

# St John's Catholic Primary School

Providence Way, Baldock, SG7 6TT

## Inspection dates

6–7 December 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Pupils are making good progress. The standard of work achieved is above that usually seen for pupils at this age.
- Pupils' progress is checked regularly. The information is used to ensure the right support is provided to enable any pupils in danger of slipping behind to catch up.
- Pupils of all abilities do well in their writing and mathematics and exceptionally well in their reading.
- Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage because staff provide a stimulating and nurturing environment.
- Teaching is usually good and sometimes outstanding. Improvements have resulted from good training and support.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted outstandingly well. This makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal development.
- Pupils work hard, behave extremely well and enjoy school. They are given high levels of support, feel safe and well cared for. They are proud to belong to this school.
- School leaders, including the governing body, constantly look for ways to improve their school, particularly teaching, and have ensured that pupils' good achievement has been maintained since the last inspection.
- Attendance is above average.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not outstanding. It is not yet sufficiently consistent and strong enough to bring about outstanding progress.
- Although pupils make good progress in writing it is not quite as strong as progress in reading.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 17 lessons and observed every teacher. Three observations were undertaken jointly with senior leaders. In addition, the inspection team made a number of short visits to lessons to observe behaviour as well as sessions where phonics (letters and the sounds they make) were being taught.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and talked to them about how much reading they do. They also looked at the work pupils keep in their books. Meetings were held with a group of pupils. Inspectors spoke to pupils during breaks and lunch times, and during lessons.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, senior leaders and with staff. A discussion was held with an external advisor on school improvement.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documentation, including internal and external data about pupils' progress, school development planning and behaviour and attendance records. They investigated safeguarding procedures and records.
- Inspectors took account of 26 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), as well as the views of several parents who directly spoke to inspectors.
- Inspectors analysed the 23 responses to the staff questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Susan Thomas-Pounce, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Mehar Brar	Additional Inspector

# Full report

## Information about this school

- The Academy of St John is a broadly average sized 3 to 11 church school, sponsored by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Westminster, a multi academy trust.
- St John's Catholic Primary Academy converted to become an academy school on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2012. When its predecessor school, St John's Catholic Primary School was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- Three quarters of the academy's pupils are Roman Catholics; others have a wide range of faiths, or none at all. Almost all live in the local community.
- Not all children who join the school in the Reception class have attended the school Nursery.
- Since the last full inspection, there have been changes to staff and a new deputy headteacher has been appointed.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage and very few pupils are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, and for whom the school receives pupil premium funding, is below the national average.
- The proportions of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action are below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which determine the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the proportion of good and outstanding teaching so that pupils make even more rapid progress and attainment rises further by making sure all teachers:
  - spend less time talking in lessons
  - provide more practical learning experiences and time for pupils to work things out for themselves
  - provide more opportunities for pupils to practise and improve their writing skills when they are working in different subjects.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

is good

- Children settle very quickly into the Nursery and the Reception class because there are good links between the school and home. They enter school with skills broadly as expected for their age and they make good progress across all areas of learning. They settle well into classroom routines and feel happy and safe.
- Attainment by the end of Year 6 is above average in English and mathematics. Standards in writing are a little below those in reading and mathematics. Work in pupils' books and lesson observations indicate that there are not enough opportunities for pupils to write in other subjects.
- Pupils make good progress in most lessons and work at a good rate. They make good gains in numeracy skills. In a Year 6 mathematics lesson seen by inspectors, pupils were effectively applying their knowledge of number skills to solve difficult sums involving the multiplication and division of decimals. Children in Reception were developing their understanding of quantity and measure as they thoroughly enjoyed estimating how much water each different size beaker could contain.
- From an early age, pupils develop a love of reading through story-telling and learning to search for words and recognise correct and incorrect spellings. Pupils who read to the inspector were confident in their ability to break down and sound out difficult or unfamiliar words. They understood what they had read and could retell the story in their own words. Reading skills are good because the school encourages pupils to read regularly for pleasure across the school.
- Pupils in danger of falling behind their academic targets are identified quickly. The school moves swiftly to put in place support to help these pupils catch up. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make progress that is at least as good as similar pupils nationally.
- The few pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding make better progress than pupils in similar circumstances nationally, and year-by-year they are catching up on all pupils.

### The quality of teaching

is good

- The large majority of teaching is at least good and some is outstanding. A small amount requires improvement. Most teachers are meeting the national Teaching Standards.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and organise classroom activities well. They quickly build good relationships with pupils and generally promote a very purposeful classroom atmosphere. Pupils know what they are trying to achieve because teachers make this clear, and their marking is usually very helpful and shows pupils how to improve.
- In the best lessons seen, for example in a very good mathematics lesson in Year 4, pupils were busy and active, finding things out for themselves or discussing their work with each other. Teachers made sure that the work helped every pupil, whatever their abilities, to do well. Teachers asked questions to check pupils' understanding and pupils were encouraged to discuss their work in greater detail.

