



St John's CofE Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 103415
Local Authority Birmingham
Inspection number 286652
Inspection date 19 October 2006
Reporting inspector Melvyn Hemmings

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Stratford Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Sparkhill
Age range of pupils	3–11		Birmingham B11 4EA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0121 7721469
Number on roll (school)	470	Fax number	0121 7710353
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	John Self
		Headteacher	Sarah Smith
Date of previous school inspection	4 February 2002		

Age group	Inspection date	Inspection number
3–11	19 October 2006	286652

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

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

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a much larger than average primary school that serves a diverse multi-racial and multi-faith community in an area of social and economic disadvantage. The attainment of most pupils on entry to school is well below that expected nationally. The percentage of pupils whose first language is not English is very high and a significant and increasing number start school at an early stage of learning English. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is below the national average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

St John's is an outstanding school that provides its pupils with an excellent standard of education. It is accurately described by the headteacher as being an exciting and vibrant school that has energy and vitality. There is a very strong Christian ethos, which is shown in the way pupils live together in harmony, respecting one another's differences and valuing each other's opinions. Because of this, pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. Pupils are confident, willing to take on responsibility and show initiative. They make a significant contribution to the school and wider community. Pupils organise their own fund raising activities, including the recent Pakistani earthquake appeal showing support for those families in the school who have friends and relations in Pakistan. Such activities develop effectively their sense of community and prepare them very well for later life. The care, guidance and support offered by the school are outstanding. Each pupil is valued as being unique, with all staff firmly committed to ensuring their health and safety. Parents are very appreciative of the way the school cares for their children. As one wrote, 'I am proud to send my child to St John's because I feel the school provides a high standard of education. The school promotes positive attitudes to ethnic and cultural diversity and every individual is equally valued.'

In recent years the standards reached by pupils at the end of Year 6 have consistently been above the national average in English, mathematics and science. This represents outstanding achievement from the time children join the Nursery to the time they leave school. Children in the Nursery and Reception classes have a very good start to their education. They grow in confidence and self-esteem, learning how to work independently of adults and to make choices for themselves. This emphasis on pupils working independently is carried on in Years 1 to 6 when they are involved effectively in assessing for themselves how they might improve their performance. The excellent progress pupils make is a direct result of the outstanding teaching they receive. Activities are very challenging and match effectively pupils' individual abilities so they achieve as well as they can. Because lessons are interesting, pupils respond positively and are very well behaved, eager to learn and greatly enjoy coming to school. There are outstanding relationships at all levels, which make the school a very happy place in which to work and play. The excellent curriculum is extended and enriched very effectively by a variety of activities. For example, visits and visitors make the curriculum engaging and give purpose to learning. However, the school is currently not ensuring that pupils use interesting ways to research information and present their findings.

At the heart of the school's success are outstanding leadership and management. The headteacher is an inspirational leader whose high aspirations and clear vision are understood by all. A strong sense of teamwork has been forged, with everyone being committed to school improvement. The school is not complacent and is relentless in its drive for improvement. There is very strong evaluation of the school's performance and resolute action is taken if areas of weakness are found. For example, the provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has been much improved and is now a strength of the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop more interesting ways for pupils to research information and present their findings.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

High achievement stems from the way all pupils' individual needs are so effectively met. For instance, there is an increasing number of pupils starting in the Nursery class with little or no English. To address the issue, the school has deployed extra staff in this class, including bilingual support. This has been successful in enabling these children to make rapid progress in learning to speak English. This firm foundation is very effectively built upon in the Reception class, so that by the time children enter Year 1 most of them are working within the expected levels. Results of the national tests for 11-year-olds in 2006 indicate pupils are continuing to reach standards that are above average. The school has identified that standards in reading are higher than those in writing and has put a range of strategies in place to lessen the gap. It is too early to see how effective these have been.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

