

St John's CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135056
Local Authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	363330
Inspection dates	23–24 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Ken Buxton HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI) the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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	389
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Derek Arnold
Headteacher	Lawrence Gittins
Date of previous school inspection	19 May 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. The inspectors visited 21 lessons and observed 15 teachers. They held meetings with the headteacher, members of the governing body, staff, pupils, parents and carers, and a representative from the local authority. The school's work was observed and various documents, including the improvement plan, progress reports, minutes of governing body meetings and records of pupils' progress, were scrutinised. Inspectors took account of the school's recent analysis of its parent and carer questionnaires.

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

- What is the impact of the actions taken to accelerate pupils' progress and raise standards across the school?
- What is the extent to which the quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection and what impact has this had on the pace of pupils' learning and progress?
- How well does the curriculum meet the needs of pupils and contribute to their engagement with learning?
- What action has been taken to develop leadership expertise and how effectively has this contributed to school improvement?

Information about the school

This school is larger than the average-sized primary school. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and only a very few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than average. At the last inspection, in May 2009, the school was deemed to require special measures because significant improvement was needed in relation to pupils' progress, the curriculum, teaching and learning and leadership and management. Since that inspection, a number of new staff have been appointed including the headteacher, an assistant headteacher, an Early Years Foundation Stage leader, six teachers and a business manager. A new staffing structure has been implemented to take account of the numerous changes to the school's staff. The school has achieved Healthy Schools status and been awarded its fourth Green Flag for being an Eco-School. The governing body manages a breakfast club at the school, which runs on a daily basis.

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

2

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

The positive changes that have occurred since the previous inspection are significantly improving the quality of education being delivered across the school. The headteacher has been instrumental in leading the drive for improvement and, working with a strong and capable leadership team, has brought about the improvements needed. The most recent example is the transformation that has taken place across the Early Years Foundation Stage, which now provides a high quality learning environment for the Reception-age children. There is far more consistency in the quality of teaching being delivered across the school and clear evidence that, as a result, pupils' rate of learning is improving securely and quickly. These changes demonstrate that the school has a good capacity for improvement and that it is well placed to implement its plans to strengthen provision further.

The recently strengthened leadership team is focused firmly on driving improvement. Although the current improvement plan is still relatively short term, the senior leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are very clear about their plans for longer-term development. There is a firm determination to involve staff and the governing body more fully in influencing and monitoring the impact of the school's improvement priorities. There is also a clear recognition that the quality of teaching still needs further improvement if the school is to continue to close the attainment gap that exists with schools nationally. Senior leaders have identified the need to improve pupils' standards in writing and, particularly, to close the attainment gap that exists between boys and girls. Actions taken by the English and mathematics subject leaders have already established secure foundations to ensure greater consistency in the quality of teaching of these subjects. Their actions are enabling pupils to make accelerated progress. Leadership in other subjects, including science, is not as developed and, as a result, the curriculum does not build sufficiently on pupils' prior learning and experiences. Senior leaders are fully aware that, in some of the less effective lessons, insufficient account is taken of pupils' differing needs and that the pace of learning is not quick enough.

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.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' attainment so that, by July 2012, it matches or exceeds the national average by:

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- reducing the gap that exists between girls' and boys' attainment, particularly in writing
- strengthening the curriculum to build on pupils' prior knowledge and understanding.
- Strengthen the quality of teaching by:
 - ensuring activities are matched accurately to pupils' different abilities
 - delivering lessons that consistently motivate and engage pupils
 - making explicit the high standards for the quality and quantity of work expected.
- Improve the effectiveness and impact of the school's leadership by:
 - sharpening the governing body's ability to hold the leaders to account
 - developing subject leaders' effectiveness at driving improvement, particularly in science
 - involving the school's community more in the development, implementation and monitoring of the improvement plan.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

