

St John's CE Primary School, Radcliffe

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105349
Local authority	Bury
Inspection number	377229
Inspection dates	20–21 March 2012
Lead inspector	Sarah Drake

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	138
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Donald Binks
Headteacher	Malcolm Gate
Date of previous school inspection	10 December 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

Sarah Drake

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed teaching and learning in seven lessons taught by five different teachers, plus brief observations of sessions held during a mathematics fun day. She held meetings with pupils, school staff, members of the federated governing body, representatives of the local authority, and spoke informally with parents and carers. The inspector observed the school's work, and scrutinised a range of documentation relating to pupils' progress and school management, including assessment and tracking information, work in pupils' books, safeguarding information and school development planning. She also took into account the responses made to the inspection questionnaires by pupils, members of staff and 84 parents and carers.

Information about the school

St John's is around half the size of an average sized primary school. It serves an urban area to the south of Bury town centre. The great majority of pupils are White British and the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is more than twice the national average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is well above average; most of these have social, emotional and communication difficulties. Many more pupils than is usual join or leave the school partway through their primary education. The school meets the current floor standard which sets minimum expectations for attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

In September 2011, on the retirement of the previous headteacher and after a period of uncertainty about possible closure, the school joined a hard federation with another local school, for a fixed period of one year. There is a shared governing body and the executive headteacher divides his time between this school and the school where he is the substantive headteacher. At the same time, one teacher from the federated school also joined St John's. In February 2012 the local authority took the decision to keep the school open. It is currently taking steps to appoint a substantive 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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a satisfactory school. Under the inspirational and decisive leadership of the executive headteacher it is rapidly improving. It is not yet a good school because pupils' achievement is currently only satisfactory. Although good overall, teaching is not consistently of good or better quality. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage do not make fast enough progress.
- After a long period when pupils' learning was slow, their progress is improving and is now often good in lessons. However, many pupils still have gaps in their basic communication and numeracy skills that prevent their achievement over time from being better than satisfactory.
- Most teaching is of good or better quality but it is not consistently so for all pupils. Much teaching fills pupils with enthusiasm to work hard and persevere but sometimes a slower pace and too much talking by adults reduce the rate of pupils' learning. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, the planning and adults' interactions with children do not focus closely enough on what it is intended that children should learn.
- Pupils typically behave well and they have a good understanding of how to identify and avoid hazards. They form good relationships and enjoy school, describing it as 'like a family'. Attendance has improved significantly this year.
- The improvements that started in the last school year, with support from the local authority, have greatly accelerated over the past two terms due to rigorous internal analysis and accurate prioritisation of those areas in need of development. Notable changes include improvement in the quality of teaching and much increased engagement of parents and carers in their children's learning. The executive headteacher has skilfully galvanised the development actions to which the school's other leaders are now making a strong contribution.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the pace of pupils' progress so that it is consistently good or better by:
 - ensuring that pupils firmly embed their understanding of basic literacy and mathematical skills
 - ensuring that all teaching is of good or better quality
 - adapting the curriculum more closely to pupils' interests and needs.
- Improve the quality of provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - ensuring that assessment is accurately based on recorded evidence and is used to identify in planning what children with different abilities are expected to learn
 - improving the quality of discussion between adults and children, especially during children's self-chosen play
 - strengthening the leadership and management.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Most children join the Nursery with skills that are well below those expected for their age. Their communication and personal skills are often similar to those of children one year younger. Children enjoy their time in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are eager to explore and to share their experiences with adults but their progress is too slow. This means that many pupils move into Year 1 with skills that are still well below average. Elsewhere, the majority of pupils make good progress in lessons but this is not yet consistent throughout the school. The legacy of weaker teaching in the past shows, for example, in some older pupils' restricted vocabulary, spelling errors, or uncertainty about which mathematical function to use when solving problems.

Attainment in 2011 was broadly average in mathematics and English, and it is currently broadly average for current pupils. Attainment in reading at the end of both Year 2 and Year 6 is also broadly average. Most pupils are on track to make the expected progress by the end of Key Stage 2 and so achievement is satisfactory. This includes disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, some of whom, due to well focused support, make good progress from the low communication, social and emotional skills with which they join the school. The high proportions of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who join the school midway through their primary education make similar progress to that of their peers. Almost all parents and carers who expressed an opinion are pleased with their children's progress, with some commenting positively about recent improvements. This bears out inspection evidence that pupils now make at least satisfactory, and often good, progress in lessons.

Pupils say that lessons are 'brilliant and fun especially when we do maths'. They persevere with their learning and are highly supportive of each other so that, for example, they are confident to ask questions if they do not understand something. Pupils collaborate well when working in small groups and show respect for others' contributions. They know their targets and are clear about what they need to do to improve their work although younger pupils in particular sometimes find it hard to extend their learning independently. By the time pupils reach the Year 5 and 6 class they produce some well considered work, for example, short poems such as, 'Mars the ghostly and bloodshed/ the sound of it hurts my head', in response to a range of stimuli.

Quality of teaching

Most teaching adapts the content of lessons very skilfully to suit the wide range of abilities in every classroom because it is securely based on an evaluation of pupils' prior learning. Interesting activities, such as working out the cost of spending a night in a space hotel, spark pupils' enthusiasm for learning. Most, but not all, lessons move at a good pace, capitalising on pupils' responsiveness so that they make good strides in their learning. The teaching promotes pupils' basic literacy and numeracy skills increasingly effectively but these are not fully embedded yet. A new curriculum focus on developing pupils' reading skills through library visits and more purposeful guided reading sessions is enabling many pupils to achieve well in this area. The teaching places much emphasis on the importance of talk when learning, providing many opportunities for pupils to collaborate and discuss their ideas. Such activities also promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well as they appreciate the importance of turn-taking and broaden their horizons through others' experience.

