

St John's C of E (A) Primary School

Wheatly Avenue, Trent Vale, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, ST4 6SB

Inspection dates 13–14 December 2012

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get off to a good start and make good progress.
- Standards in Year 6 rose in 2012 national tests to above average, with more pupils reaching expected, and better than expected, levels in English.
- Teaching is good and a good proportion is outstanding. Pupils enjoy learning and become enthusiastic and engrossed in lessons.
- Carefully planned support ensures that all pupils, whatever their needs, make good progress.
- Pupils feel safe in school and their behaviour is good both in and out of lessons.
- Relationships between pupils and staff are of a high quality and promote strong social and moral development.
- Pupils are given opportunities to experience a wide range of interesting and exciting experiences throughout the year.
- The headteacher's skill and determination has brought about improvements in teaching and standards. There is strong teamwork and everyone, including governors, is clear about how the school can improve further.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils are not always given enough opportunities to practise their mathematical skills to solve problems, including in other subjects.
- Occasionally work is not set at the right level so that all pupils can benefit to the full.
- Information on the progress pupils make is not always used in enough detail to look at the progress that different groups of pupils are making.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 22 lessons or part lessons taught by 11 different teachers, one of which was a joint observation with the headteacher.
- The inspectors listened to pupils read from five different year groups and talked with them about their lessons and school life.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, a member of the governing body and representatives of the local authority.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised documents relating to pupils' progress and to the school's management, including the arrangements for safeguarding.
- Inspectors took account of the five responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), results from the school's recent parents' questionnaires and questionnaires completed by staff.

Inspection team

Vanessa MacDonald, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
John Shutt	Additional Inspector
Aileen King	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St John's is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, or who speak English as an additional language, is below average but increasing.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is well above average and those supported at school action plus and those with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well above the national average.
- The school met the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school provides a breakfast club for pupils, which was part of the inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - ensuring that all pupils have opportunities to use and apply their mathematical skills to solve problems in mathematics and other subjects
 - making sure that the activities planned are always set at the right level for different pupils' needs and abilities.
- Raise attainment and accelerate the progress of pupils further, especially in mathematics by:
 - ensuring that leaders and managers use the information on the progress pupils make to check more closely on the progress that different groups of pupils make, so all staff know how well they are doing.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Most children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills, knowledge and understanding which is well below those typical for their age. They settle quickly and play and learn happily in an environment which is attractive and where learning is fun. Across both the Nursery and Reception classes, children make good progress, particularly in their language skills.
- Good progress is maintained through Key Stage 1, where pupils' standards of attainment have risen steadily over the past three years. Although this remains below national levels the gap has continued to be narrowed, especially in reading. Pupils develop their reading skills well and their ability to use the sounds that letters make (phonics) is now above national levels by the end of Year 1.
- Over the past three years, the standard of attainment at the end of Year 6 has improved and by the end of 2012 attainment was above national average in English. Attainment in mathematics has also improved and is average.
- Currently, progress is at least good in all classes and particularly strong in reading because pupils enjoy books and specific support is given to developing each child's skills through additional support and intervention, including for those for whom English is an additional language.
- Pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium do as well as others. This is because the pupil-premium funding is used well for deploying staff and using targeted interventions, to support pupils' emotional and their learning needs.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs do well in writing and mathematics, and extremely well in reading given their particular starting points. They are helped to achieve well in lessons by skilful, designated teaching assistants who are sensitive to pupils' individual needs.
- The school has accurately identified mathematics as an area for continued improvement and new initiatives have recently been introduced, though the affect of these has not yet had time to be fully measured.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is almost always at least good throughout the school and a good proportion of teaching is outstanding. It is usually lively and exciting, which creates an air of interest and enthusiasm amongst pupils. Lessons are well organised and include a range of different activities, which maintain pupils' interest well.
- Teachers are skilled at asking pupils questions which make them think and explain. In one outstanding lesson the teacher's questioning allowed pupils not only to explain what they knew, but also how the new learning could fit in to this and so their understanding quickly improved. This also gives the pupils the opportunity and confidence to answer, explain and question.
- Teaching in subjects other than mathematics and English is also good, with a good example being a stimulating lesson on volcanoes which fully engaged the pupils. This was because of the teacher's strong subject knowledge, skilful questioning and well-planned and practical activities, including making an active volcano.
- Pupils, particularly in the younger classes are given opportunities to practise their writing and coordination skills through different tasks, which mean that these develop at a good pace.
- The teaching of reading is particularly good. This happens in sessions which focus on the sounds letters make where in one lesson new sounds were reinforced through a variety of practical activities which made learning for all fun. The school has effective ways of ensuring that pupils who need to improve their reading are given support, particularly on an individual basis.
- The teaching of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language is good because all adults, and particularly the skilled teaching assistants, ensure pupils receive appropriate support specific to their needs. As a result all pupils

have equal opportunities and potential discrimination is tackled well.

