

St John's CofE Primary School

Stratford Road, Sparkhill, Birmingham, B11 4EA

Inspection dates 19–20 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy	
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Early years provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The academy benefits from outstanding, dynamic leadership at all levels. Senior leaders and governors provide leaders in charge of subjects and year groups with excellent support to fine-tune their skills and to review pupils' performance.
- Staff are ambitious, reflective and self-critical. They strive successfully to improve teaching and pupils' achievement at St John's and in other schools. Teamwork is very strong.
- Pupils get off to an excellent start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. All groups of pupils make rapid progress in Years 1 to 6. Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is well above average by the end of Year 6. Pupils achieve well in other subjects, such as music.
- Staff use their excellent knowledge of what pupils can already do to plan work which stretches pupils of all abilities.
- Staff have high expectations of all pupils. They question pupils expertly to develop their speaking and thinking skills and to check on their learning. They adapt the level of work to accelerate progress further.
- Outstanding teaching and relationships ensure that pupils enjoy learning, are highly motivated and contribute fully to lessons.
- Staff develop pupils' personal qualities and teamwork skills to the full. This enables pupils to support each other very successfully in lessons and in assemblies.
- Pupils are mature, reflective learners. Pupils in Key Stage 2 understand how to make the best use of staff's oral feedback and marking to improve their work.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the academy is outstanding.
- The academy promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well. It ensures pupils develop a keen awareness of diversity and life in modern Britain.
- Robust safeguarding arrangements ensure that pupils feel very safe and well cared for in the academy. Attendance is above average.
- Pupils have fewer opportunities to develop their mathematical skills in other subjects, than they do for reading and writing.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching through visits to classrooms to check on pupils' learning. On some visits, they were accompanied by senior leaders.
- A range of pupils were heard reading.
- Samples of pupils' work were looked at.
- Meetings were held with academy staff, a group of pupils, and six members of the governing body. A telephone conversation was held with an independent consultant who provides the academy with regular reviews on aspects of its performance.
- Inspectors took account of the 35 questionnaires completed by staff, parents' responses to the academy's own recent questionnaire and 22 responses made by parents to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View. An inspector spoke informally to some parents during the inspection.
- Inspectors checked a range of evidence including: monitoring records; consultants' reports; the academy improvement plan; the academy's own data on pupils' attainment and progress; and policies, procedures and practice relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

