

Deepcar St John's Church of England Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107117
Local Authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	287718
Inspection dates	25–26 June 2007
Reporting inspector	John Young HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	231
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs K Bullock
Headteacher	Mr D Rogers
Date of previous school inspection	16 May 2005
School address	St Margaret Avenue Deepcar Sheffield South Yorkshire S36 2TE
Telephone number	0114 2883878
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Introduction

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector carried out the inspection.

Description of the school

Deepcar St John's has a distinctive Christian ethos. The size of the school is broadly similar to most junior schools nationally. There are eight classes, two for each age group. The vast majority of pupils are White British and live locally. Very few pupils originate from black and/or minority ethnic backgrounds, and the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is low. Most pupils are from economically secure backgrounds and the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for a free school meal is well below the national average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also below average. On entry into school pupils' attainment is above national averages overall.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

The school is not providing an effective education for its pupils. In accordance with section 13(3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Many aspects of the school's provision are sound, but significant improvement is required in relation to the achievement and progress of large numbers of pupils.

When inspected in May 2005, the school was judged to have serious weaknesses due to the significant amount of unsatisfactory teaching which was leading to pupils' underachievement and because important aspects of leadership were unsatisfactory.

In December 2005, inspectors visited the school and judged that it was making satisfactory progress in removing the causes of its serious weaknesses. However, they also identified further priorities for improvement including the need to provide more challenges in lessons to meet the needs of the higher attaining pupils and continuing to improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is good.

The school has continued to make satisfactory progress in addressing a number of these serious weaknesses. Pupils' achievement is showing signs of improvement in certain areas and the quality of teaching, curriculum provision and leadership has all improved. In addition, pupils' behaviour is now good and the school has improved the quality of self-evaluation. However, despite these gains pupils' standards and the progress they make is still not good enough overall, when set against their capabilities and starting points. This has been the case for three successive years.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good and are strengths of the school, as is the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils know and choose safe practices and healthy lifestyle options, including regular exercise. They are active in the local and wider community, willingly undertaking charitable tasks and participating in church activities. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and attendance are good overall. Provision for pupils' care, guidance and support are satisfactory. While the arrangements for safeguarding and pastoral support are effective, less well developed at this stage is provision for pupils' academic guidance. The quality of teaching is inconsistent, but broadly satisfactory overall. There are pockets of excellent teaching in some classes which other teachers could learn from. The curriculum is satisfactory with a number of good features, including the extra-curricular opportunities available to pupils and the citizenship programme.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher is providing clear direction and is driving the improvement process. He has received good support from a strengthened senior leadership team and the local authority. Shortcomings in leadership have been recognised and dealt with decisively. The improvement process was initially slow because of previous issues with staffing, but the introduction of suitable assessment, tracking and intervention procedures has added momentum to the school's push to drive up standards. This approach is showing signs of impact, but has not had long enough to fully embed itself. The headteacher's commitment and dedication to the school has been important in rallying the support of staff, who have responded very positively to the challenge of school improvement. This has fuelled improvements in teachers' planning and organisation, behaviour management and curriculum provision, and the emerging improvements in pupils' achievement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the achievements of pupils, particularly in writing in Years 3 and 4.
- Remove inconsistencies in teaching and ensure best classroom practice is shared effectively to increase the proportion of lessons in which teaching and pupils' progress is good or better.
- Ensure monitoring, evaluation and assessment practice is sufficiently systematic and rigorous to promote the necessary improvement in the quality of provision, and increases pupils' awareness of how well they are progressing relative to their targets, and precisely what they have to do to progress further.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

During their time in school pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory, although standards attained are broadly average.

At the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6), pupils' results in the national tests in 2006 were broadly in line with national averages overall, although pupil's performances in English were lower than average. These results, which have fallen in each of the past three years, represent poor achievement for most pupils when compared to what was expected of them on entry to the school. Girls and pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities underperformed when compared with similar pupils elsewhere, including in the key subject of English. The school's own data for all groups in 2007 reveal that while in-year progress has improved for some groups, this is not consistent and some pupils' achievement has regressed. Standards in Year 3 writing are exceptionally low and the majority of pupils are not on track to meet their individual targets.

