

INSPECTION REPORT

ST. JOHN'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Chorlton-cum-Hardy

LEA area: Manchester

Unique reference number: 105546

Headteacher: Mr. L. Dillon

Reporting inspector: Dr. B. Blundell
23868

Dates of inspection: 24-25 June 2002

Inspection number: 196407

Short inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and Junior School

School category: Voluntary Aided

Age range of pupils: 3 –11 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Chepstow Road
Chorlton – cum - Hardy
Manchester

Postcode: M21 9SN

Telephone number: 0161 881 1040

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Fr. P. McMahon

Date of previous inspection: 16th June 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St. John's R.C. Primary School is a very good school for boys and girls, aged 3 to 11, situated in Chorlton-cum-Hardy, Manchester. There are 486 pupils on roll, including 60 (full-time equivalent) children in the Nursery; the school is larger than most primary schools. The ethnic background of the pupils is largely white with U.K. heritage; a minority of pupils are black with Caribbean or African or other heritage or white with other than U.K. heritage. No pupils are at an early stage in the acquisition of English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly in-line with the national average. The percentage of pupils with statements of special educational needs is below the national average, and the proportion of pupils identified within the school as having special needs is well-below average. The nature of pupils' special needs includes specific learning difficulties, physical and speech difficulties. Pupil mobility is relatively low overall, except for the current Year 6 where it is significant factor. Pupils' attainment on entry is broadly average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The overall effectiveness of the school is very good. Standards in English, mathematics and science for pupils aged eleven consistently exceed national averages. The overall quality of teaching is very good, and leadership and management are excellent. The school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils by the end of Year 6 consistently attain standards in English, mathematics and science that are well-above national averages because of the high expectations which the school has of them.
- Leadership and management by the headteacher and senior management team are excellent; the school has an exceptionally clear educational direction.
- The overall quality of teaching is very good; gifted and talented pupils are particularly well-provided for.
- Pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour and the excellent relationships promote a happy environment for learning
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.
- The school's provision for sport and extra-curricular activities is outstanding.

What could be improved

- The inspection team identified no areas for improvement.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in June 1997. Standards in English, mathematics and science by the age of eleven have improved from being above the national average to well above the national average. The key issue to eliminate the budget deficit has been addressed; in the last full financial period there was a large surplus, mainly due to a change in the accounting period. The overall quality of teaching has improved appropriately. The key issue to provide an appropriately resourced library and multimedia centre has been addressed effectively. Provision for pupils' multicultural development has improved well. The school has justifiable ambition to succeed further, and has the capacity to do so. The school has improved greatly since the last inspection.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	B	A	A	A
mathematics	B	A*	A	A
science	C	A	A	A

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

Standards attained by pupils aged eleven in 2001 were well above the national average in English, mathematics and science. Compared to those in schools of a similar type, standards were also well above average in all three subjects. Over the three years from 1999 to 2001 taken together, pupils have left the school over two terms ahead of pupils nationally in English, mathematics and science.

Standards reached by pupils aged seven in the national tests in 2001 matched the national average in reading and mathematics, and were above the national average in writing. Compared to that in schools of a similar type, pupils' attainment was average in reading, above average in writing and below average in mathematics. Over the three years from 1999 to 2001 taken together, pupils have left the infant stage with standards nearly one term ahead of pupils nationally in reading, nearly six months ahead in writing and nearly half a term behind in mathematics.

The school's targets are appropriately ambitious. In the work seen during the inspection, standards for pupils aged seven were above national expectations in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Standards in mathematics for this age group have improved as a result of specifically targeted work by the mathematics coordinator. For pupils aged seven and eleven, standards in design and technology, information and communication technology, history, geography and art and design met national expectations. Standards in music and physical education for pupils aged seven and eleven were above national expectations. Children aged five are on course to exceed the Early Learning Goals. (The Early Learning Goals are the nationally expected standards for children at the end of the Foundation Stage.) Pupils' achievement is very good overall. Standards at this school are sufficiently high.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school.	Pupils' attitudes to the school are very good; they really enjoy coming to school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms.	Behaviour, both in and out of the classrooms, is very good. Older pupils look after younger ones appropriately at lunchtimes.
Personal development and relationships.	Pupils' personal development is excellent; relationships are excellent both between pupils and with adults. There is a mutual respect between staff and pupils that fosters confidence and trust within the school community.
Attendance.	Whilst pupils' attendance has in the past been below the national average, it has now improved and just meets the national average. Unauthorised absence is below average.

