

St John's Catholic Primary School, Trowbridge

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126429
Local Authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	366617
Inspection dates	5–6 July 2011
Reporting inspector	Ian Hodgkinson 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 aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	303
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Derek O'Rourke
Headteacher	Frank Toner
Date of previous school inspection	22 June 2010
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. Inspectors observed 11 teachers and 16 lessons, and briefly visited other lessons and activities. Discussions were held with senior and middle leaders, staff, members of the governing body, pupils, parents and carers and the advisory headteacher from the local authority. Inspectors looked at documentation, including pupils books, the school development plan, records of assessment and tracking of pupils progress, plans and monitoring information for the support of potentially vulnerable pupils, records of the schools arrangements for the safeguarding and protection of pupils, and policies and procedures for promoting equality and countering discrimination.

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

The quality of provision and pupils attainment in science across the school.

The quality of teaching and learning, including the effectiveness of teachers marking of pupils work and use of assessment information.

The effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels in raising pupils attainment and accelerating their progress.

Information about the school

This larger-than-average primary school draws its pupils from families seeking a Catholic education from a wide geographical area in and around the town of Trowbridge. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups, especially those of Eastern European and particularly Polish heritage, has grown quickly over recent years and is above that found in most schools. A high proportion, almost a fifth, of pupils speak English as an additional language. Very few pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is low, with speech, language and communication difficulties representing the largest group. Currently, the school operates two Reception classes and mixed-age classes for Years 1 and 2, Years 3 and 4, and Years 5 and 6. The school has achieved the Activemark award and the National Healthy Schools Status.

Since its last section 5 inspection, the school has appointed a headteacher, and revised senior leadership structures have been put in place. The governing body has elected a new chair and appointed six new members.

When the school was inspected in June 2010, it was judged to require special measures. Subsequently, the school was inspected on three occasions. At the last monitoring inspection the school was judged to be making good progress.

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

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. This is a good school. Under the excellent direction of its headteacher, the school has focused relentlessly and successfully on improving the quality of teaching and learning. Teaching is good, and teachers make excellent use of assessment criteria to enable pupils to understand clearly what they need to do to achieve their targets and to improve to reach higher levels of performance. Indeed, pupils themselves are exceptionally confident in setting their own success criteria for high quality work and assessing their own attainment and progress against these. Older pupils, in particular, are able to work with considerable independence. Pupils make good progress given their broadly average starting points and, by the end of Year 6, their attainment in English and mathematics is above average. Attainment in science has been transformed, and much outstanding learning is to be seen in science lessons across the school as pupils demonstrate an excellent grasp of scientific methods and terminology.

Pupils excellent attitudes and behaviour underpin their good learning in class. They work exceptionally well together, listen respectfully to each others views and offer their own constructive opinions about how their own work or that of their peers can be improved. Pupils feel very safe in a caring environment, and have a very well-developed understanding of how to keep each other safe. They value and celebrate diversity. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils who arrive in the school speaking little or no English receive strong and effective support from their peers, and most make at least good progress as a result of well-tailored support, including in their first language, from school staff and the ethnic minority achievement service. There has, however, been a significant fall in overall school attendance figures this year to broadly average levels, partly through families taking extended term-time holidays. This has constrained progress for some pupils, especially younger children.

Parents and carers have very positive views about the schools improvement and the quality of education it provides. They value, in particular, the warm welcome they receive in the school, and the efforts of leaders to engage with them over its development and progress. Leaders and managers at all levels, including the governing body, are making very effective use of a good flow of information on pupils progress and the quality of teaching and learning to strengthen accountability for performance throughout the school. Self-evaluation is well informed, and swift action is taken to improve performance where weaknesses are identified. In the light of the previous section 5 inspection report, the schools focus has been on improving performance in Key Stages 1 and 2. Childrens progress and the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, while satisfactory, have not improved in line with the rest of the school, particularly in ensuring that activities are always purposeful in developing childrens understanding and skills.

