

St John the Evangelist Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	124355
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	380868
Inspection dates	29–30 May 2012
Lead inspector	Doris Bell

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	174
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anne Alcock
Headteacher	Helen Butters
Date of previous school inspection	01 October 2008
School address	The Avenue Kidsgrove Stoke-on-Trent ST7 1AE
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Doris Bell

Additional Inspector

Alison Lamputt

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspection team observed 12 members of staff, including teaching and support staff, during 19 lessons, covering approximately seven-and-a-half hours of teaching. As well as observing full or part lessons, inspectors spent time observing sessions where pupils were learning letters and sounds. They also heard pupils read, watched them being taught in small groups and individually, analysed their work, and discussed their learning and school life with them. Meetings were held with senior and middle managers, and representatives of the governing body. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation, including: information relating to the attainment and achievement of all groups of pupils; the school improvement plan; governing body minutes; and evidence of monitoring and evaluation. They also spoke to parents and carers, and analysed 84 parental questionnaire responses, together with the responses to the questionnaires returned by staff and pupils.

Information about the school

This smaller-than-average-sized primary school operates on two sites, approximately one mile apart. One site, which also includes the privately-funded 24-place Nursery run by the governing body, caters for pupils aged three to seven. The other site caters for pupils aged seven to 11. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, who are at school action plus or have a statement, is broadly average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is also broadly average, as is the proportion for whom English is an additional language. All pupils speak English fluently.

The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. It has achieved Healthy Schools Status, and it runs before- and after-school clubs on each of its two sites. It is also part of a three school collaboration, managed by an executive headteacher. The collaboration is due to finish at the end of this term, at which point the executive headteacher is to return to her own school, this one, full-time. Since the previous inspection, there have been several changes in staffing and in the governing body and the senior leadership team has been completely restructured.

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	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. It is not yet good because there is more to do to improve writing and teachers' marking, to establish consistently good leadership at all levels, including by the governing body, and to achieve consistently good teaching and progress throughout the school. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Achievement is satisfactory and attainment is broadly average. Pupils make better progress in reading and mathematics than they do in writing. Progress in writing has improved this year as a result of pupils being taught to use their reading, speaking and listening skills better to help their writing.
- The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Much good teaching was observed during the inspection, but teaching and assessment, including marking of pupils' work, are not yet consistently good enough to accelerate progress for all groups of pupils.
- Pupils enjoy school. Their good behaviour and attitudes to learning enable lessons to flow smoothly, and make playtimes sociable occasions where, happy and confident, they play together well. Pupils feel safe in school and say behaviour is almost always good, and their parents and carers agree. The confidence and trust that pupils have in the staff were summed up in a comment made during a discussion with pupils, 'Teachers never give up on you, they always help'.
- The headteacher gives the school clear direction, and teachers' performance is managed satisfactorily. The re-structured senior leadership team is growing into its role but it is not yet fully effective in accelerating pupils' progress. Changes in the governing body mean that, in its own words, it 'needs to re-establish' itself in order to fulfil its role better. Overall, leadership and management are satisfactory.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate achievement in writing throughout the school by:
 - in Nursery and Reception, encouraging more children to engage in the planned writing activities on offer when they select what they want to do
 - in Years 1 and 2, providing more opportunities for extended writing during topic work
 - in Years 3 to 6, capitalising on the writing done in different subjects by ensuring pupils remember to use their writing targets at all times.

- Achieve greater consistency in teaching by ensuring that teachers:
 - make better use of whole-class sessions to assess pupils' learning in the course of a lesson
 - always give pupils, from the least- to the most-able, work that is matched to their different levels of ability
 - give pupils clear guidance, in the marking of their work, about how to improve
 - give pupils time to respond to marking and do corrections.

- Establish good leadership at all levels, including the governing body, ensuring that all aspects of the school's work are rigorously monitored and consistently good teaching and progress are secured for all pupils.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children start school with skills well below those expected for their age. They make good progress in Nursery and Reception, but language and mathematical skills are still below average at the end of Reception. Opportunities are missed to encourage children to practise these key skills when they select their own activities.

