank you for being so polite and friendly when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed our visit and the opportunity to talk with some of you and to see you in lessons and at play. You are rightly proud of the school's happy atmosphere in which you all get on so well together. St John's is a satisfactory school and it is improving. Here are some of the things we found out.

You make a happy start in the Reception classes.

You told us you enjoy school and feel safe and secure.

Your behaviour is good.

You readily accept responsibility.

You have good relationships with your teachers and you try hard for them.

The curriculum provides you with plenty of art and exciting clubs and visits, which you enjoy.

Adults look after you well and are always ready to help you.

The headteacher and staff are working together to make the school get better.

We have asked the school to do two things to help you do even better in your learning:

- improve your progress in lessons by making sure that your work makes everyone think hard
- use information about your progress to check how well you are learning in different subjects and to pinpoint where further improvements are required.

All of you can help the school by continuing to try your best in lessons, behaving well and attending regularly. We wish you all the best in the future.

Yours sincerely

Gerald Griffin

Lead inspector

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