

St George's New Town Junior School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	114704
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	378910
Inspection dates	26–27 June 2012
Lead inspector	Karen Heath

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	269
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Chable
Headteacher	Carl Messer
Date of previous school inspection	13 October 2008
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Age group	7–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Karen Heath

Additional Inspector

Lynn Lowery

Additional Inspector

David Belsey

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. In planning the inspection inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). Inspectors visited 32 lessons taught by 10 teachers. Some pupils read to, and shared their work with, inspectors. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of staff and a representative of the governing body. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation including the school development plan, records that track pupils' progress and attainment, and the school's own monitoring and evaluation records. In addition, they looked at records of attendance and arrangements to secure pupils' health and safety. Inspectors analysed the responses of parents and carers to 45 questionnaires. They also analysed the responses to questionnaires issued to staff and pupils.

Information about the school

St George's New Town Junior School is an average-sized primary school. Pupils are admitted predominantly from one local infant school although some pupils join the school later during Key Stage 2. The majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds and speak English as their first language. Recently the school has admitted a number of pupils from a range of different ethnic backgrounds, some of whom speak English as an additional language. The number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than the national average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs who have a statement or receive support at school action plus is above average. The school meets the government's current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and 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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- St George's provides a good quality of education. Consequently, all groups of pupils make good progress. The school is good rather than outstanding because teaching does not always meet the needs of some pupils. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils make exceptionally good progress in English; progress is not as strong in mathematics.
- Pupil achievement is good. Pupils make good progress in their reading and rapid progress with their writing; they are inspired to write because teachers make writing a lively and interesting activity. Pupils' progress in mathematics is improving and some achieve standards above age-related expectations but rates of progress are not consistent across the year groups.
- Teaching is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and high expectations. In good and outstanding lessons teachers use questioning effectively to secure the pupils' understanding and set activities which challenge and stimulate their learning. In some lessons, pupils' progress slows because they have insufficient time to work independently. Not all teachers use assessment effectively to identify gaps in learning and plan work to address these.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and are, typically, well behaved in and out of lessons. They are polite and considerate to one another and are confident speakers. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe including when using the internet. Attendance has improved and is now above the national average.
- The strong strategic leadership from senior staff and governors has resulted in improvements particularly in English. Teaching is monitored closely and pupils' progress rigorously tracked, and timely support provided for improvement where necessary. Professional development is focused well on improving teachers' expertise but has yet to provide some teaching assistants with the

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necessary skills to support learners, particularly in mathematics lessons.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make teaching consistently good or better to maintain pupils' progress in English and accelerate progress in mathematics by:
 - ensuring teachers use assessment to identify gaps in learning and match activities and interventions to the pupils' learning needs
 - allowing pupils opportunities to respond to teachers' marking comments
 - giving pupils more time in lessons to work independently
 - improving teaching assistants' expertise and knowledge in mathematics to support learning.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils' attainment in both mathematics and English is broadly in line with national averages by the end of Key Stage 2. The majority of pupils join the school with skills that are lower than those expected for their age and make good progress in reading and progress rapidly in writing, consequently their achievement is good. Evidence collected during the inspection shows that there is no significant variation in the achievement of boys and girls or particular groups including those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. Those learning English as an additional language do so at a good rate. Pupils who join the school later in Key Stage 2 and who benefit from the good quality of teaching make progress in line with their peers. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make progress similar to their peers and sometimes better progress from their individual starting points, particularly in reading and writing. This is because their progress is carefully tracked and they receive well-targeted support in small groups. Pupils make better progress in English than in mathematics but progress in mathematics is improving, particularly at the end of Key Stage 2 where some teaching is outstanding. Pupils' progress in writing has accelerated due to the focused improvements implemented by the school using 'screen to page' methods. In these lessons pupils use film-making techniques to visualise their writing. This has provided pupils with successful strategies to help them to write with confidence and enjoyment. For example, pupils' English books showed how well pupils' of all abilities wrote poetry using highly descriptive language. Of the small number of responses to the questionnaire, most parents and carers feel their children make good progress.

Pupils are particularly keen readers. They are motivated by the school's 'Bug Club' where they read books on line and this helps them to apply their learning of phonics (sounds that letters make). They talk with confidence about the books they choose to read and why they like particular authors. Attainment in reading is above average by the time pupils are at the end of their primary schooling.

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Pupils' progress in mathematics is less consistent across the school. Some pupils are working to a standard beyond their age expected levels and others are supported by intervention groups to supplement their learning which in some cases is accelerating their progress. However their needs are not always being catered for in lessons to sufficiently embed their learning and ensure consistently good progress over time.

Quality of teaching

Good teaching underpins the good progress that pupils make. Nearly all parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire believe their child is taught well, and pupils agree. The purpose of lessons is explained clearly and success criteria are used so that pupils understand what they need to achieve. Teachers have high expectations and set challenging tasks. For example, in one mathematics lesson pupils had to work out a complex algebraic formula, in another lesson pupils were asked to write a poem using a range of techniques. In a younger class pupils were learning about how the heart works which extended both the pupils' and teacher's thinking as pupils asked the teacher some challenging questions. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use questioning well to encourage pupils to explain their ideas and assess their understanding and explain or support those pupils who may find something too difficult. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are well supported by good and sometimes outstanding teaching and they make good and sometimes rapid progress, particularly in reading. Pupils know their levels of attainment but do not always fully understand precisely what they need to do to move up a level or have time in lessons to respond to teachers' marking.