Derek Aitken, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Helen Quinn	Additional Inspector
Stephen Cox	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St John's CofE Primary School converted to an academy on 1 January 2013. When its predecessor school, of the same name, was previously inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding.
- The academy is a designated National Support School. The executive headteacher is Vice-Chair of the city-wide Birmingham Education Partnership. She is a National Leader of Education (NLE) and works in this capacity with a number of schools, including St George's Primary School and Christ Church Primary, on behalf of the local authority. The head of school is a Specialist Leader of Education (SLE) who provides advice and guidance on teaching and learning to local schools.
- The academy is much larger than most primary schools.
- The academy's part-time nursery operates in the mornings and afternoons.
- Around 95% of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. At around 66%, Pakistani pupils form the largest grouping. A high proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language and many of the children in Nursery and Reception are at an early stage of learning English.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium, which is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those in local authority care, is average at 25%.
- At around 12%, the proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Provide more opportunities for pupils to use and to apply their mathematical skills in other subjects.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The executive headteacher, head of school and deputy headteacher provide exceptionally astute leadership. They ensure that all staff, governors and leaders are fully accountable for achieving the academy's high aspirations for pupils' academic success and personal development. They strive relentlessly to unearth new ways to raise standards and to further improve teaching.
- Senior leaders' links to other schools, their wider contributions to education across Birmingham and the academy's role as part of a teaching school alliance, ensure that staff have, over time, developed high levels of expertise in leadership and teaching. Senior leaders have fostered a self-critical culture in which all staff regularly examine their performance and seek to do better.
- Senior leaders have strengthened leadership, by giving leaders in charge of subjects and year groups shared responsibility for monitoring standards. They have provided them with specialist coaching and training in the use of data which enable them to carry out this task very effectively.
- The academy's work is checked very thoroughly, including through external scrutinies. Leaders at all levels, including the co-leaders of the Early Years Foundation Stage, systematically review the impact of the actions they take and swiftly implement new plans if there are any minor shortfalls. Excellent teamwork ensures that all colleagues know the academy extremely well, follow procedures to the letter and implement agreed actions consistently, such as the new calculation policy for mathematics.
- Excellent attention to performance management and ongoing professional development ensure that teaching continues to improve and that colleagues new to teaching benefit from skilled coaching. Judgements for staff's appraisal are closely linked to the fulfilment of the ambitious targets set for pupils' achievement.
- These strengths ensure that the academy's long-term plans – for example, for implementing its version of the National Curriculum and its preferred approach to assessment following the removal of levels – are soundly based.
- The academy promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well. Staff reinforce the concept of fairness in lessons in numerous little ways; for example, in their insistence that pupils listen to and value each other's contributions. These experiences are supplemented by topics, theme days or weeks, such as 'Black History', visitors and trips. The Year 5 'Project Birmingham' visit acquaints pupils with the concepts of law and democracy and life in modern Britain and stimulates ideas for discussion in school council meetings.
- The academy's highly successful commitment to equal opportunities is demonstrated by its very effective curriculum. This promotes high aspirations and enables pupils to thrive in an exceptionally supportive and highly cohesive learning community. This results in outstanding progress for all groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, and is sustained by the ways in which the academy allocates its resources, including staffing, to ensure that all pupils do the best they can.
- National primary sports funding has been spent appropriately. These monies have been used, for example, to employ a health mentor, to increase pupils' participation in on-site clubs, and to include physical education activities in the daily breakfast club provision. Leaders have noted evidence of positive impact of this expenditure in improvements in pupils' cardio-vascular performance in physical education lessons and in the quality of sports teaching.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors support the academy well. They recruit carefully to ensure that there is a suitable breadth of expertise on the governing body. They take well-considered financial decisions; for example, to provide extra staffing in the younger years to boost pupils' language skills. They have successfully restructured the senior leadership team to ensure that the academy continues to thrive.

- Governors are exceptionally well informed about the academy's work through regular reports provided by senior leaders. They discuss in their achievement committee how well the academy's pupils are doing compared to similar pupils nationally. Governors understand and review the strategies used to support disadvantaged pupils and know which actions, supported by this extra funding, have had most impact.
- Governors are knowledgeable about the actions leaders have taken to improve teaching and the performance of individual teachers. They know whether senior staff have reached their targets. They ensure that pay awards are only approved when staff meet their demanding targets.
- Governors consider safeguarding and child protection issues carefully. They ensure that current government requirements for safeguarding are fully met and that safeguarding arrangements are effective.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Excellent teaching and high expectations for pupils' behaviour promote exceptionally positive attitudes to learning. Pupils are keenly aware of the importance of well-developed moral and social characteristics for success in the academy and in later life. They respond very well to staff's high expectations for their work-rate, concentration and engagement in lessons.
- In lessons, pupils are highly attentive, eagerly answer questions and participate fully in discussions. They work with each other in a very supportive way, reviewing each other's work and encouraging each other in their efforts to correct any mistakes. The presentation of their work is excellent.
- Pupils move around the academy in an orderly, well-mannered way. They open doors for each other and are polite and welcoming to visitors. They behave well in assemblies, where they reflect on the choices they make and learn to appreciate how, for example, their contributions to the local food bank make a difference to others. Music, linked to the themes of assemblies, is used very effectively to develop pupils' musical and social skills.
- Pupils are reflective about beliefs and values and show a keen awareness of, and respect for, diversity. They respect rules, know what is right and what is wrong, and do not tolerate anything other than perfect behaviour. They are thoughtful, responsible individuals, who appreciate music, art and literature.
- Minor incidents of misbehaviour are rare. These are carefully recorded and reviewed by a small team of key staff, which enables them to spot patterns in behaviour and helps them to take swift action before any unpleasant situation can escalate. Behaviour logs show that pupils are remorseful if they have behaved inconsiderately and that they have subsequently behaved well. There have been no exclusions for several years.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Lunchtimes have been varied to ease congestion. Pupils are very well supervised outside lessons and staff are equipped with walkie-talkies to enable them to summon aid quickly, if required, on the playground.
- Pupils feel very safe in the academy. They understand what constitutes unsafe situations and are highly aware of strategies for keeping themselves and others safe. They are especially knowledgeable about e-safety and value the support of trained peer mediators who help them to resolve issues on the playground.
- Pupils are fully aware of different forms of bullying and actively try to prevent it occurring. Incidents of bullying are very rare and are dealt with very effectively by staff.
- The well-staffed breakfast club provides pupils with a good range of activities, including computing and sports, which pupils engage with quickly after eating their healthy breakfasts.

