

INSPECTION REPORT

ST JOHN'S CE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Grove Green

Maidstone

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118753

Headteacher: Mr T Harrington

Reporting inspector: Mrs S Vale
22476

Dates of inspection: 10th – 11th March 2003

Inspection number: 247957

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:	4 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Provender Way Grove Green Maidstone Kent
Postcode:	ME14 5TZ
Telephone number:	01622 735916
Fax number:	01622 735992
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Reverend David Mouncer
Date of previous inspection:	22 nd - 25 th September 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St John's Church of England (Aided) Primary School, with 242 pupils is an average sized primary school. It is situated in the purpose built, owner occupied, Grove Green estate on the outskirts of Maidstone. Since the previous inspection the school has become very popular and is now only able to take children from roads on the estate which are very close to the school. At least two children apply for every place available. The small number of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The small number of pupils identified as having special educational needs, including those with statements is also below the national average. The percentage of pupils who speak English as an additional language is also very low. The majority of children enter school with standards expected for their age.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St John's Church of England Primary School is a good school and gives good value for money. An important factor in this is the very good leadership and management provided by the headteacher, supported very well by the deputy headteacher and the governing body. The good teaching means that pupils make good progress and by the time they reach the end of Year 6 they achieve standards in English, mathematics and science which are above average.

What the school does well

- Pupils make good progress and reach above average standards, particularly in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6 and in lessons throughout the school.
- Teaching is good. Teachers expect the most from their pupils and make work interesting and challenging. This promotes high standards.
- The headteacher provides very good leadership, strongly supported by the deputy headteacher and the senior management team and curriculum co-ordinators and the very supportive governing body.
- St John's promotes very good attitudes and cares for its pupils very well. Pupils apply themselves to their work with enthusiasm and interest.
- It offers a rich curriculum with a good range of extra-curricular activities, including sport, and music.

What could be improved

- Standards and resources in information and communication technology, to enable pupils to effectively learn the required skills.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the school was last inspected in September 1997 improvement has been good. Assessment procedures for all subjects have been developed and are now used to inform the next steps in pupils' learning. There is a stronger focus on planning, and matching work for the more able pupils, and this is helping to raise standards. Standards in English in years 1 and 2 and in design and technology have improved. The school improvement plan now has specific targets. The role of the co-ordinators in monitoring and evaluating standards is now fully developed and much improved.

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
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	C	A	B	C
Mathematics	A	A	A	B
Science	B	A	C	D

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

In the National Curriculum tests in 2002 for pupils at the end of Year 6, overall standards in English were above national averages, in mathematics they were well above and they were average in science. When compared to similar schools results remain in line with national averages in English, are above in mathematics but below in science. The test results in 2002 for pupils at the end of Year 2, in reading and in mathematics were above national averages and in line with national averages in writing. When these are compared to similar schools the results in reading and mathematics were in line with national averages but below in writing.

By the time pupils enter Year 1, pupils' achievements are in line with the Early Learning Goals. Current standards for pupils in Year 2 are above in reading and in mathematics, and average in writing, with a small but significant number of pupils achieving at the higher level. The current Year 6 pupils are reaching standards in English, mathematics and science, which are above what is expected for their age. Pupils make good progress during their time at St John's.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are keen to come to school and are interested and enthusiastic about their lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils behave well both in lessons and in the playground.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils show very great respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others.
Attendance	Very Good. Well above the national average, with no unauthorised absence in the last year.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	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 and learning is good throughout the school. Most of the teaching observed was good with a significant proportion being very good or excellent. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. Very good teaching was observed throughout the school. High quality teaching of English and mathematics, including literacy and numeracy enables pupils to make good progress. Teachers have very good knowledge of these subjects. They use good question and answer sessions to make the pupils think and to ensure their learning takes place. They have high expectations of the standards that the pupils can achieve and regularly refer to pupils' individual targets which are set in these subjects, to motivate them to do their best. This means that the pace in lessons ensures that all pupils are challenged and fully included in lessons.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good overall. Whilst there is a broad and balanced curriculum there are some gaps in the information and communication and technology curriculum. Teachers often skilfully link different subjects through lesson topics.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported and consequently make good progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Provision is effective and gives good support to those pupils who need it.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for social, moral and spiritual are very good. The provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Excellent. Assessment is very thorough and is used very well to plan work to support pupils' individual learning. All staff know their pupils very well.