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Overall, the schools very rapid progress in addressing the key issues of the previous inspection through significant improvements in science achievement, in transforming the quality of teaching and learning, and in the effectiveness of leadership and management confirms the schools good capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve outcomes and the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - ensuring that activities, including child-initiated play, are consistently purposeful in developing childrens understanding and skills
 - improving the quality of learning outdoors to make it more regular and purposeful
 - ensuring that staff across both classes have opportunities to work collaboratively and to see and share good early years practice.
- Raise pupils attendance rates by:
 - working with parents and carers to reduce the number and extent of term-time holidays
 - raising the profile of the importance of good attendance, including through the rewards system and through the regular sharing of detailed attendance information across the school community.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils achieve well to attain above average results in Year 6 national tests in English and mathematics. Attainment in mathematics has improved markedly since the last inspection, especially at the higher levels, at Key Stages 1 and 2. Improvement has, however, been most rapid in science, where pupils skills of scientific investigation are very well developed, and their recording of experimental work in their books is exemplary. English attainment is above average too, and while there remains a legacy of weakness in writing which constrains attainment for some, pupils have generally made good progress since the last section 5 inspection. In over a third of lessons seen on this inspection, the quality of pupils learning was outstanding. This is especially the case in Key Stage 2, where pupils are adept at evaluating their work against clear success criteria across many subjects. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language make good progress, particularly in developing communication skills through many opportunities to interact with others through high quality small-group and whole-class activities.

Pupils contribute enthusiastically to a wide range of school, community and church activities. They willingly take on responsibilities, such as monitors and playground buddies. The school council and eco-committee are having an increasing profile in shaping the schools development. Extensive involvement in charitable fund-raising reflects pupils strong empathy for others around the globe. Pupils have very active lifestyles in school, through wide participation in a range of physical activities, and through their involvement in very successful sports teams. Many pupils also take part in music programmes and activities, and some perform to high standards. Pupils develop good basic skills, including

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the ability to use information and communication technology to support their learning, which prepare them well for later life. They are very punctual to lessons and activities, but attendance is only average overall, because a very small minority of pupils are absent too often.

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	2
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	3
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?

Throughout the sequence of monitoring inspections following the schools last section 5 inspection, much outstanding teaching has been observed in the Year 5/6 classes. The strengths evident in those classes have now spread through most of the school, ensuring that the large majority of teaching is at least good and a significant proportion shows outstanding features. There remain some inconsistencies in teaching quality across the school, especially in maintaining the pace and purpose of learning consistently across all activities. However, teachers consistently plan lessons very thoroughly, matching lesson objectives and tasks to pupils capabilities. They have very clear strategies to support those in need of extra help, for example by giving careful attention to the way in which pupils are organised in groups and to the deployment of the support of teaching assistants. By evaluating their own work and through the exceptionally clear and thorough checking and marking of their work by their teachers, pupils develop an excellent understanding of how well they are doing and where they need to improve.

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New systems and structures are planned to be in place for the school curriculum in the next academic year, including a move to a combination of mixed- and single-age classes. These are aimed at narrowing the very wide range of capabilities which prevail in some classes at present, and improving the planning for pupils transition as they move up from one class to the next, which has not always ensured smooth progression across all subjects in the past. The allocation and development of subject leadership roles across the teaching staff have been highly effective in developing the quality of the curriculum in many subjects. This is especially so in science, where the curriculum was judged inadequate at the last section 5 inspection, but is now being used by the local authority to demonstrate exemplary practice. The curriculum makes very good use of visitors to enrich and enthuse pupils learning. An extensive programme of extra-curricular clubs and activities makes a significant contribution to pupils strong personal development and well-being.

Pupils, parents and carers have a very high regard for the way adults in the school support and care for pupils well-being. Very good systems are in place, drawing effectively on the expertise of external agencies, to support the progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language. There are strong links with the neighbouring Catholic secondary school to ensure that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. The school, supported by the educational welfare service, works intensively with families to improve the attendance of pupils with the worst absence records. However, the importance of good attendance does not have a high enough profile more generally in the school, either through the rewards system or through information published to pupils and parents and carers.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
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?

The headteacher has drawn very effectively on excellent and well-targeted support from local authority consultants to make rapid improvements in the quality of teaching and learning across the school, and to strengthen the quality of leadership at all levels. Under new leadership, the governing body has strongly developed its capacity and confidence to hold the school to account for its performance. It has been helped in this regard by a much improved flow of performance information from senior leaders, and through its own engagement with stakeholders through meetings and surveys of parents, carers, staff and pupils. Senior leaders and the governing body have been highly effective in short-term action planning on points for improvement identified in recent inspections and monitoring activities, and realise the importance of finalising a comprehensive improvement plan to guide the school in its next stage of development.