The recent changes that have been implemented are having a positive impact on improving pupils' outcomes. Evidence from lesson observations shows that the legacy of previous underperformance is being tackled successfully. However, the gaps in pupils' knowledge are still evident and this is why time is still required to raise standards to the levels expected. When children begin school in the Reception Year, their skills are often typical of those expected for their age. By the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment in English and mathematics is still currently lower than average. The school has correctly identified the attainment gap that exists between girls' and boys' writing across the school. The initiatives that the English and mathematics subject leaders have implemented are already making a positive impact. For example, the newly implemented mathematical calculation policy provides a carefully structured programme that ensures that pupils are taught appropriate numerical operations each year. Evidence shows clearly that pupils have developed a greater understanding of the strategies taught and apply them correctly to solve mathematical problems. The school's assessment data confirm that pupils' progress has accelerated this year, although it is still faster in some year groups than others. This evidence is substantiated by lesson observations. The increased speed of learning is because pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, find lessons more interesting and enjoyable than was the case previously. As a result, pupils' achievement is now satisfactory.

Pupils have a good understanding about the importance of leading a healthy life and being safe. They know about the health dangers associated with smoking and drinking alcohol and enjoy the many opportunities to exercise. They are also keen to take on responsibilities around the school, including as play leaders and representing their classes on the school council. The recent initiative to organise and run the 'Green-Day', which involved building sculptures using recycled materials, demonstrates how they contribute to and influence events at school. Pupils are polite and respond appropriately to instructions. Their behaviour is satisfactory. Pupils are confident that any incidents of inappropriate

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behaviour, including bullying, are dealt with robustly and fairly. Attendance levels are average.

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	4
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	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
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	3

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 previously inadequate teaching has been eradicated and improvements have resulted in a higher number of good quality lessons being taught. The high turnover of temporary staff has also been reduced and there is much greater continuity in the staff teaching across the school. As a result of the increased stability of staffing, pupils are more settled and better motivated to learn. Teachers teaching same-age pupils in parallel classes are increasingly planning their lessons together, which has improved the consistency of learning opportunities that pupils experience. Support staff are briefed well on their role in working in the classroom and contribute well to the learning, often supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Lessons are increasingly planned on the basis of accurate assessment information and teachers' knowledge of the pupils. However, there are still instances of all pupils in the same class being given the same work to complete, which reduces the progress they make. Teachers' marking is more effective than before. Feedback in pupils' books explains how work could be improved and sets out the next steps to be taken. In the most effective lessons, in which pupils make the most progress, the pace of learning is clearly evident and little or no time is lost. Pupils are fully engaged and motivated to learn and teachers build skillfully on pupils' prior knowledge and

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understanding. They make good use of information and communication technology, to capture and stimulate pupils' imagination and enthusiasm. In those lessons in which the pace of learning is slower, teachers do not take enough account of pupils' differing abilities and do not set their expectations of pupils high enough. In addition, the activities planned are not always matched carefully enough to pupils' capabilities and, as a result, pupils lose interest and find opportunities to avoid completing the work.

The school's developing thematic curriculum is helping pupils to use and apply their literacy and numeracy skills and knowledge across a range of subjects. The topics are selected carefully to engage pupils' interests; ideas for lessons are increasingly drawn from the planned theme. This is a particularly strong feature in Year 6, where there is exceptional consistency between the parallel classes with the delivery of a high quality curriculum. The subject leader for English is leading the initiative to ensure that writing opportunities are encouraged throughout the school and that they are equally interesting to boys and girls. However, because some of these changes are relatively recent, there is insufficient evidence to judge how well the curriculum is contributing to pupils' development. Visitors to the school and off-site visits add interest and variety to learning, as does the Forest School, which provides younger pupils with an exciting outdoor learning area.

The school provides a good level of care, guidance and support for pupils. Staff know the pupils well and work hard to encourage regular attendance. For example, the breakfast club is used well to incentivise those pupils who need to be at school early. The review of procedures for the identification and support of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has been led well by the coordinator. As a result, resources are targeted more precisely at those pupils needing extra help. This work has resulted in a faster pace of learning for this particular group of pupils and is helping to narrow the attainment gap that exists with similar pupils nationally.

Similarly, the good level of care provided for pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable is also enabling them to make the progress expected.

