

St John's Catholic Primary School

School Lane, Great Haywood, Stafford, ST18 0SL

Inspection dates 26–27 September 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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 get a good start to their education. They make good progress in Nursery and Reception and are well prepared to join Key Stage 1.
- Pupils' achievement at Key Stage 1 is good. Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics has steadily risen since the last inspection and is above average by the end of Year 2.
- Achievement at Key Stage 2 is good for those pupils who have been attending school for the whole of the key stage. Their progress in writing is excellent and in mathematics it is good. They reach standards that are well above the national average.
- Teaching is consistently good throughout the school so pupils make steady good progress as they move through the school.
- Teachers match work very closely to individual pupils' achievements so pupils confidently build on previous learning.
- Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. They set tasks that are effective in helping pupils to become independent learners.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to school and to learning. They show pleasure in achieving and confidence in taking the next steps in learning.
- Attendance is above the national average. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are safe.
- The whole teaching staff work very closely with the headteacher in leading and managing the school. They contribute well to maintaining the school's good overall effectiveness.
- There are effective opportunities for all staff to develop their teaching skills. The headteacher carefully checks the impact of their work on pupils' achievements and standards.
- Governors have a high level of involvement in the school. They know its strengths and where improvements are needed. They skilfully prioritise school development matters and contribute well to school improvement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although standards in reading are just above average, they are not as high as those in writing.
- The outdoor apparatus limits the range of opportunities Nursery and Reception children have to develop fully their physical skills.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed eight lessons and saw all teachers teach. Five lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspector heard pupils read and looked at the work in their books.
- Meetings were held with governors, all teaching staff, and with pupils. The inspector held a meeting with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector looked at a wide range of documentation, including the school's own judgements on its strengths and weaknesses, and the data it collects on pupils' progress. Documents detailing the school's arrangements for safeguarding were reviewed.
- The inspector took account of the 52 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). He also noted the responses to the school's own recent questionnaire to parents, held a discussion with some parents and talked to parents informally at the school's charity coffee morning.
- As this is a small school with only a few staff, they did not complete the inspection questionnaire but instead spoke to the inspector face-to-face.

Inspection team

David Speakman, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The school opened its Nursery in September 2011. Children start during the term after their third birthday and attend part time. The Nursery is open from Monday to Thursday.
- Pupils are taught in four mixed-age classes.
- Most pupils are White British. A well below-average proportion of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- Very few pupils speak English as an additional language and almost none are at an early stage of learning English.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is below average. This is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children in the care of the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- In the last three years, the school has experienced an increase in the number of pupils joining the school, mostly joining Years 5 and 6. As the pupil numbers in each year group are small, this represents a much greater than average rate of inward mobility in these year groups.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 make the same rapid progress in reading as they do in writing by:
 - continuing and further developing the good start made in the Nursery and Reception Years in children's knowledge of letters and the sounds they make (phonics) into Key Stages 1 and 2
 - making sure that pupils apply this knowledge to read more accurately, especially at Key Stage 2.
- Improve outdoor apparatus to extend opportunities for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage to develop a wider range of physical skills.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children make good progress in Nursery and Reception classes, particularly in reading. They join the Early Years Foundation Stage with attainment above that typical for their age. By the end of the Reception Year, an above-average proportion achieves a good level of development and a good number exceed this. Children are prepared well for Key Stage 1.
- Even at this early stage in the school year, children can easily read a good number of words and build words they do not recognise by blending letter sounds. They have a good vocabulary and suggest a wide range of words to describe characters in a story. More-able children are already beginning to write simple descriptive sentences.
- At Key Stage 1, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics has been rising steadily since the previous inspection. It has been above the national average at the end of Year 2 for two years and the school is beginning to build a record of above-average attainment at the end of this key stage.
- There have been low numbers of pupils in each cohort and pupils joining towards the end of the Key Stage 2 have a significant impact on assessment data. The data for those pupils who were in Year 2 in this school and completed Key Stage 2 shows they achieve well and their attainment is above average. In 2012, it was broadly average in reading and well above the national average in writing and mathematics. There was a similar attainment profile in 2013. In both years, pupils' overall achievement was good. In reading, pupils made expected progress but much greater progress in writing and mathematics, which had both been a development focus.
- Pupils currently in Years 5 and 6 are showing great promise. Assessment data, pupils' work books and lesson observations show these pupils are working at levels about a year ahead of the levels expected for their ages.
- More-able pupils do well. The proportion making more progress than ordinarily expected is very high. This data mainly includes pupils who attained well at Year 2 and who achieved high standards at the end of Year 6, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- There were no pupils supported through pupil premium funding in the latest published data. However, the school keeps a careful track on these pupils' progress and school data show that they make good progress and achieve similar standards as their classmates.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress because work is matched closely to their individual needs. Expectations for their learning are high, and staff set work which moves these pupils on quickly.
- Results from national screening in Year 1 to check pupils' knowledge and understanding of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) exceed the national average because reading is taught well in the Early Years Foundation Stage. However, the good start has not been built on and older pupils do not show secure knowledge of higher level phonics to read unfamiliar words. They still try to blend letter sounds and this means that some read more difficult words inaccurately.

