



St John's RC Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 105546
Local Authority Manchester
Inspection number 287259
Inspection date 6 November 2006
Reporting inspector Marie Cordey

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Chepstow Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Chorlton-cum-Hardy, Manchester
Age range of pupils	3-11		Lancashire M21 9SN
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0161 8811040
Number on roll (school)	508	Fax number	0161 8617463
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Fr Patrick McMahon
		Headteacher	Mr L Dillon
Date of previous school inspection	24 June 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This large school is close to the city of Manchester. Most children's attainment is typical for their age when they start school. The vast majority of the pupils are of White British heritage and there is a small number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. A broadly average proportion of the pupils are eligible for free school meals. The school holds Activemark Gold and the International Award.

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. Standards in English, mathematics and science are significantly above average and pupils make excellent progress. This is mainly because of the inspirational leadership of the headteacher and the leadership team. The school is not complacent and always forward looking. It succeeds in its aim of, 'surrounding the pupils with opportunity to make progress'. The school is at the heart of its community. Church links are strong and the pupils live the mission statement of the school. Parents overwhelmingly support and value the school. 'Staff lead by example in school, the church and the community.' 'I am proud to say that my children go to St John's.' 'All staff are a tower of strength.' These comments reflect the views of many parents.

Teaching and learning are outstanding. Care for the pupils' personal development and well-being is excellent. Teamwork is exceptionally good. Roles and responsibilities are well defined and conscientiously undertaken to meet the needs of the pupils. The leadership team acknowledge that there is more that can be done in developing staff leadership potential. Consequently, the staff are beginning to take on greater responsibility in the development of their leadership skills in monitoring and evaluating pupils' progress and school performance.

Children in the Foundation Stage make an excellent start to their school life. The broadly typical skills when children join the Nursery improve to above average when children leave Reception. Extremely good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes is consolidated in Key Stage 1 because of high quality planning and transition arrangements. Outstanding progress is continued in Key Stages 1 and 2 because of high quality teaching and detailed lesson planning. Work is matched precisely to the needs of pupils and they thrive on the care and value paid to them. Marking is thorough and informative. Pupils make outstanding progress in their personal development. The school is inclusive and welcoming and, as a result, the pupils are tolerant, kind and thoughtful to each other and all staff. Behaviour is exemplary. The curriculum is broad and promotes pupils' enjoyment in learning extremely well. Provision for out of school clubs is outstanding. Sport, music and Spanish are just some of the wealth of additional activities that are relished by pupils. The school has made good improvement since the previous inspection and gives excellent value for money. The school evaluates itself accurately and has very good capacity to maintain the outstanding quality of education it provides. Governance is strong and governors are very involved in the life of the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Model the excellent practice in monitoring and evaluation to develop the leadership potential of all staff.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Standards are significantly above average, especially in English, and progress is outstanding. Children in the Foundation Stage make excellent progress when compared with their average starting points. Their standards are above those usually seen for children of their age by the time they leave Reception. Standards for pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 have improved to be significantly above average and pupils have exceeded their challenging targets. This reflects a trend of continuing improvement. Results for 2006 indicate higher standards in both key stages. Although pupils' skills in writing are slightly lower than those in reading they have improved significantly in the last year. A much higher proportion of pupils gained Level 5 in all core subjects than in 2005.

Support for pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well deployed and ensures that pupils make the same outstanding progress as their classmates. Excellent curriculum planning for pupils whose first language is Polish leads to considerable gains in their learning and understanding of English.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The school's aim of caring for each pupil as an individual and creating a happy school is reflected in the outstanding attitudes of the pupils. The school provides extremely good spiritual development and the pupils' social, emotional and cultural development is of the highest quality. All pupils thoroughly enjoy their lessons and their behaviour is excellent. Attendance is consistently good. The school's outstanding sports provision and the choir's contribution to Opera North are typical examples of how pupils work very well together. The school's links with parents and the wider community are exceptional. As one parent commented, 'Nothing is too much trouble.' Pupils are given an active voice in the work of the school through the school council. The councillors have been instrumental in providing 'friendship benches' and have helped to improve the school playground facilities. Outstanding contributions to the community include significant charity fund raising and active involvement of pupils and parents in the vibrant church activities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The school's focus on raising standards in writing through the writing project is successful. All lessons are thoroughly planned to build on pupils' previous learning and teachers make it clear at the start of lessons what pupils are expected to learn. Staff at all levels have enthusiastically embraced the opportunities provided to extend their skills and expertise. The youngest children learn happily and enjoy their lessons.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and also make outstanding progress. The recent admission of some Polish pupils has been welcomed and celebrated. Consequently, these pupils have settled in very well to school life and are enjoying learning. The school encourages pupils to work together in groups and develops pupils' independent learning skills from an early age. By age 11, pupils are confident and resourceful. Outstanding displays of pupils' work both celebrate and inform their learning. High quality marking and tracking of progress ensure that pupils know how they are doing in their work. Targets are clear and pupils are aware of what they need to do to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Children in the Nursery and Reception classes enjoy creative play and activities that are firmly based on the recommended areas of learning for children of that age. The curriculum promotes enjoyment and achievement exceptionally well for all pupils. They particularly enjoy learning about history, using information and communication technology and learning to play a musical instrument. The curriculum ensures exceptionally good achievement in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. Because of excellent support, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make the same rate of progress as their classmates. The school is keen to extend its international links. The fact that the teachers are learning to speak Spanish actively encourages the pupils to learn Spanish and other languages. An outstanding range of out of school activities is popular and very much appreciated by the pupils and their parents. Pupils learn how to be physically and emotionally healthy and to avoid potential risks.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding. Even though some lessons take place in demountable classrooms, both displays of pupils' work and lessons are stimulating and appropriate, and staff and pupils are welcoming. All pupils are clear about who they can turn to when they are troubled and the school knows its pupils very well. Many pupils make friendships with younger and vulnerable pupils in the playground. Pupils' work celebrates their achievements at all ages and abilities. The school has procedures in place for child protection and for safeguarding its pupils. Vulnerable pupils and those with additional needs are provided with excellent support.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding and contribute to consistently improving standards and high quality care for pupils' well-being. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher have worked with all the staff at St John's to provide high quality care and education for the pupils. The almost daily presence of the parish priest, who is also the chair of governors, gives significant support to the

school. Parents know what the school stands for and are overwhelmingly appreciative of the work of the school and praise the headteacher's contribution.

The headteacher and leadership team are continually developing the expertise of all members of staff. They have successfully modelled school improvement through a clear and consistent vision, careful planning and clear goals. There is exceptionally good teamwork by the staff. They carry out their responsibilities very well but there is more that can be done to enhance their leadership skills and qualities. Accurate self-evaluation has sharpened the school's focus on raising the pupils' standards further. Initiatives put in place have been successful in raising standards, particularly in writing at the higher levels in Key Stage 2. Tracking of the pupils' progress is very well served by excellent procedures introduced by the deputy headteacher and shared with both staff and pupils. The governing body is challenging and keeps the welfare of the pupils very much at heart.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
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	1
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	2
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 for the very warm welcome you gave me when I came to your school. You were very friendly and obviously delight in being at school. I agree with you and your parents: St John's is an outstanding school. The things I think are best about your school are:

- the high standards you reach in all your subjects, especially in English
- the excellent teaching and progress you make
- the outstanding way the school is run by your headteacher, deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher
- that you are well looked after and behave excellently
- there are lots of activities to help you to learn.

Even though your school is excellent, your headteacher still wants to continue to improve and I think this could help:

- to spread, to all teachers, the excellent way senior teachers work out how good the school is doing so that they can share in being leaders.