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 headteacher has made a significant contribution to the positive changes that have taken place. He has 'led from the front' and built a strong leadership team that is successfully driving improvement. The team's efforts, through carefully targeted support and coaching, are strengthening the quality and effectiveness of teaching across the school. In particular, the mentoring of recently appointed newly qualified teachers is

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proving particularly successful. The English and mathematics subject leaders are proving instrumental in identifying and implementing well-considered actions to drive up standards. They are monitoring the impact of the different initiatives introduced and have secure evidence that their work is successful. In contrast, far less progress has been achieved in promoting other subjects, including science.

Governance is satisfactory. The governing body is organised well and its members are playing an increasingly visible role within the school. The recent introduction of link governors, whereby members of the governing body are attached to particular subjects, has provided good opportunities to gain in-depth knowledge and understanding of developments taking place. The detailed reports presented to the governing body have ensured the members have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, as yet, the governing body is not playing a strong enough role in determining the school's improvement priorities, or holding the leaders sufficiently to account for the actions they have taken.

There are procedures for leaders to monitor provision but the analysis of impact on pupils' outcomes is not embedded. For example, although there are plans to promote community cohesion, and appropriate actions have been recently taken, the school has little evidence about the impact of its work. Efforts to strengthen the promotion of equal opportunities are improving the rate at which some groups of pupils are making progress. The school has gathered pertinent information about the performance of different groups and is taking action to address attainment gaps that it has identified. Safeguarding arrangements are good and the school is planning to take further action to improve pupils' safety at 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	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

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Early Years Foundation Stage

The new team leading the Early Years Foundation Stage has, in a remarkably short period of time, transformed the quality of provision. The adults have a very good knowledge of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum and have developed an interesting and engaging environment in which to deliver it. The children are challenged well by the exciting range of opportunities on offer.

Staff provide children with experiences covering all the relevant areas of learning. The quality of assessment is good and staff use their expertise well to monitor and record children's development. The quality of leadership is good. The team has appropriately high expectations of what is to be achieved and there is already very clear evidence of a positive impact on children's learning. Outcomes are currently satisfactory. This is because the very recent changes have yet to impact fully on children's attainment. The initial signs are very positive. Evidence from lesson observations is already showing strengths in developing children's early writing skills. Communication with parents and carers is good, which has strengthened the overall effectiveness of the Foundation Stage.

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	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Parental questionnaires are not normally distributed for monitoring inspections conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so. However, the inspectors did consider the school's analysis of its own questionnaire that had been circulated just prior to the inspection. This showed that a very large majority of parents and carers were positive about all aspects of the school. A few raised concerns about pupils' behaviour. This has been commented on in other sections of the report.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Parental questionnaires are not normally distributed for inspections conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so.

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	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.



25 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St John's CE Primary School, Kidderminster, DY11 6AP

You may remember that I inspected your school, with another inspector, to see how well your school is helping you to learn. I thank you all for being so friendly and helpful. I thought you would like to know what we found out.

You go to a school that has had a lot of recent changes and new staff and is now improving. You go to a satisfactory school that is doing a number of things well and no longer requires 'special measures'.

Most of you enjoy school.

Many of you are making faster progress than previously, enabling you to learn more by the time you transfer to secondary school.

You have a good understanding of how to lead healthy lives.

The Reception classrooms and the outdoor learning area have been significantly improved.

The headteacher and staff take good care of you and are doing well at improving the school.

Your lessons are interesting and you are making better progress than previously. Your teachers know that you can make even more progress and attain higher standards. Therefore, I have asked them to help you to do so by improving the opportunities you have to write and by making sure that the boys do as well as the girls. I have also asked them to increase the pace of lessons and to make sure the curriculum builds on what you already know and understand. It is important that you are actively learning for more of your time in school. I have asked the school's leaders and the governing body to be even more effective in planning and monitoring the school's future development.

Remember, you can help to play a part by working hard and always doing your best.

I wish you the very best for your future at St John's CE Primary School.

Yours sincerely

Ken Buxton

Her Majesty's Inspector

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