- Leaders monitor attendance closely and make successful use of a range of strategies, including home visits, the breakfast club and the academy's emotional literacy support advisor, to improve the attendance and punctuality of individual pupils. Attendance rose last year after a small dip in 2013 due to the timing of the Eid festival. It remains above average.
- Case studies show swift and detailed responses to the needs of vulnerable pupils. Safeguarding procedures are comprehensive, rigorous and robust.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Staff have consistently high expectations for pupils' progress, behaviour and work-rate in lessons. They promote very positive attitudes and relationships. They manage pupils sensitively and they encourage and motivate individual pupils. They cultivate pupils' self-confidence and instil in them a strong desire to do their best.
- Teachers know individual pupils and understand how each learns best. They make extremely effective use of their excellent knowledge of what pupils already know and can do. This enables them to plan high-quality learning activities at just the right level to challenge each pupil. Teaching assistants and other adults are very well briefed about their roles and make a significant contribution to pupils' progress.
- Staff check pupils' progress very carefully in lessons. They step in very effectively to support individual pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, or to redirect learning for small groups who need extra help. They guide pupils' learning in lessons exceptionally well so that pupils know exactly what they must do when they work unaided. Teachers make excellent use of verbal feedback and marking to extend pupils' learning and, in the older years, to help pupils to assess and to improve the quality of their work.
- Staff's relentless focus on developing pupils' speaking skills, especially in the younger years, is highly successful. Their expert questioning engages pupils fully and enables them to construct full sentences using a suitable range of descriptive adjectives and adverbs. This provides pupils with a solid foundation for developing their communication skills further in Key Stage 2.
- Pupils' vocabulary is widened through well-judged teaching which acquaints pupils with a range of alternatives for using adjectives and adverbs to convey small differences in meaning. Staff explore these possibilities thoroughly with pupils, provide pupils with skilled support with their spellings and punctuation, and ensure that pupils approach their writing tasks with confidence.
- Early reading skills are taught very well. This enables pupils to make plausible attempts at the meaning of unfamiliar words and to comment sensitively when studying poems.
- Mathematical skills are expertly taught. This enables pupils to develop rapidly their understanding of the use of number in taking measurements, calculating weight and capacity, and using money, as was observed in lessons and pupils' books in Key Stage 1. Staff reinforce comprehension skills very effectively as pupils are introduced quickly to word problems which make them think hard and encourage them to become resilient learners. However, pupils only have a moderate range of opportunities to practise their mathematical skills in 'real-life' contexts in other subjects.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Attainment in Year 2 and Year 6 has risen in the last two years. In Year 2, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is above average; in Year 6 it is well above average. All groups of pupils make rapid progress, including those learning English as an additional language. Given their well below-average starting points on entry to Nursery, especially in their communication and literacy skills, this represents outstanding achievement.