- Where teaching is not quite as effective, activities which are planned are not always specific to the needs of different pupils. Although the teaching of mathematics is usually good, and in some cases better, pupils are not given enough opportunities to use and apply their skills to solve problems both in mathematics and in other subjects.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils respond positively to the staff's expectations of high levels of behaviour. They display respect and courtesy to adults and pupils alike, which is reinforced through the weekly celebration of good behaviour and attendance. This is rewarded through prizes and a special invitation to the weekly 'Headteacher's Tea Party'.
- There is a strong community feel to the school and pupils take on different responsibilities sensibly and with pride. The school council are very involved in the running of the school and have written their own policies on attendance and bullying, for example.
- Records show that instances of poor behaviour and bullying are infrequent. Where this occurs pupils are confident that it will be dealt with quickly, and the behaviour policy is well understood. They have a good understanding of the different types of bullying and how to keep themselves safe. Pupils feel safe and the majority of parents agree.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage soon settle in to school routines and enjoy their learning. They respond well to staff's clear expectations for their good behaviour.
- Attendance has improved and is average. The majority of pupils attend regularly and the school works hard to ensure that parents and pupils understand the importance of attendance through weekly cups, prizes and through the weekly newsletter.
- Pupils get on very well with staff and each other and these relationships are a strength of the school. As a result their personal development is strong. Through school assemblies and other lessons pupils learn to reflect and to celebrate their achievements. This makes a very positive contribution to pupils' social, moral and spiritual development and a growing sense of confidence and pride in themselves.
- Pupils who attend the school's breakfast club get off to a good start because they have a healthy breakfast and mix with pupils from different classes.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher gives strong leadership and provides clear direction. She is focused on improved outcomes for all pupils and puts improving teaching and achievement at the centre of the school's work. All staff work together successfully, showing a shared commitment, and this has contributed to the strong improvement since the last inspection.
- There are good methods for checking regularly on the quality of teaching and for making sure that actions taken to improve the school are working. This is well led by the headteacher and supported well by other staff who are developing their management roles effectively and are keen to take responsibility and gain new skills.
- Performance-management systems are robust and information is used well to support the professional development of staff, through whole-school focused sessions, sharing of good practice and individual courses, resulting in improvements in the quality of teaching.
- School leaders carefully track how well pupils are doing and there are regular meetings to review progress. This information is used well to target support, for example in reading, and since the last inspection achievement has risen for all pupils. The headteacher and other leaders recognise that they and all staff need to use this information to look in more detail at how well different groups of pupils are doing to ensure that no groups are falling behind.
- The school's evaluation of its performance is accurate. Development plans clearly identify areas for improvement which are identified from both the checks on the quality of teaching but also

from the views of parents and pupils.

- The curriculum provides pupils with a wide range of exciting opportunities through visits and visitors, such as pupils being involved in building a willow sculpture in the school grounds during the inspection. This, and their links with other schools, both in this country and in Kenya, provide for their strong social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.
- The local authority has, since the last inspection, provided the school with support through regular visits and opportunities to evaluate the performance of the school alongside the headteacher and governors.
- The school works hard to provide opportunities to involve parents through information sessions and other events. During the inspection, parents were invited to the local church for both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 concerts, a parents' massage session for Reception class parents was held and an extremely popular grandparents' lunch took place where pupils were visibly delighted and proud to be sharing that time.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements and are a high priority for the school, particularly training for staff and governors.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are committed to seeing the school improve and have a well-developed understanding of its strengths and weaknesses, through its regular and active involvement in checking up on different aspects of how well the school is doing. Attendance at local authority training sessions has helped governors to provide good challenge and support for the school's work. They are thorough in their budget decisions, for example, in approving the use of pupil-premium funding to provide staffing for support programmes. They use data to have a good understanding of the school's performance and use this and other information when reviewing performance management.

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	124309
Local authority	Stoke-on-Trent
Inspection number	402248

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

Type of school	All-through
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	298
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Julie Spiers
Headteacher	Mrs Pauline Bloor
Date of previous school inspection	8 February 2010
Telephone number	01782 238889
Fax number	01782 253359
Email address	stjohns@sgfl.org.uk

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