

St John with St Mark CE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133929
Local authority	Bury
Inspection number	381569
Inspection dates	18–19 April 2012
Lead inspector	Terry McDermott

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	284
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Wilfred Davison
Headteacher	Janet Moore
Date of previous school inspection	19 November 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

Terry McDermott
Janet Keefe
Terry Bond

Additional inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 25 lessons taught by 10 teachers, for a total of approximately 12 hours. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, staff and members of the governing body. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line Parent View survey in planning the inspection. They observed the school's work, listened to pupils reading, looked at the school's methods for tracking pupils' progress, and at a range of school documents, including its policies, minutes of governing body meetings, monitoring records and samples of pupils' work. Responses from 94 parents and carers to the Ofsted questionnaire were considered, along with responses to questionnaires completed by staff and pupils.

Information about the school

The school is larger than the average-sized primary school. The proportion of girls in the school is much lower than is usually found. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic heritages is above average, as is the proportion of pupils who do not speak English at home. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is near the national average. A greater proportion of pupils than is usual enter or leave the school other than at the normal time. The school meets the current floor standards which set the national minimum expectation of pupils' attainment and progress.

The school holds several awards including Intermediate International School and Artsmark Gold.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a good school. Parents and carers express full confidence in its work. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. This is because of the school's relentless focus on high standards of politeness, tolerance and respect. The school is not outstanding because the quality of teaching, although good overall, has inconsistencies.
- Achievement is good. From low starting points, particularly in communication, language and literacy, pupils make consistently good progress through each phase of the school to reach broadly average levels of attainment in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6. The school's reliable tracking system indicates that no group of pupils underachieves.
- Teaching is good. Relationships between adults and pupils are very good. Pupils' attitudes to learning are consistently good. The best lessons challenge pupils to find things out for themselves in small groups; pupils like working in this way. The quality of marking is inconsistent: it does not always tell pupils what they need to do next to improve. Sometimes, teachers spend too long giving the same explanation to all pupils in their class.
- Behaviour is consistently good. Pupils are safe and take good care of each other. Parents and carers unanimously agree that the school keeps their children safe. Pupils cooperate well when playing or working in groups. They say that bullying rarely happens, and that they enjoy school. They engage in voluntary activities with gusto, and participation rates are high.
- Leadership and management are good. Actions taken to improve the quality of learning in Key Stage 1 and standards of writing throughout the school have been successful. Procedures for the management of performance are followed well. Middle leaders do not always use the full range of monitoring strategies to check on the amount of learning taking place in their subjects.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of teaching and learning that is good or better by:
 - ensuring that, when marking pupils' work, the quality of guidance given in all subjects matches the very good practice in literacy books
 - reducing the amount of time spent giving the same explanations to the whole class at the start of lessons
 - setting work in lessons which accurately meets the learning needs of individual pupils.

- Ensure that middle leaders measure the amount of learning taking place in their subjects more rigorously.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and quickly learn to cooperate, work and play together. The good relationships they develop here are further developed as they grow older and move through the school. This continuing focus underpins pupils' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development over time. Children make good progress in developing their communication skills because adults make good use of interesting and exciting resources and facilities, both inside and outdoors, to inspire imaginative discussions.

Although basic reading skills are taught frequently and well, pupils' attainment in reading remains below average at the end of Key Stage 1 because they have such a large amount of catching up to do. Nonetheless, pupils read regularly and enthusiastically, and are comfortable reading aloud. Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics are broadly average at the end of Year 6. This represents good progress when considering pupils' starting points. Rearrangements to the curriculum have ensured that this good progress is made across all three phases of the school. All pupils, including those learning English as an additional language, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, make better progress than that found nationally, irrespective of their starting points. Some pupils make outstanding progress. The very large majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire felt that their children make good progress and inspection evidence supports this view.

Learning in lessons is good. Relationships between adults and pupils are very good. Pupils have positive and enthusiastic attitudes to learning. They are always ready to find things out for themselves, and respond well to challenges set by their teachers. They listen carefully to their peers' different views and opinions, and this helps them to deepen their understanding by considering alternative explanations. They sustain their concentration particularly well when work is of a practical nature.

Quality of teaching

Many examples of good or better teaching were seen in all classes in the school, but some satisfactory teaching was also observed. This inconsistency explains why pupils' achievement is good rather than outstanding. The very best lessons are characterised by short, sharp, demanding practical tasks, carefully matched to individual pupils' needs. Pupils respond with enthusiasm, concentration and sustained efforts to satisfy their aroused curiosity and interest. This was seen to excellent effect in an outstanding Year 6 music lesson when 32 pupils, each with their own violin, learned how to play, in tune and in time, the harmony 'backing track' to the national anthem in preparation for their celebrations of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and anticipated British victories in the Olympic Games. Team-working by five passionate adults provided very effective support for pupils as required, and made outstanding learning and progress possible.