The school has introduced better arrangements to boost pupils' achievement, including a new assessment strategy. However, this system was introduced less than a year ago and it has not had sufficient time to embed itself, or provide robust evidence of its impact on pupils' achievement and standards.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school that personal development and pupils' spiritual, moral and social development are strengths of the school. Pupils are courteous and when given the opportunity work well in small groups and pairs. The school council provides pupils with numerous opportunities to develop a good understanding of citizenship, including using their initiative to raise money for local and international charities, for example, in supporting projects in Africa. Pupils have strong links with the local community, particularly the church, and with other schools, through the sport partnership, which enables them to access external sporting facilities and specialist coaching. Good personal and social education helps pupils to develop values such as care, honesty and cooperation, but there are few opportunities for pupils to find out about people different from themselves.

Pupils really enjoy coming to school and this shows itself in their good attendance and good behaviour. The recently introduced behaviour policy has had a positive impact upon pupils' attitudes to learning.

Pupils understand well the importance of keeping safe and healthy. They know, for instance, about the importance of having a diet that includes fruit and water and the benefits of regular exercise.

Pupils' are developing the appropriate social skills, such as team working to prepare them well for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall with examples of good practice across school. Year 5 classes have consistently good teaching. Teachers and support staff in all classes work together closely to try to meet the varying needs of the pupils. Improved planning and organisation of lessons is helping to create a better climate for learning. All teachers tell pupils what the objectives of the lesson are but they do not always express this with sufficient precision to enable pupils to check for themselves what they have learned.

When teaching is good, there is a purposeful 'can do' approach to learning. Expectations are high, the pace of learning is brisk, challenges are set and pupils are encouraged to think for themselves. Teachers capture pupils' interest well, respond to individual learning styles and sustain a good level of challenge through well targeted questions. In a vibrant Year 5 lesson, for example, children's imaginations were captured when they were required to recreate scenes from the Highway Man using animation and photography. They responded very positively to this practical approach, which the teacher underpinned with excellent support and guidance, including exemplification, reading the poem and encouraging the pupils to interpret the personalities of the characters. These good features are lacking in lessons when teaching is weaker and pupils sit for long periods because the teacher dominates the discussion. When this happens pupils learn at a slower rate and there is little provision for differing needs of the range of learners present, including the more able and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This inconsistency in teaching quality is hampering pupils' learning.

Better targeted intervention and support, for the pupils who most need it, including the least and most able, is having some success in boosting their achievement. However, the school does not always use this information to plan the next steps of learning or share it in a way that pupils can access it. This leaves them unsure of their relative progress against their targets. Improved reports to parents and consultation evenings are engaging parents to support their child's progress. Marking is inconsistent in quality and does not provide the detail needed so that pupils know how to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory with a clear focus on the basic skills of English and mathematics. It meets all statutory requirements. The school has secured a number of improvements since the last inspection. Pupils have better access to information and communication technology. Staff are using interactive whiteboards well to provide a visual stimulus, as well as giving pupils opportunities to extend their learning. A move towards a cross-curricular approach to teaching is at the early stages of development, although themed weeks and days are beginning to add breadth to the curriculum. There is a good programme of visits, including a residential trip for older pupils. Visitors include the emergency services and members of the local community. Good features of the curriculum include activities enriched by external provision, such as involvement in the school sport partnership as well as work in personal, social, health and citizenship education. The Social, Emotional, Aspects of Learning programme permeates all

areas of school life and contributes effectively to pupils' good behaviour ensuring that pupils work and play well together.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school provides pupils with satisfactory care, guidance and support overall.

