



St John's CofE (Aided) Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 110001
LEA Reading LEA
Inspection number 278337
Inspection dates 10 October 2005 to 11 October 2005
Reporting inspector Bernice Magson AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Orts Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Reading
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		Berkshire RG1 3JN
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01189015540
Number on roll	299	Fax number	01189015541
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr D Langshaw
Date of previous inspection	13 November 2000	Headteacher	Mrs M Donaldson

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

St John's is a popular and over-subscribed voluntary aided primary and nursery school situated in an area of socio-economic disadvantage close to the centre of Reading. This is a multi-faith, multi-ethnic school, where a third of pupils are of white British origin. Other than English, Urdu, Punjabi and Bengali are the main languages spoken. A small number of pupils are at an early stage of learning English. There are 299 pupils on roll, aged from 3 - 11. Attainment on entry is below average, particularly in communication, language and literacy skills. Twenty per cent of pupils have special educational needs, including statements.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. Pupils of all backgrounds and abilities make very good progress and achieve highly. There is an excellent climate for learning because the curriculum is exciting and motivates the pupils to work hard and do their best. It reflects the social and cultural breadth of the communities served by the school and prepares children very well for life in a multi-ethnic society. Pupils are happy and secure; they are confident that adults take very good care of them. 'We are like a big team of people who work together and look after each other,' observed one pupil. Taken overall the teaching is good. Pupil progress accelerates as they move through the school and is most rapid in Years 3-6 where teaching is often outstanding. Although teaching in the nursery (Foundation Stage) is satisfactory it is not yet as strong as elsewhere in the school. In Years 1 and 2, the brighter pupils could achieve better standards with a greater challenge in their writing tasks. The excellent quality of leadership and management is reflected in the considerable improvement in standards since the last inspection and the thorough approach that has been taken in tackling the issues that were raised. Under the purposeful leadership of the headteacher the school evaluates its performance with rigour but is modest when forming overall judgements. Even so, headteacher, staff and governors demonstrate an excellent capacity to drive forward continuing improvement. The school provides very good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

1. Strengthen the teaching and learning in the nursery year
2. Extend the writing of the more able pupils in Years 1 and 2

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

The achievement of pupils is excellent overall and satisfactory in the nursery. In the reception pupils' progress begins to accelerate and many achieve expected goals by the age of five, although their communication, language and literacy skills remain below average. In Years 1 and 2 pupils make good progress overall and standards are average by Year 2. There is some variation in the progress of different groups over time, but no consistent pattern. For example, in 2004, there was some under-achievement of Pakistani boys. Additional support was provided and these pupils have achieved their predicted targets in 2005. The school has now identified that more able Years 1 and 2 are not always extended fully in their writing and more challenging work is being provided. By Year 6 standards are well above average and the achievement of pupils is excellent. Despite the low starting points of many pupils, the 2004 test results were in the top five per cent of schools nationally. More than half of all pupils attained the higher level 5 in the national tests in English, mathematics and science. Provisional results for 2005 suggest a similar picture with the teachers helping the pupils to make significant improvements to their performance between Years 2 to 6. There is no difference in the achievement of boys and girls. Those pupils

learning English as an additional language meet their predicted targets. Because of very effective focused support, pupils with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented achieve as well as their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Inspectors consider that the school's judgement of good is a conservative one. Pupils enjoy their education greatly, not only in lessons, but also through the many activities that enrich their experience in school. Attendance is good. Pupils settle happily in the Foundation Stage, and achieve well in their personal, social and emotional development. In Years 1 to 6, personal development is excellent and pupils become confident, mature members of a caring, racially harmonious community. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Behaviour is exemplary because pupils respond well to teachers' high expectations and clear behaviour guidelines. They have a strong sense of right and wrong and benefit from working together. Pupils are polite and friendly and are proud of their school. The school council affords opportunities to contribute to school improvement, encouraging initiative and social responsibility. For example, council members choose the school's charities each year. Pupils are aware of the need to adopt healthy life-styles. They know the benefits of good diet and exercise. Many take part in the extensive sporting programme of lunch-time and after-school activities, some of which they organise themselves. The strong emphasis on pupils' acquiring basic skills in literacy and numeracy provides a good grounding for adult life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The school has rightly evaluated teaching as good overall with some excellent elements. Bright and stimulating classrooms contribute successfully to the priority to widen pupils' experiences and they learn to question, reflect and explore the world around them. There is a plentiful supply of suitable resources, which encourages pupils to achieve extra depth in their learning. Pupils work confidently, concentrate well, and persevere with tasks. In Years 3 to 6 consistently good teaching or better develops pupils' basic skills rapidly, particularly literacy and numeracy. However, in Years 1 and 2 there are not always enough opportunities for more able pupils to write freely and at length. There is a strong and successful emphasis on developing speaking and listening and pupils have good communication skills. Teachers plan very well in all lessons, identifying individual needs and ensuring good support is provided. Teachers' marking is exemplary and, as a result, pupils have a very good understanding about how to improve. Very good systems are used to check how well pupils are doing and targets ensure that they know how to improve further. When questioned, pupils explained their mistakes clearly and suggested good systems to help themselves improve. The school's judgement that teaching and learning in the nursery are

