

St John's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	115669
Local authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	379119
Inspection dates	14–15 June 2012
Lead inspector	Kerry Rochester

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	188
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sara Morris
Headteacher	Suzanne Gilbert and Juliette Moxham
Date of previous school inspection	23 January 2008
School address	Albion Street Cheltenham GL5 2SN
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Kerry Rochester

Additional inspector

Graeme Burgess

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 17 lessons taught by 10 staff. They held discussions with staff, pupils and representatives of the governing body. They attended assembly and listened to pupils read. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line Parent View survey in planning the inspection. They observed the school's work and looked at pupils' books, the school's self-evaluation, documents relating to safeguarding and data relating to pupils' achievement. They analysed the responses to the 59 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, as well as those returned by pupils and staff.

Information about the school

St John's is a smaller than average primary school. It meets the current floor standards, which set the minimum standards expected by the government. A higher than average proportion of pupils is from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils speaking English as an additional language is well above the national average. The proportion of pupils who are supported by school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is also below average. More pupils than average enter or leave the school at other than the normal times during the school year. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is in line with the national picture. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in one Reception class.

Since the previous inspection, there has been a change in the leadership of the school and since September 2012, the school has been managed by two co-headteachers. There is a privately run before- and after-school club on the site that was not a part of this inspection.

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

- St John's is a good school. The school is not yet outstanding because teachers' use of assessment does not enable all pupils to make consistently rapid progress in all classes. The systems for monitoring and improving teaching and learning are good overall but middle leaders do not take a full part in checks in learning in their subjects and this impedes their contribution to securing further improvements.
- Pupils' achievement is good. Children make good progress in the Reception class and this level of progress largely continues as pupils move up through the school, with slight variation. By the time they leave Year 6, attainment is above average overall, and writing standards are high.
- Teaching is mostly good. Teachers inspire and motivate pupils to do their best and ensure the differing needs of pupils are met well in most lessons. Teachers use written marking to identify what the pupils are doing well, but progress slows when pupils are not given guidance in the marking about how to make the next steps, or opportunity to follow up guidance when it is given. As some teachers do not involve pupils enough in setting personal learning targets, pupils are sometimes unsure about what these mean or how to use them to help them make progress.
- Pupils' behaviour and safety are good. This comes in part from the strong caring atmosphere in which the pupils thrive. They enjoy school, have positive attitudes towards their learning and show respect and consideration towards each other.
- Good leadership and management have consolidated the school's good overall effectiveness since the previous inspection and have improved writing standards further. Performance management and training of staff is beginning to improve teaching and help middle leaders to develop their roles effectively in order for them to make a greater contribution to the drive for improvement.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By July 2013, improve teachers' use of assessment and its impact so that all pupils make rapid and sustained progress, by:
 - involving pupils more in setting personal learning targets and helping them to understand how these will guide improvement
 - ensuring that marking consistently provides specific advice for pupils on how to improve their work and reach the next steps in learning
 - providing opportunities for pupils to follow up on teachers' written guidance.

- By July 2013, develop the role of middle leaders in checking the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school to ensure their stronger contribution to improving pupils' achievement.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

When children start school, their skills are generally a little below the expected levels for their age. They get off to a good start in the Reception class and reach broadly average levels of attainment by the time they enter Year 1. The good progress continues so that pupils attain standards above the national average by the end of Year 6. The action that senior leaders took as part of a focus to improve writing across the school has resulted in writing attainment which reached well above the national average in 2011 and this picture has continued in current work. Pupils in Year 6 enjoy writing for a range of purposes and their creative writing shows maturity and imagination, as well as high levels of grammatical understanding.

Typically, pupils enjoy lessons, have good attitudes to learning, settle quickly and respond well to the good teaching strategies used to stimulate their learning. Early literacy skills are given priority. Pupils' increasing knowledge of phonics (linking sounds with letters) is due to daily practice in Reception and in Years 1 and 2. In a lesson observed in Reception, children made good progress in reading, independently recalling and sounding out letters. As a result, they were able to write new words independently. This good start is built on in the rest of the school so that attainment in reading is average by the end of Year 2 and above average by the end of Year 6. Pupils at all ages talk of their enjoyment of reading and were eager to read to inspectors. They read confidently and fluently. Key Stage 2 pupils enjoy the daily reading workshops that help them to develop good reading strategies. In a Year 5 session observed, pupils responded very well to the challenge of analysing an author's work by completing comprehensive book reviews.

Pupils make good progress in mathematics. Reception pupils develop a secure knowledge of counting and ordering numbers to 20, and in class, Year 2 pupils

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demonstrated a good understanding of reading time to the hour and half past. Older pupils worked with confidence when identifying complex number patterns and sequences.

Parents' and carers' views that their children are making good progress concurs with inspectors' findings. All groups of pupils are helped to learn well, including those who enter the school roll later than the usual starting points, those who speak English as an additional language and those who are known to be eligible for free school meals. Gaps in performance within school have narrowed sharply because the school has implemented specially tailored programmes, for instance in support of the high proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language. The extra help and guidance ensure they are fully involved in lessons, make good progress and achieve at least as well as their peers. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs also make progress at the same rate as their classmates through the effective deployment of teaching assistants to support their learning.