Particular strengths in pupils' attitudes include their enthusiastic application to their work and love for learning.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good	Very good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

The quality of teaching in English and mathematics is very good; the skills of literacy and numeracy are very well taught. Particular strengths in teaching include teachers' high expectations, class management and the sharing of learning objectives with pupils. Classroom support assistants work well with teachers in planning lessons. The school meets the needs of all pupils well. All pupils are fully included. Particular strengths in pupils' learning include their concentration, productivity and pace of learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum.	The quality and range of the curriculum are very good throughout the school.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs.	Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good overall; learning support assistants support pupils well. The school also provides very well for pupils who are gifted and talented.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.	Provision for pupils' personal development is very good. The school very successfully provides for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In particular, assemblies are most uplifting and accompanied by exceptionally fine singing.
How well the school cares for its pupils.	The school looks after its pupils very well. The school has a caring Catholic ethos.

The school works well in partnership with parents. A particular strength in the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils is the school's excellent provision of extra-curricular activities. All areas of the curriculum meet statutory requirements. A particular strength in the way the school cares for its pupils is in child protection procedures.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff.	Leadership and management by the headteacher, deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher are excellent.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities.	The manner in which the governors fulfil their responsibilities is excellent. They bring a very wide range of expertise to the running of this school. The chair of governors is a regular visitor to the school.

Aspect	Comment
The school's evaluation of its performance.	The school's evaluation of its performance is excellent. It painstakingly analyses its work in external national tests, and uses the resultant findings to improve standards effectively.
The strategic use of resources.	The strategic use of resources is excellent. The school always asks the question, "Will the resource be useful for increasing learning?" when purchasing any item.

Particular strengths in leadership and management include the commitment and vision of the headteacher and senior management team. The school's administrative officer and secretary are most efficient and help ensure the smooth running of the school. Lunchtime assistants and catering staff create a very happy atmosphere at the mid-day break. The accommodation is well-maintained by a dedicated caretaker and cleaners. The school's application of the principles of best value is excellent.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are delighted with the range of activities outside lessons. • Parents feel that the school sets high expectations. • They are very happy with the way that the school is led and managed. • They judge the overall quality of teaching to be good. • Parents feel that the school helps their children to mature and be responsible. • They are happy with behaviour at the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some parents are not happy with the level of homework. • Some parents would like more information about their children's progress. • Some parents would like the school to work more closely with them.

The inspection team agrees with parents' positive views. It finds that levels of homework are appropriate overall, although there are no homework diaries. The inspectors find that information about pupils' progress is good, and that the school works well with parents overall.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Pupils by the end of Year 6 consistently attain standards in English, mathematics and science that are well above national averages, because of the high expectations which the school has of them.

1. Over the last three years taken together, pupils have left the school, on average, over two terms ahead of pupils nationally in English, mathematics and science. Pupils currently aged eleven are also exceeding national expectations in all three subjects.
2. Over the three years from 1999 to 2001, pupils have left the infant stage, on average, with standards nearly one term ahead of pupils nationally in reading, nearly six months ahead in writing but half a term behind in mathematics.
3. If we look at the performance of recent eleven-year-old pupils and compare it with their results when they were aged seven, we find that they have generally made very good progress. The school's initiatives in writing have had a positive impact on pupils' learning.
4. In English, the skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening of pupils currently aged eleven are all well above national expectations. Pupils in Year 6 revise and refine their personal response to texts thoughtfully. They use reading journals consistently and effectively. They describe the feelings of characters using terms such as "enraged", "disappointed" and "disgusted", and explain why characters have these sentiments. They engage well in discussion. Pupils at the end of Year 2 respond imaginatively to humorous stories and poems. They write appropriately extended sentences on subjects such as "the Aliens", and enthusiastically volunteer suggestions in class.
5. In mathematics, pupils aged eleven carry out long division methodically and understand the value of the "remainder". They are clear and concise in their mental strategies and are able to explain clearly how they arrive at their answers. Standards for seven year olds have greatly improved; the mathematics coordinator has spent considerable time improving planning and raising expectations for this age group. Seven year olds recognise division as sharing equally. They construct their own problems involving addition and subtraction, using the correct mathematical vocabulary. They understand the key words in problems such as how many are there altogether, or how many are *left*? Not all pupils in the school have a sufficiently prompt recall of their multiplication tables, and this is not helping their learning.
6. In science, pupils aged eleven carry out investigations well, using bar charts, tables and line graphs to illustrate their findings appropriately. Pupils throughout the school record their work in a logical, scientific manner, and draw accurate diagrams with correct scientific vocabulary, and this practice is having a positive impact on pupils' learning. Teachers' expectations are high.