Teachers make good use of probing questioning and subject specific language. They ensure that, for example, when one pupil volunteered 'hesitate' as a good word to include in a suspense story, both the user and other pupils understand the word's meaning. Most teachers also use new technology effectively to provide visual reminders of important points, to introduce new learning or to help pupils celebrate, evaluate and suggest improvements to their own and others' work. Special support assistants and teaching assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning both through focused work with individuals and groups and in whole class sessions, ensuring that all are fully engaged in their learning. Good quality marking of work and feedback during lessons provide pupils with the tools to move their learning forward with increasing independence. Pupils, parents and carers agree, and inspection evidence confirms, that most teaching at the school is now good.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, planning for lessons is extensive but it does not make sufficiently clear what skills the adults intend children should develop through the different activities. Staff record observations of individuals' learning but do not use these well enough to identify the next steps that children need to take in the different areas of learning. While relationships among children and between children and adults are good, ensuring that children feel secure, the adults do not always make the most of opportunities to extend children's learning through discussion, especially when children independently choose the focus of their play.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils say that they feel 'absolutely safe because people you can trust are always there to look out for you'. They know about dangers posed by, for example, different substances or electronic communication and they highlight to staff potential hazards around school. Parents and carers unanimously express the view that their children are safe and that any, rare, instances of bullying are dealt with effectively. Behaviour is almost always good both on the playground and inside, helping to create a positive atmosphere for learning. Pupils are agreed that those who initially find anger management difficult soon discover ways to identify trigger points independently and take effective action. Pupils of all ages relish taking on responsibilities. They run a school shop where 'Fairtrade bananas ROCK!', have organised a book day to raise funds for playground equipment and held a 'Blue Friday', linked to Children in Need, which promoted anti-bullying awareness. They welcome newcomers very positively and help them swiftly settle. Pupils are polite, confident, proud of their school and appreciative of others' efforts. Attendance has improved markedly from below average for the past three years, to average in the autumn and above average for the current term.

Leadership and management

Good quality leadership and management have underpinned the good improvements that are appreciated by all those associated with the school. Development planning is precise and crystal clear. It takes into account the views of all stakeholders and is firmly rooted in exceptionally sharp analysis of the impact of the school's provision on pupils' achievement. Succinct, measurable success criteria, combined with very regular review, provide a sense of urgency and challenge to which staff are responding in a positive manner. Good quality support and continuing professional development are carefully targeted at those areas in most need but, should they not have sufficient impact, leaders do not shy away from taking difficult decisions. Initial steps were led by the very skilful executive headteacher but soon involved the school's competent internal leaders to ensure that the capacity for improvement is good, whatever changes to the headship may occur. However, the leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage unit is not yet effective enough and consequently provision is not as cohesive or sharply focused on children's achievement as it should be. The arrangements for the federation are working well. Members of the governing body have greatly increased their involvement in school life and their understanding of how well the pupils can achieve. This means they now offer the school challenge as well as support. Arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements. Simple, new systems ensure that all who need to know about those pupils whose circumstances are likely to make them more vulnerable, are kept abreast of any changes.

The curriculum is satisfactory and an area already identified for improvement by the school. It promotes pupils' basic skills sequentially. There has not yet been time to adapt it so that it takes more account of the particular needs and interests of the school's pupils, and extend more fully their skills in information and communication technology (ICT). The school promotes equality and tackles discrimination effectively. As standards rise, the gap is closing between its pupils' attainment and that of pupils nationally. The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. From learning about the plight of animals in the rainforest

to the importance of the golden rule to 'treat others as you would want to be treated', pupils have a good understanding of life beyond the mundane. The involvement of parents and carers in their children's learning has increased remarkably this year. Many now hear their children read at home, they attend events such the 'maths fun day' at school and more than half felt it important to express their positive views about the school by returning the inspection questionnaire. This is a much higher response than the school has experienced before when seeking the views of parents and carers.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



22 March 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of St John's CE Primary School, Radcliffe, Manchester, M26
1AW**

Thank you for your warm welcome and politeness to me when I visited your school recently. I was very touched by the spontaneous applause that some of you gave me, when we had finished our group discussion, for your perception that I had treated you with respect. You clearly take on board the golden rule to treat others as you would want to be treated! Thank you very much to everyone who spoke with me, read to me or returned questionnaires – this includes your parents and carers.

St John's is a satisfactory, improving school. You enjoy your lessons and are making increasingly good progress. This is because most of the teaching is good. The teachers provide you with interesting things to do. They make sure you are clear about what they expect and what you need to do next to improve your work. Some of you have a few gaps in your communication and numeracy skills so I have asked the school's leaders to make sure the teachers help you fill these soon so that you can achieve higher levels more consistently over time. I have also asked them to make sure that all the teaching is of at least good quality and that children in the Nursery and Reception are helped to make better progress than at present. The school's leaders have been very successful in taking actions to ensure it improves rapidly. No wonder you are so proud of it.

One of the school's great strengths is the way that you all get on so well together and want to help each other. It was great to find out about the learning mentors, tuck shop crew and reading buddies, and to see the playtime buddies in action. It was also very good to see how sensibly you all behaved on the maths fun day and what a good time you and your parents and carers had in the different classrooms. Your attendance has improved a lot – please try to keep it up! This letter comes with my best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Drake
Lead inspector