Quality of teaching

Most parents and carers feel that the quality of teaching is good. This view is endorsed by inspection findings and pupils' good progress and achievement. In the Reception class, particularly in communication, language and literacy, strong teaching of linking sounds and letters helps children make good gains in reading and writing. Teacher-led sessions and those where children choose for themselves are well balanced and strongly promote children's independence and their personal and social development.

Teaching is securely underpinned by an exciting and relevant curriculum which is enriched by a wide range of after-school clubs that promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils with disabilities or special educational needs are taught well and, as a result, make the same good progress as everyone else. Where teaching is at its best, teachers ensure there is a good pace to learning and have high expectations of pupils' work. Throughout the school, teachers have good subject knowledge and, where questioning is strongest, staff use it to target and extend progress and promote learning and thinking. For example, in a Year 6 lesson, the teacher used questioning well to set the pupils the challenge of analysing an author's style of writing. The pupils successfully identified the difference between tension and description. They applied this knowledge to their writing and, as a result, all ability groups developed excellent understanding of the topic. In a mathematics lesson in Year 6, the teacher quickly engaged the pupils with key focused questions. The questioning ensured that learning was brisk and challenges pupils at an appropriate level. In almost all lessons, teachers provide explicit learning objectives and pupils engage in activities, knowing what the steps to success are for that lesson.

In a few less effective lessons where teaching is satisfactory, assessment information is not always used to set suitably challenging and personalised learning targets, and so pupils do not know, with sufficient precision, how their personal targets support

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the next step in their learning. Teachers' written marking is of variable quality. Marking is often positive and confidence-building, but does not consistently give pupils relevant guidance on what they need to do to improve, nor point to the next steps in their learning. Where good guidance is given, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to respond to it.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

All pupils, parents and carers responding to the inspection questionnaires agree that there is a good standard of behaviour and that pupils are kept safe. Inspectors checked school records and observed behaviour around school, at playtime and lunchtime and found behaviour is typically good. Pupils' good behaviour and positive attitudes towards their work mean that learning is rarely disrupted. Pupils from a diverse range of backgrounds get on well together and the warm and welcoming ethos of the school supports and encourages pupils' all-round development. Pupils are polite to adults, respectful of each other, courteous and thoroughly enjoy school.

The school's attention to safety ensures that pupils can talk confidently about dealing with possible dangers they may encounter. The school's records of bullying and racist incidents, over time, and discussions with many pupils, during lessons and in group discussions, showed that bullying in any form is uncommon. Pupils are confident about what to do if they have any concerns and they feel the school responds successfully and promptly. Through an unrelenting focus on using all possible strategies to encourage parents and carers to send their children to school regularly, attendance has improved and is now average.

Leadership and management

The co-headteachers work exceptionally well together and set high expectations for what every pupil and teacher can achieve. There is accurate self-evaluation and leaders know what still needs developing. They have worked successfully, since the previous inspection, to maintain and improve the quality of the school's work and consolidate pupils' good achievement. They have developed good systems that track pupils' progress and link teachers' practice to training opportunities. As a result, progress is now more evenly good across the school, with pockets of outstanding progress. Taking into account these improvements in pupils' progress, rising attendance and continuing good teaching, the school has clear capacity to improve further.

Good management of staff performance has provided the basis for carefully identified staff training. Senior leaders meet all of the school's teachers each term to discuss the progress being made by pupils in their class. Pupils are known as individuals and staff work hard to help them to prepare for the next stage in their education, tackling discrimination and promoting equality well so that rates of learning and progress are good for all groups of pupils. Although senior staff monitor the quality of teaching and learning well, the school is aware that middle leaders are not fully involved in this process. This limits their overview and their impact on

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raising the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects across the school.

The curriculum is well planned and supports pupils' enjoyment of learning. Parents and carers speak highly of the care and warmth provided by the school. Weekly assemblies promote the school's 'Values', which include teaching the pupils to be trustworthy, thankful, respectful and caring. These support the school's ethos and successfully promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The governing body provides effective support to the school and offers a good degree of challenge to the senior leadership team. Governors are very diligent in ensuring that safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. The school engages very well with parents and carers. They are very positive about the work of the school, with a comment from one, reflecting the views of most: 'Any issues I have had have always been dealt with. The staff are very helpful and have always done their best to help us.'

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.



18 June 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St John's Church of England Primary School, Cheltenham, GL52 2SN

Thank you for your warm and friendly welcome and for helping us when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking with you and hearing some of you read. Thank you, too, for responding to the questionnaire. This letter tells you about the judgements that we reached during our visit.

You go to a good school. Here are some of the things we found.

- You are polite, care for each other and have good relationships with the staff.
- You are taught well and this helps you make good progress. You are doing better than the average for children of your age in this country.
- You agree that behaviour is good; you enjoy school and you know how to keep yourselves safe.
- The school leaders are doing the right things to move your school forward.

We have asked the school to help you make the best progress you possibly can by involving you more in setting your own personal learning targets and in helping you to understand what these mean and how the targets can help you do even better. We have also asked that teachers give you more written guidance in your books that will help you improve, and the chance to follow up on the guidance.

Finally, we have asked that those teachers who are responsible for different subjects make more checks on their subjects through the school to help them make sure everything is at its best.

All of you can play a part by continuing to work hard and do your best. We hope that you will have every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Kerry Rochester
Lead inspector

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