- Results in the Year 1 screening check for phonics (the sounds that letters make) were above the national average in 2013 and 2014. Decoding and blending skills are taught systematically so that pupils quickly develop confidence in reading in Key Stage 1.
- Exceptionally thorough checks on pupils' learning, together with outstanding teaching, underpin pupils' excellent progress. Shortfalls in pupils' skills are pinpointed and tackled immediately through intensive one-to-one or small-group teaching. These are especially successful in Key Stage 1 in closing gaps in pupils' literacy skills.
- In Key Stage 2, exceptional progress continues across a wide range of subjects. Pupils benefit from a wide range of opportunities to practise their literacy skills in other subjects. They have a precise understanding of what they are learning and very clear targets for improvement. As they move up the year groups, they demonstrate an increasing ability to reflect on their learning and to decide what they need to do next to improve their work. Pupils in Year 6 are well prepared for the challenges of secondary education and have high aspirations for their future careers.
- In 2014, disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 were working, on average, two terms behind their classmates in writing and mathematics but were half a term ahead in reading. As in 2013, their attainment was above other pupils nationally. Across the academy, these pupils make similar progress to their classmates.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make rapid progress because they receive skilled support. Staff identify very precisely any weaknesses in their work and help them to remedy them quickly. Personalised work programmes, supported by regular assessment reviews, ensure that they progress as well as other groups of pupils.
- The most-able pupils respond eagerly to staff's questioning which probes their higher-level thinking skills and spurs them on to edit their work in writing, which they do very well. Their well-developed comprehension skills enable them to discuss characters in books in detail and to comment convincingly on the motivation for their actions. In Year 6, the most-able pupils understand mathematical language and they use it expertly to comment on their investigation of shapes. In music lessons, they perform complicated passages accurately.
- The carefully planned curriculum ensures that no one falls behind. It secures pupils' full commitment to their learning and enables them to achieve well in various subjects such as art and music. By Year 4, for example, pupils demonstrate an impressive command of rhythm and pitch in their playing of brass instruments.

The early years provision

is outstanding

- Children's skills and knowledge are well below those typical for their age on entry to Nursery, especially in communication, language and literacy. Forty percent of children have no pre-Nursery experience and many children who speak English as an additional language have a very limited command of English.
- All groups of children make rapid progress in Nursery and Reception. This means that children learning English as an additional language catch up with their classmates in most areas of learning, although small gaps remain in reading and writing. The percentage of children in the Reception classes who reached a good level of development has been above the national average in each of the last two years, and children are well prepared for Key Stage 1.
- Staff's rigorous and highly successful focus on developing children's speaking skills underpins their swift progress. Staff take great care to show children how to pronounce individual sounds and how to blend them together to form words. They question children exceptionally well and quickly develop their capacity to answer in full sentences. Staff's questioning is carefully designed to enable children to extend their knowledge and skills in several areas of learning simultaneously. This was observed in a Nursery lesson during snack-time, when children discussed where oranges grew and how many were

needed for the group to provide each child with one. Staff expertly link children's responses based on their personal experiences to the lesson topic to further extend opportunities for group discussion. In their writing, children soon make plausible phonetic attempts at spelling simple words, while more-able children write more complex words accurately.

- Staff plan a wide range of activities, supported by well-organised resources and 'real-life' experiences to stimulate children's imagination and to prompt them to talk, as was observed during a visit by fire-fighters. Children are enthusiastic, curious learners, relate well to each other and to adults and work hard to improve their skills.
- Assessments of children's starting points are robust. Staff make excellent use of assessment to record observations on children's progress and to diagnose which children need extra help to close gaps. Assessment is fully shared between staff so that all take responsibility for planning the next steps in children's learning. Staff, including bilingual assistants, are skilfully deployed to support children's learning.
- Leaders check the Early Years Foundation Stage's work rigorously. Successful strategies for using assessment to underpin teaching in Reception have been extended into Nursery. Staff review their work daily and use this information to plan the next day's work. Close links with parents, which include regular workshops, as well as links with health visitors and the local children's centre, enable staff to monitor children's achievements and well-being very closely.

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	139173
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	449224

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	492
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Self
Headteacher	Sarah Smith (Executive Headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected as an academy
Telephone number	0121 675 1469
Fax number	0121 675 0353
Email address	enquiry@st-johns-pri.bham.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2014