Well-resourced classrooms help to inspire pupils' curiosity about the world around them and support their excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. At its best, the planned curriculum leads to well-organised lessons where teachers make clear to pupils what they are going to learn. These lessons are pacy and move forward rapidly, with teachers and other adults moving around the different groups in the class making sure that pupils are on the right track. Questioning is usually random and rapid, seeking opinions, but always with explanations. Pupils are happy to speak aloud without any fear of ridicule. The pace of learning slows when all pupils receive the same explanation to listen to, or task to do. The more-able pupils finish quickly; they then wait politely for the next task, but it means their progress is not as good as it might be. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively and most play a vital role in supporting different groups of pupils including disabled pupils, those with special educational needs, or those whose home language is not English. This ensures that all pupils make at least good progress over time. The marking of pupils' work is more effective in helping them to move forward in English than in other subjects. Parents and carers rightly expressed the view that teaching is good.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

There is a distinctly calm atmosphere in the school. Pupils are polite, well mannered and considerate to each other, to visitors and to their environment. Even the youngest routinely say 'Good morning', or 'Thank you'. This harmony is the result of adults consistently upholding and modelling the values of respect, tolerance and cooperation.

Behaviour is good throughout school. Pupils are able to explain with confidence how they know they are safe in school, and they are well aware of the dangers they may face outside the school and how they might respond sensibly to them. Parents and carers are accurate in their extremely positive views about pupils' safety and, without exception, feel their children are well looked after. The school maintains detailed records of instances of unacceptable behaviour; these are rare. Some pupils whose circumstances make them particularly vulnerable can occasionally display challenging behaviour. These events are small in number and they are all managed successfully. Pupils say that their learning is not disturbed. Parents and carers comment that incidents of any kind of bullying are unusual, and they are confident that any

incidents are swiftly and appropriately dealt with. Links with parents and carers are strong, and this provides very solid grounding for the excellent relationships between pupils and staff maintained throughout the school.

The school works vigorously within the community to improve attendance. This is now slightly above average.

Leadership and management

Resolute and purposeful leadership by the headteacher is moving the school steadily forward. She and the senior leadership team have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They target professional development specifically to improve teaching. Recent improvements, particularly in reading and writing throughout the school, and in the overall quality of teaching in Key Stage 1, stem directly from senior leaders' focus on accelerating learning. The leaders are active in ensuring equality of opportunity for all pupils in this harmonious school, where there is no evidence of any sort of discrimination and all groups of pupils make equally good progress. These strengths indicate the school's good capacity for securing further improvement. Although middle leaders are active in using different methods to monitor learning in their subjects, they do not use direct observation frequently enough.

The governing body is dedicated and hard-working in supporting the school, and also in challenging its outcomes. Its members are active in ensuring that the school has good procedures to promote safeguarding and they ensure that all staff are suitable to work with children. The curriculum is good overall. Those aspects pertaining to pupils' personal development are excellent and lead directly to pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. A language-rich learning environment, with well planned activities, successfully focuses on improving pupils' reading skills and writing proficiency. Activities to widen pupils' horizons and raise their aspirations in music and art are notably strong. Activities to link subjects in groups where pupils can practise and refine skills learned in one subject area across a range of other subjects, for example in a modern foreign language or by using modern electronic tools, are not as well developed.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 December 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.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
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.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
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.



20 April 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St John with St Mark CE Primary School, Bury, BL9 5EE

Thank you for making the team so welcome when we inspected your school recently. We enjoyed being shown around by the prefects, visiting you in your lessons and talking with you. We were particularly impressed with your politeness and good manners and the way you get on so well with each other and with the adults in your school. You pay good attention to the teachers and to each other in lessons.

We found that St John with St Mark's is a good school. It is well led by your good headteacher. The way in which the school helps you to accelerate your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. That is why you are such good young citizens. Good teaching helps you to make good progress.

However, we also found that the school could do some things better and that these would help you to learn even more than you do now. So we asked the adults who run the school to make lessons even better by:

- making sure that when they mark your work, in whatever subject, teachers tell you clearly what you need to do to get better
- spending less time giving you all the same explanation about what you are going to be learning, and giving some of you different pieces of work to do in lessons
- checking more closely that you are all learning as much as you should be in lessons.

You can help your school to get better by continuing to try your very best in lessons, and by attending school as often as you possibly can. Good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

Terry McDermott
Lead inspector

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