A particular strength of pupils' personal development is the confident manner in which they take on responsibilities. Through this and through their strong development of basic skills pupils are prepared very well for their future life. Pupils who act as peer mediators are proud of their role in helping other pupils to overcome any worries or concerns they might have. Members of the school council spoke enthusiastically about the way they help pupils have their voice heard and how they can effect change through a democratic process. For example, the school uniform was changed to allow girls to wear trousers as a direct result of pupils asking their councillors to discuss the issue with the school. Pupils' enjoyment of coming to school is reflected in their above average attendance rate. They are kind and considerate and respect the views and opinions of others. As one pupil put it, 'What I really like about this school is the way it welcomes children from all faiths'. Pupils demonstrate a very clear understanding of the importance of eating healthily and taking physical exercise as a way of helping them to live a healthy lifestyle.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teachers plan their lessons very carefully so that the activities build on previous work. Because of this, pupils are able to use prior knowledge and understanding to take

their learning forward very effectively. Lessons are lively and conducted at a very good pace so that pupils are very productive. Teachers are however not using a sufficiently wide range of techniques to develop pupils' research and presentation skills. Teachers and support assistants work together in an exceptionally effective way to move pupils' learning on. High quality specialist teachers from outside agencies add an extra dimension to pupils' learning and also help teachers to further their own expertise. This was evident in a music lesson for pupils in Year 6 in which they made excellent progress in their skills of using a xylophone to create a cyclic melody. The pupils' very positive attitudes in this lesson, as in others, make a significant contribution to the progress they make.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is exceptional and very effectively meets the needs and interests of all pupils. The way the curriculum in the Nursery and Reception classes is tailored to develop children's language and literacy skills and their ability to make choices is a clear example of this. It very firmly gives the children the skills and confidence to perform so successfully in Years 1 to 6. There is strong emphasis on the development of pupils' creative skills as well as their academic ones. There are very good links with other organisations that add further interest to the curriculum. For instance, pupils are taught how to keep safe through regular visits from the coastguard, police and fire services. The exceptional range of after school clubs and the opportunity for all pupils in Year 5 to go on a residential visit contribute very effectively to pupils' personal and social development. The many excellent opportunities to use ICT and to learn independently further enrich their skills for the future.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Parents are very appreciative of the care and support given to their children. One comment on a parental questionnaire captures the views of so many parents: 'What I really like about this school is that whenever my child struggles with reading or counting numbers the teachers will give lots of support and he is now catching up. That makes me really happy.' Pupils said, 'We feel safe and secure in this school, we know our teachers will look after us'. Child protection procedures are rigorous and risk assessments are carried out in a very thorough manner. The building and grounds are maintained to extremely high standards. There are excellent procedures for checking the progress that individual pupils make. Information gathered is used very effectively to help them to improve their performance. This makes a very significant contribution to the outstanding achievement that pupils make.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The senior leadership team, comprised of deputy and assistant headteachers and phase leaders, very ably supports the headteacher in moving the school forward. There is a shared vision of how the school should improve and a comprehensive strategic plan as to how this might be achieved. Subject leaders are very effective in identifying areas of weakness that require improvement. For example, pupils' enquiry skills in history and geography have been much improved because of the subject leaders' action plans.

The school's self-evaluation is mainly accurate, showing a very good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. The procedures to monitor teaching and learning that identify teachers' strengths and areas for development are outstanding. The action taken on the information gathered to improve teaching and learning has a very significant impact on the progress that pupils make. With its track record of sustaining high achievement and continually improving provision, the school's leadership demonstrates an excellent capacity for further improvement. The governing body's contribution to the work of the school is excellent. It is very supportive and very effective in holding the school to account.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	-----------------------

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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

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

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you very much for welcoming me into your school. I really enjoyed talking to many of you and finding out about all the things you do. I would like to tell you what I found your school does well and how it could improve further.

Your school is one of the best in the country. It enables you to make excellent progress and achieve standards that are above average by the end of Year 6. All adults in the school are so proud of you all and think you are the best. Your behaviour is outstanding and you show so much care and consideration for others. I found it so uplifting that pupils from such a variety of backgrounds and faiths can work and play so well together. You are given interesting things to do in lessons and in the many after school clubs you can join. The school takes excellent care of you and makes sure you feel safe and secure. You are really good at taking on responsibilities such as being a member of the school council. Your parents are so pleased about the way the school looks after you all.

Mrs Smith and the staff have planned some things to make your lessons even more interesting. For example, you are going to be able to use video cameras and digital photography to help you to research information and then present your findings in a more interesting fashion.

A special word of thanks to the two pupils from Year 6 who showed me around the school when I arrived. I shall not forget your enthusiasm and smiling faces. Both of you are a credit to the wonderful school community to which you belong.

All my best wishes for the future.