Leadership and management by the headteacher, the senior management team and the governing body are excellent; the school has an exceptionally clear educational direction.

7. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher are leading the school skilfully in a very appropriate educational direction. The school is very well placed for further improvement; targets for national tests are rising annually. The school's priorities for further development are most appropriate.
8. The senior management team is most effective and works well together. With the coordinators for literacy and numeracy, the team has monitored teaching and learning through the school, giving teachers constructive written and verbal feedback, with areas for improvement indicated where appropriate. Good practice is widely and freely shared. Much work has recently been done in improving the quality of the sessions that terminate lessons, which assess to what extent learning targets have been met. The senior management team has guided the school in refining and improving planning, incorporating learning outcomes for higher-attaining, middle-attaining and lower-attaining pupils. The role of the curriculum coordinators has improved since the last inspection, in that they are now more closely involved in monitoring their subject areas.
9. The governing body is very committed and brings a breadth of expertise to the school. It is effective in its function as a critical friend. Governors, some of whom have a background in education, have an appropriate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The chair of governors comes into school nearly every day, liaising informally with the headteacher. Numeracy and special educational needs governors, in particular, are regular visitors to the school, and monitor the delivery of the curriculum appropriately.

The overall quality of teaching is very good; gifted and talented pupils are particularly well provided for.

10. The overall quality of teaching throughout the school is very good, with examples of excellent teaching being seen in every phase of the school. Overall, teaching was excellent in thirty-nine per cent of lessons seen, very good in thirty-seven per cent, good in twelve per cent and satisfactory in twelve per cent of lessons. Teaching standards have improved very considerably since the time of the last inspection, as a result of the school's conscious effort to improve the consistency of lessons. Pupils' successful learning mirrors the effective teaching throughout the school.
11. Pupils know and understand the precise purpose of their lessons. At the outset, teachers explain in appropriate language what the learning objectives are for the lesson. At the end of each lesson, the learning targets are looked at again to see how far they have been achieved. This was a particular feature of nearly all literacy and numeracy lessons observed, including those in the foundation stage, and such practice is very effective in increasing the rate of pupils' learning. Time is not wasted in lessons because everybody realises that they have a learning target to meet. This was particularly evident in two excellent numeracy lessons for pupils in the two Year 6 classes, where no time was lost as pupils tackled their division problems.

12. Planning is particularly effective at this school. Nothing is left to chance. Teachers of pupils in same-age classes plan well together. Teachers manage their classes efficiently; expectations are high in terms of both behaviour and standards of work for all pupils, including those with special educational needs.
13. The teaching of gifted and talented pupils is of a particularly high standard; Year 6 pupils receive weekly lessons in literacy, numeracy and science. For example, in a mathematics lesson for gifted Year 6 mathematicians, pupils were successfully solving complex problems involving algebraic equations. Questions such as “My mum was 27 when I was born. 8 years ago she was twice as old as I shall be in 5 years’ time. How old am I now?” were converted thoughtfully into mathematical statements. Pupils used information and communication technology skilfully to input their solutions to problems and have their answers assessed externally. Teaching was thorough, knowledgeable and most professional, and ensured excellent learning. In a lesson for gifted and talented pupils in literacy, pupils subtly explored the story of “The Three Pigs” from the viewpoint of the Wolf.
14. Gifted and talented pupils are identified and catered for in a wide range of subjects, from literacy, numeracy and science to music, art and design and sports.