The school works well in partnership with parents. Parents feel that they are able to approach the school with any specific problems which they may encounter and that the school deals with them promptly and successfully. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities for pupils to participate in.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher gives the school clear and purposeful leadership, very well supported by the deputy headteacher. This results in very effective teamwork by the staff and a joint commitment to continuing high standards.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. The governing body fulfils its responsibilities very well. It takes an active role in monitoring the school's finances, standards and the curriculum. This gives governors a good knowledge of the school and allows them to support it well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school analyses the results of annual tests carefully to ensure that high standards are maintained. There is very good monitoring of teaching, by the headteacher, senior management and subject co-ordinators. The school knows exactly what to do to improve further.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school's resources are used very well to promote pupils' learning.

The school buildings and grounds are very well maintained by the hard working caretaker and his staff. They are used well to support pupils' learning.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school and make good progress. • Behaviour is good, and their children are becoming more mature. • Teaching is good and the school expects their children to work hard. • Parents feel comfortable about approaching the school and the school works closely with them. • The school is well led and managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A few parents do not feel that their children receive the right amount of homework. • A small minority of parents feel that they are not well informed about how their children are getting on. • Some parents would like more after school activities.

Inspection evidence strongly supports all parents' positive views about the school. The inspection does not support their views about homework, which is similar to that found in other schools for pupils of this age. It finds that there is in fact a good range of activities outside lessons. The weekly newsletter to parents and the good reports on their children's achievements ensures that parents are well informed about their children's progress.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Pupils make good progress and reach high standards, particularly in English and mathematics in the national tests taken at the end of Year 6 and in lessons throughout the school.

1. The school's performance in the 2002 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6 was above average in English and well above average in mathematics. Over one third of pupils achieved at the higher level (Level 5) in English, mathematics and science. This also indicates how well the school is providing for pupils with special educational needs, as these pupils achieved well and that the school caters well for those with English as an additional language. They also provide very well for pupils who are gifted in certain subjects, for example, in stretching and challenging more able pupils through providing differentiated work in mathematics and in some aspects of English work. Over the last three years 2000 – 2002, test results have remained consistently above the national average, keeping pace with the rise in standards nationally.
2. Evidence from the inspection shows that in Year 6 lessons, pupils' standards remain high especially in English and mathematics. Higher attaining pupils are well catered for and are constantly challenged to achieve as well as they possibly can. They, and other pupils, know exactly what they need to do to improve in all aspects of their work and are actively involved in their own target setting within these subjects. The good quality teaching has a positive impact on standards in the end of year tests in English, mathematics and science and standards in these subjects are set to remain high. For example, in a Year 6 lesson on citizenship, when pupils were planning where to site a cycle park for Grove Green, the rate of learning was tremendous as the pupils were constantly challenged in their thinking by putting themselves in the positions and minds of others. Very high standards were achieved as they discussed their opinions and presented their discussions to others.
3. Learning was also particularly good in a mathematics lesson in a Year 4 class where pupils were actively encouraged to refer to their individual mathematical targets and were encouraged to check and self correct their own leaning and answers. Again, the excellent quality of teaching enabled pupils to learn very effectively during the course of the lesson. By the end of the lesson achievement was high and pupils had a very good understanding of how the three times and six times tables relate to each other.

Teaching is good. Teachers always expect the most from their pupils and make work interesting and challenging. This promotes high standards. There is no unsatisfactory teaching.

4. In 100 per cent of lessons teaching is satisfactory or better, in 91 per cent it is good or better and of these 35 per cent is very good with a further four per cent being excellent. Teaching is good throughout the school and this is why standards are high by the time pupils leave at the end of Year 6. Pupils get a very good start in the reception class and the effective teaching they receive as they move through the school has a very positive impact on their progress and attainment. This is true for pupils of all abilities as can clearly be seen from the Year 6 national test results, in

which the majority of pupils reached at least the expected level in English and mathematics with over a third exceeding it.

