



Bollington St John's CofE Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 111324
LEA Cheshire
Inspection number 284318
Inspection dates 15 March 2006 to 16 March 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs Sonja Oyen HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary	School address	Grimshaw Lane
School category	Voluntary aided		Bollington
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Macclesfield, Cheshire SK10 5LY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01625 572025
Number on roll	91	Fax number	01625 576603
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Rhona Prescott
Date of previous inspection	26 April 1999	Headteacher	Mr Capener

Age group 4 to 11	Inspection dates 15 March 2006 - 16 March 2006	Inspection number 284318
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an additional inspector.

Description of the school

St John's is a small primary school and many of the children's families have a long association with the school and town of Bollington. Very few children are eligible for free school meals. Nearly all are of white British heritage and none has English as an additional language. Many of the 12 children in the Reception class attended the independent pre-school group which is held daily in a room in the school. The three other classes each have children from two age groups. In general, the children's attainment is slightly higher than expected for their age when they start school at five. In the school, nine children have been identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities and one child has a statement of special educational need.

In September 2004, an inspection judged the school to require special measures. HMI have visited the school each term to judge the progress made in dealing with the key issues. Following the resignation of the headteacher in December 2004, the local authority seconded an experienced headteacher to lead the school from January to September 2005, when the present headteacher took up the substantive post. Two of the four class teachers joined the staff in September 2005 and a third in January 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

St John's is now an effective school which, in the words of governors and parents, 'has turned the corner' and 'changed a lot for the better'. The headteacher has brought a breath of fresh air and successfully forged a strong team spirit and common purpose. Governors, staff, pupils and parents are working together to ensure that St John's is a place 'where talent grows'. The headteacher has set his own stamp, particularly in heightening the school's Christian foundation and extending its links with the local community. Standards are satisfactory and rising because the children now enjoy their learning. The quality of teaching is strengthening; although satisfactory overall, much good teaching in English and mathematics is helping the children to meet their targets. The youngest children get off to a really good start in reading, writing and number. The widespread underachievement evident in 2004 has gone. There is now a clear focus on ensuring that each child does well. Nevertheless, there is scope to raise the bar further particularly for the higher attaining children and to exact the best from all, especially in written work.

The curriculum has widened. It is satisfactory overall with many good elements, including the growing opportunities for children to take part in visits, community projects, and work with specialists. Topics are being used to link subjects and motivate the children, but the school is in the early stages of identifying how this approach will ensure the systematic development of children's subject skills and knowledge. The installation of the computer suite was a key factor in renewing the older children's enthusiasm for school. Incidents of immature behaviour are now rare. There is a good family feel and the children take an active part in making decisions about day-to-day affairs. St John's is gaining in standing in the community. The governing body is now strong in holding the school to account. The headteacher's clear vision and verve engender confidence in the future. He has an accurate view of the school's performance and what needs to be done. Much has been achieved in the last few terms giving a firm foundation for further improvement; the school now gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

To raise standards further across the curriculum, the school should:

- strengthen further the quality of teaching and learning
- ensure that every child is challenged to do his/her best, but most especially the higher ability children
- refine children's skills in writing and in presenting their work to the best they can
- map out clearly how children's subject knowledge and skills are to be developed through the use of topics.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are satisfactory; they are higher than they were in 2004 and rising. The school is well set to meet its targets in the 2006 national tests. This is because much good teaching is boosting the children's achievement especially in English, mathematics and science. The good art work produced under the guidance of specialists shows the potential of what the children can do. The Reception year children have made good progress in all areas but most in reading, writing and number. Some are doing as well as pupils a year older.

The school's results in the 2005 national tests were the best in recent years. All of the Year 2 children attained the level expected for their age and a good many did better than this, especially in reading and mathematics. Similarly, a higher proportion of Year 6 children did well for their age. Compared with previous years, the children made better progress in the junior years. Underachievement is not the problem it was. The children are doing better because the teachers expect more of them and make clear what must be done to improve. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported thoughtfully and achieve satisfactorily. Higher attaining children are starting to work to their potential although they could do even more, especially in writing. Many of the junior children have gaps in their learning, such as number facts. They are slipshod in their work; they make spelling errors and omit punctuation. This detracts from the often good quality of their ideas and flair in using words and phrases.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The children's personal development is good and they develop into mature young people by Year 6. The youngest pupils, in particular, are very confident and know their own minds because the adults encourage them to have their say. All the children clearly enjoy learning; they concentrate well in lessons and most show good levels of independence, although the higher attaining children could be even more self reliant in their learning. Children respond well to the school's ethos of respect and achievement. They show first class commitment to the community of St John's. They beam with pride as they guide visitors around their cheery school. The school council buzzes with good ideas such as the recent anti-bullying initiative. Parents and children agree that rare incidents of bullying are speedily resolved. Children develop a good feel for compassionate citizenship as seen in their demanding fundraising agenda to support a young Brazilian girl. Such activities contribute to the children's awareness of economic well-being. Good personal and social education helps the children to develop values such as care, cooperation, honesty and respect for people different from themselves. The children's regular attendance reflects their enthusiasm for school. A typical comment is, 'We can go on all day about the things that are better now'. The school is orderly and children behave well. They participate in worthwhile local activities such as planting bluebells to enhance a local tourist trail. The children eagerly embrace healthy living messages.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning has improved. It is satisfactory overall with good elements. Changes in staffing since the inspection in 2004 have brought fresh ideas, personal enthusiasm, and expertise which have invigorated the provision. That for the youngest children is consistently good and occasionally outstanding. The teacher has high expectations of the children and helps them to succeed by clearly defining, demonstrating, and talking through each step in a new task. This meant they all learnt how to use a search engine on the computer to find and then print information about Grace Darling. All the teachers plan and prepare well. Much effective use is now being made of practical activities, learning partners, interactive whiteboards, probing questions and praise to motivate, involve and reward the children. Improved teaching in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT) is beginning to reap benefits in a rise in standards. Nevertheless, there are inconsistencies. The teachers too often accept mediocre work from the children; they do not challenge them enough to do better. In the concluding part of lessons, too little focus is placed on identifying what the children need to remember.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum has many good aspects; it has broadened to the benefit of all the children. Support is in place for children with learning needs. The gaps in the ICT curriculum have been plugged and the school has used national initiatives well to develop a programme that, in general, meets every child's needs. However, many changes are new and not yet firmly embedded, particularly the activities to develop the children's investigative skills in science and their problem solving skills in mathematics.