Pupils’ very good attitudes and behaviour and the excellent relationships promote a happy environment for learning.

15. Pupils’ attitudes are at least good. They behave very well indeed and want to learn. They mirror the enthusiasm of their teachers and really enjoy coming to school. The school’s learning mentor has had an important impact on the attitudes and behaviour of a significant number of pupils.
16. Pupils take part in question and answer sessions eagerly, as in a Year 5 numeracy lesson on decimals. They are very keen to explain what they are doing and demonstrate their thorough understanding of place value.
17. Relationships both between pupils and with adults are excellent. Staff treat pupils respectfully and this is reciprocated by the pupils. Pupils help around school, with the older ones, for example, looking after younger children if the weather is too bad for outdoor play.

The school’s overall provision for pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.

18. Provision for pupils’ spiritual development is a great strength of the school. There are close links with the local Catholic church. The school provides well for the study of other faiths. The school also provides very well for pupils’ moral development. Appropriate anti-bullying and anti-racism policies are in place; the school promotes racial equality well. Adults set a very good example indeed to pupils.
19. The result of the very good provision for pupils’ social development is seen in the excellent relationships around school. Cultural provision is good, and multicultural provision has improved since the time of the last inspection. Provision for pupils’ cultural development is greatly enhanced by the school’s work in music. A standard of singing that is above national expectations is regularly heard in assemblies. Pupils are avidly preparing for a musical production entitled “Harry and the Commonwealth Games”. The school choir is very active and includes over one hundred pupils.

The school’s provision for sport and extra-curricular activities is outstanding.

20. The pupils at St John's benefit from an extraordinarily wide range of sporting and extra-curricular activities. Every taste is catered for and the facilities for sport, which are already remarkably good, are shortly to be enhanced further with the completion of a large sports hall. The school's coaches are most competent and encouraging and teach pupils at lunchtimes, after school and at weekends.
21. Pupils partake in sport with very great enthusiasm. They are able to choose from football, tennis, basketball, netball, cricket, gaelic football, lacrosse....the list is endless! Pupils' standards in physical education, games and gymnastics are above national expectations.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The team did not identify any issues for improvement.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	41
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	13

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	16	15	5	5	0	0	0
Percentage	39	37	12	12	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than two percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	59	427
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	71

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	1	35

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	3

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	13
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	16

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0

National comparative data	5.6
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National comparative data	0.5
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Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2001	39	28

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	33	37	34
	Girls	27	28	28
	Total	60	65	62
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	90(93)	97(97)	93(95)
	National	84(83)	86(84)	91(90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	38	34	39
	Girls	28	28	28
	Total	66	62	67
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	99(95)	93(92)	100(100)
	National	85(84)	89(88)	89(88)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2001	35	30

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	32	33	34
	Girls	26	28	30
	Total	58	61	64
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	89(94)	94(94)	98(96)
	National	75(75)	71(72)	87(85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	28	32	30
	Girls	25	27	25
	Total	53	59	55
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	84(83)	91(81)	87(87)
	National	72(70)	74(72)	82(79)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	8
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	2
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	445
Any other minority ethnic group	11

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	21
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20.3
Average class size	26.7

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	11.8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	312

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	29.5
Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	55
Number of pupils per FTE adult	14.8

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3.0
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	6.0
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Financial information

Financial year	2001-2002
	£
Total income	1200520
Total expenditure	1135423
Expenditure per pupil	2299
Balance brought forward from previous year	35686
Balance carried forward to next year	100783

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	486
Number of questionnaires returned	126

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	68	30	2	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	72	26	1	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	71	26	3	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	51	38	10	0	1
The teaching is good.	68	31	1	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	53	34	10	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	64	31	3	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	81	17	2	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	48	41	10	0	1
The school is well led and managed.	73	25	2	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	66	32	2	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	90	8	1	0	1