satisfactory matches that of the inspection. Some tasks are not matched well enough to pupils' needs, such as for those pupils learning English as an additional language and in outdoor activities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Pupils benefit from an excellent range of curricular experiences that extends well beyond national requirements. The school has received recognition for a range of initiatives including awards for healthy schools, the environment and the arts. This creative approach to the curriculum motivates and encourages pupils to learn effectively. In the Foundation Stage there is a good balance of independent and well-resourced activities as well as effective teacher-led tasks. Much has been done to improve the outdoor classroom. Long-term curricular planning, arising from very good team work, is a strong feature across year groups. The needs of individual pupils are met very well. 'Challenge days' add excitement and opportunities to apply basic skills in practical situations as, for example, in a car project for Year 2. The school offers an exhaustive range of well-attended clubs and activities, such as community languages and Latin, sporting activities, and chess and library activities. Governors manage the art club and older pupils organise a drama group. Children's business plans for clubs support economic awareness. Strong partnerships with parents, the local church community and businesses further enrich the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding, addressing the needs of all pupils effectively. Parents express very positive views about care and welfare arrangements. This is a calm and well ordered community where individual pupils are known and respected. Procedures for child protection and health and safety are robust and well known by all adults. There are effective systems for risk assessment. Very good links with outside agencies ensure that pupils stay safe and healthy. Pupils are closely involved in setting personal targets and they understand how they need to improve. Those pupils with learning difficulties are set challenging goals. Very effective partnerships with parents promote out of school learning. Additional support enriches the education of the gifted and talented pupils, sometimes in conjunction with other schools.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Inspection evidence shows that leadership and management are excellent, although the school judges that they are good. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and management. Skilfully she enables every individual pupil to achieve very well by identifying his or her needs. She ensures that there is a wealth of learning opportunities to motivate and excite pupils. In all the school's activities the headteacher and her

deputy promote a distinctive thread of care, support and encouragement of pupils, teachers, parents and governors. Through the unusual feature of the building with its juxtaposition of the Christian church and school pupils are introduced to a very effective moral and social code. Cultural integration is very strong, because of the very clear commitment to inclusion where adults and pupils from this diverse community treat each other with dignity and respect. Monitoring of the school's performance is well-established and rigorous. The school has worked hard to raise standards by Year 6. The headteacher and leadership team address the needs of each cohort very effectively. There is no complacency in providing appropriate targeted support, for pupils with special educational needs and the gifted and talented. Pupils who learn English as an additional language receive very effective support. The management of resources is outstanding. The school has a very good capacity to improve further. Governors play an active part in strategic planning and development. They have well-defined roles in sustaining standards and monitoring and supporting change. All statutory responsibilities are fulfilled. Financial monitoring is robust and linked to priorities. Imminent building work is carefully costed with very good attention to best value.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	1	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

The inspection team enjoyed visiting your school and meeting so many of you. It was good to hear about all the exciting activities, which you are involved in. We enjoyed listening to your accounts about the 'International Evening' and your parents confirmed that this was a very good event.

Teachers give you lots of exciting things to do in lessons, and the tasks challenge you all very well to achieve your best work. We were pleased to see that you achieve very good standards in English, mathematics and science by Year 6. We are sure that all your teachers are proud of you. We have asked the teachers to give the children in Years 1 and 2 some fresh ideas to help encourage them to write more. Also we have suggested that the pupils in the nursery class have more things to do so that they can work just as hard as other pupils.

We were pleased to see how well you behaved in lessons and around the school. It was lovely to see how well you care for the outdoor areas; the gardens, sports and play areas. In classrooms you share resources very well. The care and support you give to each other is excellent. For example we were very impressed with the way older pupils organise lunch-time activities for the younger pupils, such as in the drama club. All the inspectors join me in wishing you every success in the future.