The children have welcomed new opportunities to take part in local events, to work with specialists in physical education and art, as well as with authors and musicians. The older children are learning French. Their visit to the Salt Museum added to their appreciation of life in Victorian times, a topic which was used well to link work across subjects, including writing a play about Dr Barnardo and close observation of decorative tiles by William Morris. The school is well placed to develop such work, having upgraded and increased the range of learning resources. It is at an early stage in ensuring the topics develop the children's knowledge and skills in a systematic way. The curriculum for the youngest children has also improved since 2004 with a stronger focus on learning through first hand experience, play and talk. Increased use of the outdoors is planned for the summer term. Staff and parents are drawing on their expertise to offer an increasing number of extra activities, including gardening and playing musical instruments.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Each child's happiness in, and sense of ownership of, the school is of paramount concern to the headteacher and he has strengthened St John's as a caring family. Conscientious administrators, kitchen, lunchtime and caretaking personnel all complement the good quality of care, guidance and support. Parents value highly the 'family feeling' and the way the older children look after the younger ones. There are secure programmes to support children when they join or leave the school. A good example is the way the pre-school children are being introduced to the main school through joining the Reception year children for story-times. Health and safety procedures are good; the school is a safe and secure environment with effective child protection procedures and productive links with outside support agencies. In lessons, children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from thoughtful support from adults and other children. The children know their targets. The teachers keep track of their progress and beneficial use is now being made of sessions to boost those children who could achieve more.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

In 2004, the leadership and management of the school were judged to be unsatisfactory. This is no longer the case; the quality is now good with some very good aspects. The vision, drive, enthusiasm and care of the headteacher, and of the acting headteacher before him, have turned the school round and given it a new sense of purpose. The pace of improvement has quickened as the staff's confidence has risen. Much of this is due to good collaboration with a resultant sharing of ideas and expertise and support for one another. The Reception class teacher provides valued support for the headteacher and other staff.

The headteacher has an accurate view of the school's current performance. He has rightly identified key priorities, not least the need to consolidate the school's achievements and embed procedures and systems. He is making good use of his teaching of groups and classes to monitor the children's progress and to reinforce his expectations of their conduct.

The work of the governing body has strengthened and is good. The chair has worked closely with all the headteachers and the local authority to track the school's progress and to take reasoned decisions, especially about staffing, finances and the priorities for the next years. Finances are tight but the successful application for grants and additional funding from the diocese and the local authority has allowed the school to sanction necessary repairs, refurbishment and the upgrading of resources. As a result, the school is now bright, welcoming and much more suited to the needs of the children and staff alike. It is also opening its doors wider to parents and the local community. The parents' forum, surgeries and regular newsletters have strengthened the lines of communication. Parents are right behind the school. They comment that their views

have been acted on. Their sterling commitment is reflected in the recent Burns night which raised nearly œ5,000.

The diocese and local authority (LA) have supported and facilitated change. As the pace of progress has accelerated, and staff's management skills have developed, the school has become increasingly competent in identifying how the LA may best help to sustain the impetus. Overall, the school has good capacity to improve further and provides satisfactory 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?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	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?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	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?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	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

You will know that I have been visiting your school each term since March 2005 to see how well you are getting on. This time I brought Mrs Hughes to show her just how much has changed. Thank you for telling us about St John's. Here are some things we like about your school. You'll see that we largely agree with you.

- St John's is like a big, happy family - it is a warm, friendly school.
- You are producing some good work and it was nice to see it on display in classes and around the school. I couldn't help but see the big drawings of Charlotte's bicycle!
- You enjoy school and want to learn especially when your teachers give you interesting things to do. The older children collaborated superbly on the Escher banners and in every lesson learning partners helped each other really well.
- You school councillors are doing a good job in helping Mr Capener to make the school a better place. Your anti-bullying leaflet was very professional.
- Mr Capener knows exactly what the school needs to do next. He and the teachers are working well as a team to help you to do the best you can.

St John's is a much better school than it was early in 2005. Well done everybody! You no longer need me to help so this was my last visit. To make sure that St John's is a place 'where talent grows', you might like to think how you can help Mr Capener, Mrs Prescott, the other governors and all the staff to do the following things.

- Help you to write better stories, poems and reports; also to write neatly, spell correctly and put in full stops, capital letters, ?, ; and - in the right places!
- Be even cleverer in helping each of you to learn. With more push, I know you could really excel. I am sure you can tell them what would help you best.
- Map out exactly what you will learn about and learn to do through topic work so there are new challenges for you in each topic.

Thank you for being so welcoming when I was in your school. It has been a pleasure to visit and see how things have moved on. All the best for the future!