Attainment in reading is broadly average in Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils enjoy reading and use a good range of strategies to help them read. In Year 2, their knowledge of letter blends sometimes lets them down, but staff and other pupils help them to overcome this. By Year 6, pupils understand what they read, offer opinions on different books and use the text to justify them. By Year 2, sentence construction is secure, and pupils are successfully encouraged to make their writing more exciting by adding carefully chosen adjectives and adverbs. By Year 6, pupils, especially the more-able, can adapt their writing to suit different audiences and purposes. However, uncorrected spelling, grammar and punctuation errors sometimes persist, making writing difficult to read.

The focus on using mathematical skills to solve real-life problems is improving progress in mathematics. This was evident as Year 4 pupils created a menu for the

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Queen's café, and Year 2 pupils worked out how many shoes and dresses The Queen must have. A lack of language skills sometimes slows pupils' progress in finding the key information needed to solve mathematical problems, and pupils sometimes find it difficult to articulate how they arrive at their answers. A typical comment was 'I can do it in my head but I find it hard to write down how I've worked it out'.

Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, as do all other groups, including minority ethnic groups. Gaps in learning are beginning to close with support for any pupil whose learning falls behind.

Most parents and carers say their children make good progress. Inspection findings are that achievement is satisfactory overall, because progress varies from year to year. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 use their literacy skills well in different subjects, for example, history, geography and religious education. In Year 2, opportunities to use literacy skills in topic work are limited by the use of too many worksheets. Pupils use their mathematical skills satisfactorily in other subjects.

Quality of teaching

Pupils report that teachers make lessons interesting and that learning is fun. Teaching contributes effectively to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, fostering in pupils good attitudes to learning, a desire to do well, and care and consideration for others. Reading is taught well, ensuring pupils have a range of strategies to help them read and understand unfamiliar words.

Staff have risen well to the challenges the headteacher sets them to improve the impact their teaching has on pupils' learning, for example, by using whole-class sessions during lessons to check and improve pupils' progress. Some staff use these sessions effectively, while others use them too often and disrupt the flow of learning, or, seeing them only as opportunities for more teaching input, miss opportunities to encourage pupils to learn from each other. Teachers know their pupils well and use their good subject knowledge to help them learn. However, tasks are sometimes too directed, for example, for more-able pupils, as happened in a history lesson where pupils were restricted by the number of facts they had to find. At other times, tasks are not broken down sufficiently for less able pupils, and they have to wait for an adult before they can get started.

Pupils know their targets and the levels they are at. The work in their profile books is marked well with levels, and guidance on how to improve. Beyond this, marking is more variable. It almost always praises what pupils can do, but is less consistent in showing them what they need to improve. Pupils are not sufficiently encouraged to respond to marking, for example, by doing corrections, and teachers do not encourage pupils sufficiently to refer to their writing targets when they write in different subjects. Most parents and carers say their children are taught well. Inspection findings are that, while there is much good teaching in school now, teaching over time is satisfactory, because it has led to overall satisfactory achievement.

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Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are taught satisfactorily. The pupils' targets are not always specific enough to enable the small steps in their learning to be measured accurately. When withdrawn for specific learning, the pupils are supported well, but support staff do not always contribute effectively to pupils' learning during whole class sessions.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' good behaviour and attitudes, and their ability to work independently or in groups, are successfully fostered in Nursery and Reception, and continue throughout the school. They contribute effectively to pupils' learning, and to the better progress most are now making. For example, Reception pupils organised themselves into a group to accompany nursery rhymes with actions and musical instruments, while pupils in the rest of the school worked well together, readily helping each other with their learning.

Pupils report that they feel safe in school, that 'this is a happy school' and that teachers 'always make classrooms happy places' in which to learn. They reflect on moral issues, and see as 'fair', the rewards and sanctions that encourage good behaviour. While they admit to the occasional falling out, they are adamant that on-duty staff deal well with any misbehaviour in the playground, and that there is very little bullying. They understand what bullying is and its different forms, reflecting on the damage that can be caused by, for example, continual name-calling, pushing and shoving. They state confidently that none of this would be tolerated if noticed by, or brought to the attention of, adults.