The quality of teaching is good

- Lesson observations, records of pupils' good progress and the school's checks on teaching show that good teaching is typical in this school. Consistently good teaching comes from effective monitoring and a robust professional development programme through which teachers continuously improve their teaching skills. All teachers joined the school as newly qualified and, during the inspection, demonstrated good teaching skills.
- Teachers in all classes have high expectations of their pupils. Teachers use their knowledge of what pupils have already learned to set challenging work for pupils at all levels of attainment, including the most able, that are matched accurately to each pupil's capability. Because all classes have two year groups, teachers match learning to ability rather than age. This enables all pupils to work at a level at which they feel confident yet are still challenged.
- Teachers use questions effectively to check pupils' learning. Closely focused and well thought-out questions encourage pupils to think and work answers out for themselves. This helps them to develop confidence and good levels of independence to further support their learning.
- Teachers constantly assess the success in pupils' learning. They amend their teaching in response, increasing the pace to help pupils move on quickly when they are ready or revising work, and providing support if pupils are having difficulty.
- Teaching assistants make an effective contribution to pupils' learning and progress. They support disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs by adapting work so pupils are able to work mostly independently with timely intervention when appropriate. They plan carefully with class teachers and it is clear that they know what is expected of them.
- Marking of work provides pupils with effective support and guidance by helping them to understand exactly what they need to do to move to the next level.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is good. Pupils are given clear answers to questions or explanations when they are having difficulty. However, the teaching of reading to older pupils is not fully effective in building on the good start children get in developing early reading skills. As a result, some older pupils do not read difficult words accurately.
- Adults in the Early Years Foundation Stage work hard to overcome the limitations created by the lack of outdoor apparatus to support children's physical development. For example, they set up obstacle courses for children which go only some way to helping them to develop their physical skills.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils have good attitudes to learning. They set about learning tasks with confidence and an enthusiastic approach to do their best. These positive attitudes contribute well to effective learning.
- Because pupils are encouraged to find things out for themselves, they have developed good independent learning skills and work together in groups effectively.
- Behaviour in class is good and pupils sustain concentration well, even when not directly supervised by an adult. This means that teachers can pay uninterrupted attention to the groups with which they are working.

- Pupils generally speak well about behaviour in school. They know about different forms of bullying and how to keep safe. Pupils have a realistic view on bullying. There are what pupils say are mostly simply arguments, and pupils are not aware of major incidents of bullying. They are confident that any instances would be dealt with quickly and effectively. Most parents who responded to the Parent View questionnaire say their children are happy and safe but are not as confident that behaviour is good or bullying is dealt with effectively. Parents spoken to directly have no concerns.
- Pupils are happy to come to school and attendance is above average.
- The school provides sensitive support for pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Pupils who have found difficulty in other schools have settled well into school life at St John's. There have been no cases of pupils not being allowed to come to school because of poor behaviour.

