

St John's CofE Primary School

Sallowbush Road, Huntingdon, PE29 7LA

Inspection dates 8–9 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children do less well in forming letters, doing simple sums and finding out about shapes and measures than they do in other areas of learning.
- Attainment is below average in mathematics by the end of Year 6, and pupils reach higher standards in reading and writing than in mathematics.
- Although teaching is improving, the amount of progress pupils make from one class to another varies. This is particularly so for less-able pupils in mathematics at Key Stage 2.
- Teachers do not always match work closely enough to what pupils already know and need to learn next. On occasion, they do not make best use of their teaching assistants or check pupils' work often enough.
- The leadership role of teachers who have responsibility for subjects and special educational needs is not fully developed.
- Not all members of the governing body visit the school as much as they could to gather information for themselves about its work.

The school has the following strengths

- Many pupils make good progress to reach broadly average standards by the end of Year 2, and attainment at the end of Year 6 is rising.
- Senior leaders have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness and identify the right priorities for development.
- Leaders make very good use of information about pupils' progress to identify those who need extra help and, increasingly, to improve the quality of teaching.
- Behaviour is good, pupils enjoy school and it promotes their personal development well.
- Nearly all parents and carers express satisfaction with the school's work.

Information about this inspection

- Of the 22 lessons visited, five were observed jointly with the headteacher. Four pupils in Years 1 and 2 read their books to an inspector and two assemblies were observed.
- The inspection team sampled pupils' exercise books in Years 1 to 6 and children's work and individual records in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. A group of pupils met with an inspector and there were several informal discussions with pupils about their work.
- Inspectors took account of the 11 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and talked informally with parents and carers during the inspection. Questionnaires from 26 members of staff were analysed.
- Documents scrutinised during the inspection included the school's self-evaluation, the school development plan, performance data and the tracking of pupils' progress.
- Inspectors also looked at records relating to aspects of behaviour, teachers' planning and the systems used for assessment.

Inspection team

Margaret Goodchild, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Margaret Lewis	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St John's is similar in size to the average primary school and the number of pupils on roll is increasing year by year. The premises are currently being extended to accommodate further planned expansion of the school.
- While a large majority of pupils are of White British origin, the proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds has risen and is now above average. The percentage of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funds allocated by the government to pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority) is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils who need extra help or who have a statement of special educational needs is a bit above average.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.
- The school provides a breakfast club and has gained Healthy Schools status.
- At the time of the inspection, the headteacher had recently resigned and a new headteacher had been appointed to take up post in January 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of teaching that is at least good by:
 - ensuring teachers always match tasks to the learning needs of different groups of pupils
 - making full use of teaching assistants to support pupils' learning throughout lessons
 - ensuring pupils are not left for too long to work independently or in groups without an adult checking their progress
 - focusing on the frequent checking of teachers' work and staff training specifically on these points.
- Raise achievement in mathematics by the end of Year 6, especially for less-able pupils, by:
 - ensuring, when planning their lessons, that teachers make full use of information about what pupils can already do and need to learn next
 - increasing teachers' awareness of the learning needs of less-able pupils in mathematics, including those with mathematical learning difficulties
 - setting all pupils individual targets in mathematics from the beginning of the academic year, in line with existing practice in English.
- Build on existing strengths in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - increasing opportunities for children to develop their skills in forming letters, doing simple sums and finding out about shapes and measures
 - planning learning opportunities in the outdoor area that more fully support the development of these basic skills
 - increasing opportunities for boys to write for a purpose as part of exciting imaginative play.
- Strengthen the drive for school improvement by:

- ensuring that teachers who are responsible for subjects and for special educational needs play a greater role in raising pupils' achievement and improving the quality of teaching
- increasing visits by members of the governing body to gather information for themselves about the school's work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Standards are gradually rising but pupils do not make consistent progress as they move through the school, and the attainment of older pupils is higher in English than in mathematics.
- Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with attainment that is below expectations for their age and many have limited skills in using tools for writing and drawing. Children make good progress in learning about the sounds that letters make, in counting and in their personal and imaginative development.
- By the end of the Reception year, children's attainment is in line with expectations for their age in some areas of learning but not in adding and subtracting simple numbers, in the knowledge of shapes and measures and, for boys in particular, in writing. From a low starting point, some children move up to Key Stage 1 still at an early stage in learning to form their letters. In the recent national reading test in Year 1, the school's results were a little below those seen nationally.
- Largely as a result of good teaching in Year 2, which speeds up pupils' progress, attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 has been broadly average in recent years in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2012, pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs did better than similar pupils nationally. More-able pupils also made good progress, reaching above-average standards in reading and mathematics.
- Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 was significantly below average at the time of the last inspection. Results improved in 2011 and again in 2012, when they were broadly average in English but below average in mathematics. The majority of pupils made expected progress, including pupils of minority ethnic heritage and those who speak English as an additional language. More-able pupils again did well, with a few far exceeding expectations for their age in English and mathematics.
- In contrast, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who have special educational needs made less than expected progress in mathematics during their time in Key Stage 2. The school successfully reduced a previous gap in achievement for these pupils in English through focusing pupil premium spending on supporting reading and writing but put less emphasis on mathematics.
- In response to last year's test results, leaders have already introduced support sessions in mathematics as well as English, funded through the pupil premium from the beginning of this term. These sessions are of good quality but it is too soon for them to have a clear effect on the development of pupils' mathematical skills.
- Except where teaching is at its best, teachers do not always match work closely enough to pupils' existing skills and to the next steps in their learning. As a result, some pupils make better progress than others for at least some of the time.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Although the quality of teaching has improved and some is at least good, it is not consistently good enough to enable all pupils to make as much progress as they could.

- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, the planning of outdoor learning and activities children choose for themselves are not always as effective in promoting children's literacy and numeracy skills. Imaginative and physical activities that appeal more to boys do not include enough opportunities for writing. However, teaching is good when teachers work indoors with the whole class and with small groups of children, concentrating on developing their basic skills.
- Where teaching requires improvement in the rest of the school, this is mainly because work is not matched closely enough to the needs of different groups of pupils. Teachers tend to have suitably high expectations for more-able pupils but sometimes set work that is too hard for pupils of middle ability and particularly of less-able pupils.
- In mathematics, teachers do not always take into account the difficulties some pupils experience and so rely too heavily on the good support of teaching assistants to enable them to succeed. Whereas pupils had individual literacy targets from September onwards this year, teachers in some classes have still not given pupils their mathematics targets to help inform their learning.
- When planning their lessons, teachers do not always identify what they want teaching assistants to do or use them to full effect throughout the lesson. At times in English and mathematics, teachers concentrate too much on the group of pupils they are working with and do not check that pupils working without adult supervision are making enough progress.
- Nevertheless, there is a significant amount of good teaching, especially in some classes. For example in Year 2 and in Years 5 and 6, learning proceeds at a good pace, teachers provide clear explanations and use questioning well to probe pupils' thinking. Throughout the school, teachers make good use of practical resources and interactive white boards to support learning.
- In the English and mathematics support sessions provided through pupil premium funding, teaching is of good, and sometimes outstanding, quality and matched very closely to pupils' needs. In these sessions, pupils have plenty of opportunity to identify strengths and weaknesses in their own work and that of their classmates and know what to do to improve.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils enjoy school and say that they feel proud to attend St John's. They are polite, have good attitudes to learning and very much value the opportunity to contribute through the many 'jobs' they do around the school.
- Behaviour is good when pupils come together for whole-school events such as assemblies, and at playtime where they play actively but with consideration for others. Older pupils look out for younger ones and pupils themselves say that the school is friendly.
- Pupils show enthusiasm in class, readily contribute their ideas and behave well in most lessons. There are clear procedures for dealing with inappropriate behaviour and pupils respect the fact that they lose 'golden time' if they do not follow school rules. Nearly all teachers manage behaviour skilfully, reminding pupils where necessary 'to do the right thing'.
- Just occasionally, teachers' expectations for behaviour are not communicated clearly enough and this leads to an increase in noise levels though learning is not normally disrupted. The school tracks pupils' behaviour very carefully and has very effective ways of managing the behaviour of pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. This has led to major improvements in behaviour for a number of pupils.

- The vast majority of parents and carers think the school manages behaviour well, and those spoken to during the inspection expressed satisfaction with the way any problems are dealt with. They believe that their children are kept safe in school and pupils themselves confirm this.
- Pupils say that bullying is rare now because they 'have been taught how to be nice'. Pupils show an awareness of different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying, and are confident that staff will respond quickly if difficulties arise.
- The school has very thorough systems for promoting regular attendance and this has led to an improvement in the attendance rate, which is now in line with that of primary schools nationally. The breakfast club provides a substantial number of pupils with a positive start to the day.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leaders of subjects and special educational needs do not yet take full responsibility for raising pupils' achievement or improving the quality of teaching. Their involvement in analysing the progress of different groups of pupils is quite recent, although they have all produced action plans in their areas with support from senior leaders.
- Senior leaders are making increasingly good use of their analysis of pupils' progress to accurately judge the school's effectiveness and to support their drive for improvement. They make clear judgements about the quality of teaching not just through visiting individual lessons but through rigorous use of evidence about teaching over time. As a result, standards at Key Stage 2 are rising and there is more good teaching than there was at the last inspection.
- Senior leaders hold teachers more closely to account through using information from lesson observations, records of pupils' attainment and close checks on progress in their books. Pupils' progress has become central to the termly meetings between senior leaders and teachers, to the management of teachers' performance, identification of staff training needs and decisions about salary progression.
- As a result of this increased rigour in checking how well the school is doing, the headteacher and deputy headteacher have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. This puts them in a better position to ensure that different groups of pupils receive equal opportunities to succeed and are not discriminated against. Every effort is made to foster good relations between pupils, and with parents and carers, and to make sure that the school is a warm and welcoming community.
- Interesting subjects and topics encourage pupils in their learning and promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Learning in lessons is enlivened by a good range of clubs, special events and visits, including residential trips for pupils from Year 2 upwards.
- The local authority has provided valuable support to the school in developing aspects of leadership and through a plan for raising achievement. The school is now receiving 'amber support' from the local authority; this reduced level of support is in recognition of the fact that the school is improving.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are fully aware that the school requires improvement and the Chair of the Governing Body is able to talk knowledgeably about the quality of teaching and what still needs to be done to make this a good school. Their understanding of data means that governors are able to compare the school's effectiveness with other schools. They are well

informed about the good effect pupil premium spending has had in English and know that the decision to extend spending to mathematics is key to moving the school on. Individual governors bring expertise to their roles, particularly in relation to tight financial management and support with the current building project. Governors are suitably informed about teachers' performance management, the way good teachers are rewarded and weaker teaching is tackled. Committees focus on the most important aspects of the school's work and governors receive regular training, though a few are new to their roles and not all governors regularly visit the school to gather information for themselves about its work. The governing body places strong emphasis on ensuring the school fully meets requirements for safeguarding pupils.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	110818
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	401158

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	245
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andy Mayes
Headteacher	Helen Curtis
Date of previous school inspection	27 April 2010
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