Pupils reflect on and appreciate the world around them and their place in it, as was evident in the Year 6 pupils' writing about their confirmation. Pupils accept responsibility well, for example, as school councillors, prefects and house captains, and work well together to improve the school. They are particularly proud of their garden and understand how to look after it. Playground leaders help younger pupils and encourage purposeful play at break and lunchtimes. Pupils in Year 2 talk about being 'good role models' for younger pupils, and the importance of making playtimes fun for everyone at the infant school site. The breakfast and after-school clubs provide pupils who attend them with a good start and end to their day.

Parents and carers agree with their children's views that behaviour is good, that pupils are safe at school, and are taught how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet. Inspection findings support these views.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has worked tirelessly to keep the school moving forward while she carries out her diverse roles across the three schools. Robust action has been taken to secure better teaching and learning, for example, through the fortnightly challenges for teachers, and by a range of monitoring activities. The relatively new

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management structure, with teams from across the two sites, ensures that all staff have a greater understanding of their responsibility for the school's outcomes. All leaders check teaching and learning but they do not all do so equally well. Well-targeted professional development, including for those new to leadership roles, is helping to make monitoring more robust. It often involves staff from the other two schools, enabling this school to draw on a greater range of expertise. As a result, attainment is rising in Year 2, it has been sustained in Year 6, and progress is beginning to improve across the school. All of this demonstrates the school's capacity to improve.

The curriculum promotes basic skills satisfactorily, and personal skills well. It provides many opportunities for pupils to cultivate their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and to understand their roles as members of a global community. For example, when asked to reflect on what it might be like to be queen or king for a day, some Year 2 pupils wrote that they might go to Africa, give money to the children there and watch their eyes shine when they got more food.

The school's self-evaluation is accurate. The outcomes inform the well-considered priorities in the school improvement plan, and teachers' performance management targets. The governing body, several members of which are new, fulfils its role satisfactorily. It supports the headteacher's vision, but it does not take an active enough part in checking the school's work. Safeguarding procedures, including for child protection, meet current requirements, thereby ensuring that pupils work and play in a safe, secure learning environment. The school tackles discrimination and promotes equality of opportunity satisfactorily. It includes all pupils in everything it has to offer, but has more to do to ensure that all pupils make equally good progress in their learning at all times.

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 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.



31 May 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St John the Evangelist Catholic Primary School, Stoke-on-Trent, ST7 1AE

Thank you for welcoming us so warmly into your school when we came to inspect it. We very much enjoyed talking to you and looking at your work. It is good to see that you enjoy school and want to do well. You said your 'teachers never give up on you' and that they help you with your work, and you are right. You also said that you feel very safe in school and showed that you know how to keep yourselves safe. You clearly understand what bullying is, and the different forms it can take, and are confident that it would not be tolerated in your school. We were impressed by your good behaviour in lessons and around the school, and were pleased to hear that you are confident that 'on-duty staff deal well with any misbehaviour'. Your parents and carers agree with what you say about behaviour and safety, and so do we. It was clear to see that you care for and respect everyone, and are keen to help others. You have an impressive range of jobs around the school, and you do them well.

We judged your school to be satisfactory. We can see that it is starting to improve but there are key things it needs to do to help you do even better. We have therefore asked your headteacher, teachers and governors to:

- help all of you make faster progress, especially in writing, including by encouraging you to think about your writing targets every time you write
- make sure that, when they mark your work, teachers always show you how to improve it, give you time to do your corrections, and set work that helps each one of you to build on what you already know
- establish good leadership at all levels so that everything is securely in place, and fully monitored, to ensure you make good progress.

You can all help by doing your corrections and trying not to repeat any mistakes you have made when you do more work. We hope you will continue to enjoy learning for the rest of your lives, as much as you do now, and we wish you well.

Yours sincerely
Doris Bell
Lead Inspector

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