Whilst much of the teaching is good, there is still a proportion of satisfactory teaching that has weaker areas. In these lessons, pupils do not have enough time to work independently and assessment is not used sufficiently well to plan lessons which meet the needs of all abilities. This means that some pupils struggle to complete the task. In mathematics, pupils are not always well supported by teaching assistants with the expertise to explain complex operations and this hinders pupils' progress.

The teaching of reading is effective and consequently pupils develop good reading habits. Pupils show sustained concentration particularly in their guided reading lessons when teachers focus on small groups, helping pupils and assessing their progress. Teachers promote pupils' cultural development well using texts in literacy from international authors; pupils and teachers confidently celebrate pupils' cultural backgrounds and first language within lessons.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

During the inspection, a number of pupils were consulted about behaviour and bullying. They were keen to say they feel safe and that bullying of all kinds is rare. On the few occasions where bullying occurs, the school takes concerted action and deals swiftly with any incidents. Pupils' questionnaire responses show that nearly all of them are confident that the school deals with bullying effectively. Racist incidents

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are extremely infrequent and dealt with very decisively by the school. Pupils are aware that prejudice-based harassment such as racism is unacceptable. Inspectors saw good behaviour in classes and around the school and good attitudes in the majority of lessons. There were occasional exceptions when teaching was less engaging and pupils lost concentration. The questionnaire returns from a small minority of parents and carers, and from pupils, indicated that behaviour was a concern, mainly in one particular year group. Some parents expressed a view that large class sizes make it more difficult for teachers to deal with disruptive behaviour. The school acknowledges these concerns and has reorganised this year group from September 2012. Nonetheless, inspectors observed teachers' high expectations of behaviour in all year groups and pupils responding appropriately to this. In addition, school records indicate that behaviour is typically good.

Attendance has improved as a result of the effective monitoring carried out by the school.

Leadership and management

The headteacher, the senior staff and the governing body are resolute in their ambition to achieve better outcomes for pupils. The school has successfully tackled the improvement points from the last inspection. Pupils' progress in writing has had a positive impact on pupils' achievement in English which is significantly better than national benchmarks. Evidence from inspection shows this is sustained improvement. The improvements secured since the last inspection and in writing are indicative of the good capacity for further improvement.

The school is well supported by subject leaders who share responsibility and accountability for areas of the curriculum. Governors are well informed with data about pupils' achievement and are actively involved in the monitoring of the school's work. The school has a robust tracking system for monitoring how well pupils are progressing. Subject leaders use data to plan intervention strategies to support pupils whose learning is slowing and their progress is monitored. However, the impact of this support is far more effective in improving reading and writing skills than in mathematics.

The headteacher and subject leaders monitor the quality of teaching through work scrutiny, data analysis and lesson observations and their reports provide clear areas of strength and points for professional development. Weak teaching has been strengthened by professional development and peer support but there is more to do.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and is enhanced by a wide range of extra-curricular activities and trips to a variety of places within and outside the pupils' community. The pupils talk enthusiastically about their interest in science, 'finding out about the unknown'. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are well promoted. For example, pupils develop their awareness of global issues by fundraising for Africa and teachers have shared their experience of visits to Malawi and Zambia. Assemblies provide a strong sense of community and spiritual

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awareness through singing solo or as a whole school and reflecting on the achievements of athletes competing in the Paralympics.

The school is effective in promoting equality and tackling discrimination and pupils have a firm sense of belonging. Pupils from a range of social and cultural backgrounds mix well including those pupils who speak English as an additional language. The school has been effective in accelerating the progress of some of the most disadvantaged groups as well as those who join the school later in Key Stage 2. Careful tracking of these pupils ensures that a focus on their attainment is maintained.

The school responds effectively to issues relating to the well-being of pupils and safeguarding requirements are met. Detailed records of the very few incidents of pupils' misbehaviour demonstrate effective liaison between the school, parents, carers and specialist agencies to support pupils who have behavioural or emotional difficulties.

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.



28 June 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St George's New Town Junior School, Colchester, CO2 7RU

Thank you for making my inspection team so welcome. We were very impressed with the confident way you talked to us about St George's especially the opportunities you get to enjoy trips and clubs.

We think your school is a good school because you make good progress in your reading and especially your writing. You also make good progress in your mathematics, although we think this could be even better. We were impressed with your interest in reading and the way you could talk about why you liked certain authors. The teachers in your school teach well but not all lessons are as good as the best so we have asked Mr Messer and his staff to improve these.

Although you tell us you feel safe in school and bullying is rare we know that some of you and your parents and carers think behaviour is not as good in some of the larger classes. We think over a period of time behaviour is good but Mr Messer and the governors understand your concerns and are going to make smaller classes next term.

We have asked your headteacher and governors to continue improving the teaching at St George's by:

- planning lessons which are at the right level for you and give you sufficient time to work independently
- giving you an opportunity to read and respond to your teachers' marking
- training the teaching assistants so that they become better in helping you with your mathematics work.

You can help too by continuing to do your best. I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Karen Heath
Lead inspector

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