5. Teaching is good for a number of reasons. Teachers have:

- A very good knowledge and understanding of subjects and this helps them to set challenging and interesting work; for example, all teachers throughout the school are very knowledgeable about the teaching of English and mathematics, and set appropriate homework to support what pupils are learning in class.
- Work set is relevant and challenging for the needs of individual pupils.
- Well-organised activities, such as those seen in the reception class, help pupils to learn most effectively. By having the children in groups rotating around different activity areas the time was used extremely well and the levels of concentration and interest maintained. By the end of one session the children could explain how they had made kites and they tested them out when they went out to play at playtime.
- Imaginative and interesting work are strong features of many lessons, for example, in a PSHE lesson in Year 6 the very good teaching allowed pupils to think independently, and to give opinions from different view points. They were able to develop their ideas to a high standard and were sensitive to the views of others within the local community.
- Teachers prepare some very good resources to stimulate pupils' interest and help them concentrate on their work. For instance, in lessons in reception the resources used to support the children's learning were very well prepared. This showed that the teachers had a very good knowledge of the individual learning abilities for different children by giving them appropriately challenging work.
- At the time of the last inspection assessment was not used to inform the next steps in pupils' learning. This has now been rectified and there are good assessment procedures to follow pupils' progress and to ensure that individuals are catered for fully. The more able are also now fully challenged with a stronger focus on planning, and this is having a positive effect on raising standards. The thorough assessment of pupils' work means that teachers are able to target support where needed, and provide work that is closely matched to pupils' needs.

6. Other, and very important factors in the good teaching is that:

- Teachers manage pupils very well by always expecting the best of them and being sensitive to their needs.
- The good behaviour and enthusiasm of pupils to their learning is a direct result of the good relationships they have with their teachers and the atmosphere of mutual trust and respect seen in many classes. This was illustrated well in an information and communication technology lesson where pupils who were unable to access the computers, worked hard and cooperated sensibly whilst waiting their turn.
- Teaching is carefully monitored by the headteacher and senior staff. This ensures that pupils receive the best possible standards of teaching available and hence that standards remain high.
- Individual learning targets are set in English and mathematics and pupils are well aware of what their targets and learning objectives for each lesson are. Parents are also informed of these targets. This has a positive effect on improving pupils' learning.

The headteacher provides very good leadership, strongly supported by the deputy headteacher, the senior management team and curriculum co-ordinators and the very supportive governing body.

7. The headteacher has clear values and ideals which he shares effectively with his staff and governing body. The positive role model provided by the headteacher in his relationships with pupils encourages them to react well to one another and to value each other's views and opinions. The clearly defined role of the deputy headteacher and individual co-ordinators ensures that each curriculum subject area is well led, ensuring that high standards are maintained across the whole curriculum. Teachers with subject responsibilities fulfil their roles very well by planning for, and monitoring development and their work feeds well into the school improvement plan.
8. A unique aspect of St John's School is how everybody works well together and feels a part of the whole school and that they have an important part to play in it. This was commented on by many of the co-ordinators and others who work at St John's.
9. The headteacher and staff work very well with the governors to ensure that they receive relevant information about the curriculum which enables them to monitor it effectively and focus their spending on improving the quality of education for the pupils. The governing body are very supportive and hard working and have a good knowledge of the strengths of the school.
10. Each governor takes a special interest in one subject and visits regularly which ensures that all have extensive knowledge of the school's work. Governors have spent funds wisely. The slightly large carry forward is there for when the two current Year 6 classes leave, in order to ensure that there is a smooth transition financially at this time, and it will be used towards the re-organisation of the classrooms when there is one class less in the school. Also some of the carry forward is because the school spent and costed the new building works so well they managed to save money on the project and the money saved is intended to be used towards improvements elsewhere in the school.

The school promotes very good attitudes and cares for its pupils very well. Pupils apply themselves to their work with enthusiasm and interest

11. The school cares exceptionally well for its pupils. Their welfare and well-being are shared concerns of governors, teachers, parents and the church. Everyone involved with the school expects the very best of the pupils and this is a key factor in the quality of support all pupils receive.
12. The procedures and policies for promoting health and safety are impressive and of an exceptionally high quality as are the procedures for child protection. Staff demonstrate a high degree of sensitivity to the needs of the individual when dealing with welfare and child protection issues. Very good records are kept, updated and frequently referred to. These act as an effective early warning system for any child who might be at risk for health or other reasons.
13. Parents respond well to the emphasis the school has on promoting good attendance. This results in figures way above those seen in most other schools. Procedures that support pupils' good behaviour and conduct are effective because staff and governors get on well with pupils and parents, offering a listening ear and a way forward. The headteacher sets an excellent model in this respect. He is frequently around the

school talking to parents in the morning and pupils during the day, quietly encouraging good attitudes and a respect for school rules. The effectiveness of these systems is reflected in the climate of caring, considerate and courteous behaviour established in school, supportive of family and community values. Three pupils of different ages sitting together in the dining hall had no problems summing up what was best about their school - *"our teachers; they are all so helpful"* was their unanimous response.