- Lessons usually proceed at a brisk pace so pupils learn quickly and make good progress. Where teaching is not yet outstanding, or in the small amount of teaching that requires improvement, teachers do not always get the most out of every pupil. Occasionally, pupils spend too long listening to teachers and consequently are not busy and active enough. Teachers do not always provide enough opportunities for pupils to work on their own and when this happens, the pace of learning slows.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are identified quickly and the carefully targeted support the school provides meets their needs well. Skilled teaching assistants play an important role in supporting individuals and small groups of pupils both in classroom groups and one-to-one.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, staff are skilled at observing children and using this information to plan activities to build on what children can do. There is a good balance of activities that children can select for themselves and those that are directed by adults. Staff provide children with time to work and play independently and this helps to develop their resilience and their confidence to tackle new experiences.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are outstanding

- Pupils clearly enjoy and value their school and this is reflected in much higher than average attendance and the high standard of punctuality they maintain. They move around the school calmly and quietly and their very good attitudes to learning ensure that no time is wasted in lessons. Pupils' behaviour during breaks, lunchtimes and before and after school is exemplary.
- Teachers expect a great deal of pupils' behaviour and progress. Relationships between adults and pupils are good. Staff and pupils treat each other with extreme courtesy and respect and pupils appreciate the help they get from all the staff.
- Parents are confident that the school will ensure that children are safe and secure and learn how to keep themselves safe both within the school environment and beyond.
- From a very early age, pupils behave exceptionally well together. The older pupils are extremely mindful of the younger ones, for instance, during morning breaks and lunchtimes when Year 6 pupils take responsibility for looking after younger children.
- Pupils say that bullying is not an issue at this school although they do learn about different types of bullying and, for example, how to stay safe when using the internet. They are confident that, should a minor disagreement occur, adults are always on hand to help and they are very clear that the procedures in place would deal with issues should they arise. Records kept by the school show very few reported incidents of bullying or racist behaviour over the last few years. There have been no exclusions in recent years.
- The school has an excellent system for monitoring pupils' welfare and progress. If they fall behind in their learning or encounter difficulties of a personal nature, members of staff soon intervene to put matters right. The school checks attendance carefully and takes action if it starts to slip.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- The governors and academy leadership have an accurate view of how well the school is performing. Action plans set out clear priorities and the whole school's commitment to improvement ensures standards remain high. Leaders at all levels make good use of information on pupils' progress to check if any are slipping behind and take swift action to support them if they are.
- The academy keeps careful and frequent checks on the performance of staff and links its conclusions to school priorities and national teaching standards. Staff training and support are quickly targeted on any areas that need to improve.
- Staff are dedicated and committed to providing an all-round education for pupils. This enables pupils to reach their full academic potential as well as ensuring their personal growth as individuals.
- Pupils from different cultural backgrounds, other faiths are welcomed, respected and valued in the academy. Staff ensure that all pupils have equal opportunities and consequently most pupils, including those few who speak English as an additional language, achieve well. Discrimination on any grounds is not tolerated. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are effective.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strong feature of the academy. Pupils are reflective and they are sensitive to the needs and feelings of others; this prepares them well for life in a diverse society.
- Teaching programmes are well planned, and include extensive opportunities for pupils to use their reading skills when learning other subjects; however there are too few such opportunities for pupils to do the same in writing. The academy offers a wide range of extra activities, including learning a musical instrument, singing in the choir and participating in sporting events. These popular and well-attended activities make a major contribution to pupils' excellent personal development.
- Before the school converted to an academy the local authority provided effective but limited, support because it rightly judged that the school has strong leaders who were capable of ensuring that the school continued to improve. The school has decided to continue to make use of this support.
- The pupil premium has been used sensibly to provide extra adults to support the pupils eligible for this funding.
- A breakfast club offers pupils a nutritious start to the day.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors challenge the academy rigorously and regularly, holding leaders closely to account for its performance. Through regular reports from the staff and national and local authority data they are kept well informed about pupils' achievement compared to the national picture and other schools. They make sure that better pay and promotion of staff are closely related to performance in the classroom. They are aware of where teaching is in need of additional support. Governors work effectively to maintain a balanced budget. Through the regular reports received, they keep a watchful eye on how effectively the academy is using pupil premium funding. Governors bring a good range of relevant skills and have had training on their roles. They work well with the Trustees to ensure the school plays its part in the whole community. Governors make sure that pupils and staff are kept safe.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	138316
<b>Local authority</b>	N/A
<b>Inspection number</b>	409364

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Academy converter
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	233
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	James Hough
<b>Headteacher</b>	Alex Hanou
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01462 892478
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