The leadership and management are good

- Leadership is distributed across the whole of the teaching staff and the school's bursar. The process is managed well by the headteacher and has been effective in maintaining the school's good overall effectiveness. The establishment of a whole-school leadership team has created a wide knowledge base on which to draw in accurately evaluating the school's effectiveness and making plans for development. Because staff are all involved, there is a high level of commitment to ongoing improvement.
- Pupils' achievement is individually monitored. Class teachers have a precise knowledge of how each pupil is progressing and what each pupil needs to do to achieve their best. The headteacher has an overview of whole-school performance and regularly shares this amongst staff and governors, creating a shared understanding of how well the school is doing. The school is demonstrating the capacity to sustain improvement through the high attainment levels currently moving through the school.
- The headteacher carefully monitors teaching and has an accurate view of each teacher's and teaching assistant's strengths and areas that need improving. There are good opportunities for staff training. All teachers have developed from newly qualified teachers on joining the school. The governing body ensures that the school's evaluation of teaching is linked to salary rewards and there are examples of the headteacher and governors effectively tackling underperformance in the recent past.
- All staff have challenging targets which link to the school's priorities for improvement and which are used to help assess their performance. All class teachers hold each other to account for the progress their pupils make at regular reviews of pupils' progress and on transfer into the next class.
- The curriculum is planned well to meet all pupils' needs. There have been recent changes to address the past difference in the attainment of boys and girls by adopting a practical approach to engage boys that links subjects together through interesting topics. This has been effective as inspection evidence does not identify a current gender difference. Curriculum provision for the teaching of reading for older pupils is not fully effective in promoting good progress in reading through into Key Stage 2. Curriculum initiatives to improve writing have been highly effective. There is limited apparatus for children in Nursery and Reception to fully explore their physical development.

- The school works to good effect with other schools. There is a strong sports partnership with other schools to extend pupils' sporting experiences. They join with the high school to promote the arts. Governors have made a wide number of effective improvements to engage with the parent community and to promote the school within the local area.
- The school provides a good level of equality of opportunity, with all pupils progressing equally well. The school is a harmonious community and there is no evidence of prejudice-based poor behaviour.
- The local authority has an accurate view of the overall effectiveness of the school, having graded it as low priority. It supports the school through an annual review visit. They have provided some low-level routine support for the Early Years Foundation Stage and in building links between the school and the parent community.
- The school manages funds well. The pupil premium is helping to close the attainment gap between funded pupils and others. There are clear plans for the new primary school sports funding to further enrich the sports provision. They intend to extend sports links with other schools. Sports coaching will be provided to enrich pupils' sporting experiences. Swimming provision will be extended to help those who have not learned to swim by Year 5 and the school is planning to train up play leaders. The school is wisely looking into these initiatives being sustainable in the future.
- There is good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is an important factor in pupils' good attitudes to school. There are many opportunities for pupils to support a wide range of charities and to reflect on others' circumstances. The school adopts a multi-faith approach, and pupils get on very well with each other, whatever their background. Pupils are well aware of citizenship; Year 5 and 6 organised and hosted a charity coffee morning during the inspection in support of a well-known cancer support charity. The headteacher is very keen that pupils experience the arts. This aspect of the curriculum supports their cultural awareness well.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors work well with the staff. They tackle difficult issues identified through regular monitoring, and their support for the headteacher has helped establish consistently good teaching.
 - Governors are regular visitors to the school and gain a good knowledge of how well teachers are doing through first-hand experiences. Their professional expertise provides them with a good understanding of their role and commitment. They are aware of how well the school is doing and how the achievement of pupils compares with other schools.
 - They provide challenge to the headteacher and leadership team on school improvement. They set clear targets in managing the performance of the headteacher and staff.
 - They make sure that statutory requirements are met, including for safeguarding.

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	124353
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	427098

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	93
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bernard Corban
Headteacher	Rose Brookes
Date of previous school inspection	5 November 2008
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