Good arrangements exist to care for pupils. Procedures for safeguarding are robust and appropriate risk assessments are undertaken, ensuring a safe environment both in the school and on educational visits. The school promotes messages of anti-bullying and safety well. Pupils say they feel safe and parents echo that view. Pastoral systems are effective and provide a good degree of social and emotional support, which pupils appreciate. The support provided for pupils with specific learning difficulties is good, but this is not yet reflected in improved outcomes for all groups. The school's work in this area is well supported by the links in place with a number of external agencies.

Academic guidance is a weaker feature of provision, reflected in the inconsistent progress of different groups of learners across the school. Pupils are not achieving their targets, which is influencing their overall achievement and standards. The school is beginning to work more closely with parents and other agencies to promote better achievement amongst pupils. Further work is also needed to improve transition arrangements between phases of education to ensure consistency and maximise pupil progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory overall. Previously identified weaknesses in senior leadership have been resolved and middle leaders are capable. The headteacher, together with his deputy headteacher and other school leaders has set a clear agenda for school improvement. The success of which is evidenced by the improvements since the time of the last inspection in teaching and learning, the curriculum and pupils' behaviour. The appointment of the deputy headteacher has given the school a sharper focus towards learning and achievement and the use of data to promote pupil achievement.

Staff believe the headteacher provides them with clear educational direction. They feel informed and consulted about the major developments taking place and feel strongly that the school is improving because of the new arrangements in place.

The school has the capacity to improve: many actions have been taken since the last inspection to address serious weaknesses. The school has a largely realistic view of its strengths and weaknesses and seeks the views of parents and pupils, who are mostly supportive of the school, although some believe the quality of teaching is inconsistent and are concerned by the behaviour of a minority of pupils.

The headteacher has introduced a programme of monitoring the quality of provision, which includes lesson observations, work samples and pupil discussions, but records show that not all staff in the school has been subject to this system. There needs to be greater rigour if the process is to have the desired impact on improving quality. Similarly, the inconsistency in the quality of teaching needs removing, if all pupils are to make progress in line with their capabilities.

The school has a very caring ethos. It is committed to removing barriers to learning and achievement. Pupils' achievement does not reflect the impact of this work yet. Staff training reflects the priorities of the school action plan. Performance management is undertaken and the staff are beginning to be held to account for the effectiveness of their work. However, the arrangements in place to assess, track and intervene to promote better pupil achievement require further embedding.

Governors are both supportive and challenging. They fulfil their responsibilities satisfactorily and have a clear view of how the school is operating. The school works closely with a number of partners, including the local authority, who provide good support through their intensive support programme. At this time, however, the school does not provide satisfactory value for money.

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Annex A

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?	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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?	Yes

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for talking to us and making us so welcome on our recent inspection visit. We saw your lessons, looked at your work and read the results of questionnaires completed by you and your parents/carers. They proved to be very helpful.

Here is a summary of our main findings, which I hope will be of interest to you.

- In a number of areas the school has improved since your last inspection. However, it still needs further help to improve. This is because many of you are underachieving and not making the progress you are capable of. The school's strategies to improve your achievement are having a positive impact, but have not been in place long enough to make up the ground many of you have lost in the standards you are reaching.
- Your behaviour has improved and is now good. Teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Some of it is excellent and in these lessons you find the work interesting and fun. But, these are too rare and too many lessons still do not help you to improve fast enough.
- The curriculum has improved and you have better access to information and communication technology. You enjoy a good range of additional activities, such as sport, dance and music.
- Your personal development and well-being are strengths of the school's work. Your attendance is good and you enjoy coming to school. Most of you feel safe and know whom to turn to in school if you have any concerns.
- The guidance you get to help you improve academically still needs further improvement. Although you are aware of individual lesson objectives, you are less sure about your progress towards your overall targets.

We have asked the school to raise your achievement, improve the overall quality of the teaching and learning you receive and ensure that it regularly checks that all the new procedures in place are working effectively and having the desired impact.