It offers a rich curriculum with a good range of extra-curricular activities, including sport, and music.

14. At the time of the last inspection there were weaknesses in the curriculum. National Curriculum requirements were not met fully for design and technology and in English in Years 1 and 2. These weaknesses have been overcome and standards in English and design and technology have risen as a result. All subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education are now taught in full, as required and French is added to the curriculum in Year 6, ahead of the statutory requirement to teach a modern foreign language in Year 7. Literacy and numeracy appropriately get the lion's share of curriculum time, so that standards remain high in these subjects, in line with national priorities.
15. Whilst all aspects of the information and communication technology curriculum are taught there are not enough resources to allow pupils full access to the curriculum, despite teachers best efforts, with the best will in the world it is not an ideal situation where 29 pupils share one computer.
16. The taught curriculum is substantially enriched by extra-curricular activities including sport, music and drama. Mixed teams of boys and girls play against other schools in football, rugby, cricket, tennis and netball competitions. Many pupils learn to play musical instruments and there are regular musical and dramatic performances for the whole school and parents. There are many visits out of school in connection with various subjects and aspects of the curriculum.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

Improve standards in information and communication technology. There are insufficient resources to enable pupils to effectively learn the required skills.

17. Standards in information and communication, technology, were in line with national expectations at the time of the last inspection. Now, despite the teachers' best efforts, standards in information and communication technology are slightly below average. This is because the school has insufficient resources to enable pupils, including those with special educational needs, to be taught skills effectively and there are too few opportunities to practise and consolidate the skills that they have when learning in subjects across the curriculum.
18. During the inspection the teaching of information and communication technology was observed but in some classes, opportunities to use the computer to support learning were either missed or too little time was allowed for the pupils to develop their work well. In several lessons the computers were not switched on at all.
19. During one good geography lesson in Year 5, despite good teaching by the teacher, when questioned a small but significant group of pupils did not know how to access

the programme to find the information which they needed in order to test their hypothesis. This was not because they had not learnt but simply that 29 pupils sharing one computer as a demonstration was not ideal. Without the 'hands - on' experience, learning was less effective and less secure.

20. Both the co-ordinator and senior management team acknowledge that ideally the pupils would benefit from a computer suite. This would really support pupils' learning and ensure that they have access to the full information and communication technology curriculum.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	23
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	15

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	8	12	2	0	0	0
Percentage	4	35	52	9	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 about four 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)	0	242
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR –Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	39

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	8

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	9
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	9

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.3

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0

National comparative data	5.4
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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
	2002	16	14	30

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	14	13	16
	Girls	14	14	14
	Total	28	27	30
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	93 (83)	90 (93)	100 (93)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	16	16	15
	Girls	14	14	14
	Total	30	30	29
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 (83)	100 (93)	97 (97)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

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
	2002	17	15	32

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	15	16	17
	Girls	13	14	14
	Total	28	30	31
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	88 (94)	94 (94)	97 (100)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	15	15	17
	Girls	14	14	14
	Total	29	29	31
Percentage of pupils	School	91 (91)	91 (88)	97 (84)

at NC level 4 or above	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)
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Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	215	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	10	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	5	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	2	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	6	0	0

The table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only. It gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	28.45:1
Average class size	29.9

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	139

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	0
Total number of education support staff	0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	0
Number of pupils per FTE adult	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001-2002
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	£
Total income	512,930
Total expenditure	501,311
Expenditure per pupil	2,072
Balance brought forward from previous year	27,817
Balance carried forward to next year	39,436

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	242
Number of questionnaires returned	134

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	64	30	4	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	51	42	1	1.5	4.5
Behaviour in the school is good.	51	45	3	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	36	47	11	3	3
The teaching is good.	49	41	4	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	34	45	13	7	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	55	38	2	4	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	64.5	31	2	0	1.5
The school works closely with parents.	41	47	6	4	2
The school is well led and managed.	55	37	2	4	1.5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	53	41	0	1	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	30	37	11	6	16