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The school tracks the attainment, progress and attendance of individuals and groups of pupils carefully to ensure that all have an equal opportunity for success. There are no gaps evident in the progress of different groups of pupils across the school, although progress is not as strong for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The school's ethos promotes very high levels of tolerance and respect for cultural and faith diversity. Arrangements to safeguard the well-being of pupils meet all requirements; child protection training for staff is thorough and effective, and pupils, parents and carers are strongly of the view that pupils are safe at school.

The school has audited its contribution to community cohesion, and has identified many opportunities for pupils to engage with the local and wider community through sporting, cultural and civic activities. It is currently developing links with other schools in the United Kingdom and across the world.

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	1
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	2
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

Children make satisfactory progress during their Reception Year. Most reach the goals expected for their age in most areas of learning, although writing and language skills are below average levels. Teaching assistant support is available in the Polish language, and helps children of Polish heritage settle in quickly. Children are happy and relaxed and get along well together. They grow in confidence, and the more-able children articulate and express themselves clearly. Children's welfare and well-being are at the forefront of provision. Learning resources are adequate inside the classrooms, but resources for learning in the outdoor area are very limited. Resources are not always managed to best effect to ensure that children develop new skills or understanding when playing or initiating activities independently. Staff make careful records of children's progress to inform their planning of activities and to share children's learning journeys effectively with

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parents and carers. Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is beginning to make use of the monitoring and evaluation of performance information to improve provision across both Reception classes, but there is, as yet, insufficient sharing and observation of good practice.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

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

Views of parents and carers

As this inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and deemed a section 5 inspection under the same act, Ofsted did not require a formal questionnaire survey of parents and carers views. However, shortly before this inspection, the school conducted its own survey of parents and carers views using the Ofsted questionnaire format, and received 62 responses. In addition, inspectors met with a number of individuals and groups of parents and carers on the playground at the beginning of each day of the inspection. It is evident that parents and carers have a highly positive view of the schools quality of provision and rate of improvement. This is a very marked change from the position at the last section 5 inspection a year ago, when parents and carers views were very negative. In particular, they value the stability and direction brought to the school by the headteacher. They appreciate the many improvements in the way the school engages with parents and carers, from the very welcoming approach of the front office staff, to the regular forums offered by the headteacher and the governing body for parents and carers to comment on the schools development. A small minority of parents and carers feel that information from school to home on pupils progress is not regular enough. The school agrees and has plans in place to increase the frequency of progress reports during the next academic year. Parents and carers, nonetheless, all comment very favourably on how well informed their children are about the progress they are making.

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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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.



7 July 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Johns Catholic Primary School, Trowbridge, BA14 9EA

Thank you for the welcome you gave to me and my colleague when we visited your school for its recent inspection. As on my previous visits to the school during the last year, your excellent attitudes and courteous behaviour have been prominent features of life in your school. The warm and supportive relationships between pupils from all backgrounds help to ensure that you feel very safe and secure. Your very constructive ways of working together, whether in solving problems in class or working as teams in sport and musical events, prepare you well for later life.

Our report judges that your school no longer requires special measures. Indeed, it is now a good school. It has made very rapid progress on all of the issues of the last inspection. Your attainment is now above average and you achieve well. You are well taught and your learning in the classroom is good and sometimes outstanding. Older pupils have particularly well-developed skills for working independently and improving their own work. Teachers and you, yourselves, assess your work exceptionally thoroughly to identify how you can reach higher levels of performance.

You and your parents and carers told us how much you value the way in which the headteacher has led the improvement of the school over the last year. Leadership and management of the school have strengthened in all areas, including in the effective role now played by the governing body. Teachers are leading many improvements in individual subjects, such as science.

There are, however, two main areas where the school could improve further. Firstly, the rate of improvement of childrens progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, while satisfactory, has not been as strong as in the rest of the school. Secondly, school attendance has fallen sharply this year, mainly because a very small minority of you have poor attendance records. If you are not at school you cannot keep up with learning.

If the few of you who do not attend regularly improve coming to school, your school can keep on improving. I wish you every success.

Yours sincerely

Ian Hodgkinson

Her Majestys Inspector

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