

St John's Mead Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109229
Local Authority	South Gloucestershire
Inspection number	288319
Inspection date	4 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Jacqueline Ikin

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	335
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steve Melling
Headteacher	Lynette Phillips
Date of previous school inspection	26 March 2001
School address	Hounds Road Chipping Sodbury Bristol BS37 6EE
Telephone number	01454 866501
Fax number	01454 866503

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Most pupils, in this larger than average primary school, are from White British backgrounds. A small minority are from families in the fairground business who travel. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is a little below average but a higher proportion of pupils than is usual have a statement of special educational needs. Not all the children in the Nursery enter the Reception classes and not all the children in the Reception classes have attended the Nursery. At the time of the inspection, the school was being run by an acting headteacher and an acting deputy, pending the appointment of a permanent headteacher in September. Both had been in post for two months.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school that prepares pupils well for their future lives. The acting headteacher provides good leadership. She has maintained the school's friendly and welcoming atmosphere and sustained development during a period of change. The majority of parents are appreciative of the school's work. One comment, typical of many was: 'The dedication of the staff shines through and we feel that this school is a safe and happy place to be'.

Provision in the Nursery and Reception classes gives children a good start to their schooling. They really enjoy school and are equipped with all the right skills and attitudes to learning by the time they reach Year 1. Most pupils in Years 1 to 6, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, achieve well. Standards are above average in reading and writing and well above average in mathematics. This is because of good teaching and learning and the additional boost pupils receive from some outstanding teaching in Year 6. Assessment procedures are satisfactory overall. They are good in English and mathematics where they are used consistently well to make sure that work matches pupils' different needs, interests and abilities. Not enough use is made of assessment in other subjects, where work is sometimes the same for all pupils regardless of need or ability. More able pupils then mark time and the lower-attaining pupils struggle to keep up. The curriculum is satisfactory rather than good overall because of these inconsistencies. However, throughout the school, special weeks such as arts week, visits to places of interest and visitors to the school are used well to bring learning to life. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. The good care and guidance and the genuine interest that the school takes in individual pupils are augmented well by the good links that the school has with outside agencies.

The leadership and management of the school are good. Self-evaluation procedures are good overall but procedures to monitor subjects other than mathematics and English and to help governors maintain their knowledge of what happens inside the school are not systematic enough. The strong sense of teamwork in the school and the good improvements that have been made since the last inspection indicate that its capacity for future improvement is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- ensure that pupils of all abilities make consistent progress in subjects other than English and mathematics by improving the use of assessment to plan work which develops learning in depth and which is suitably matched to their different ages and abilities
- develop a formalised programme to support all subject leaders and governors in monitoring and evaluating the school's work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Attainment on entry to the Nursery and Reception classes is broadly average. The children make good progress and by the end of their Reception Year, most reach the goals expected for children of a similar age, and the more able exceed them. By the end of Year 2, standards are above average in reading and mathematics and average in writing. By Year 6, standards are well above average in mathematics and above average in reading and writing. This represents good achievement for most pupils, including the more able and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The good support for pupils from fairground backgrounds, together with the good links that are maintained between the school and the traveller support teacher, helps

these pupils to achieve well when they are in school. Pupils' success in mathematics owes much to the very clear guidance that teachers receive from the subject leader and the outstanding teaching in Year 6. The innovative use of 'number clubs' also plays an important part in instilling the basic skills which pupils need to support more advanced work. The school is successfully raising standards and closing the gap between boys and girls in writing, by using methods and resources which capture the interest of boys. Progress in other subjects is variable across the school because of inconsistencies in planning for pupils' different needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Children in the Nursery and Reception classes grow in confidence and enthusiastically engage with all the activities provided. On a number of occasions, their eyes open wide with amazement at the new things they are discovering, such as when pulling up a potato plant and finding the harvest beneath. Here, as in the rest of the school, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Most pupils behave well, respect the feelings of others and have a well-developed sense of fair play. However, some parents and pupils report that a small amount of bullying has occurred amongst older boys. Pupils say that these incidents have been thoroughly and fairly investigated and that actions taken by the acting headteacher are improving matters. Pupils contribute well to the school and local community, for example through their work on the school council when making decisions about the development of the school grounds. They enjoy school because they say that most teachers 'make learning fun'. Attendance is satisfactory; however, too many parents take their children on holiday in term time. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy and know the importance of exercise and good nutrition. The good progress that pupils make in their basic skills prepares them well for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good planning in the Nursery and Reception classes results in purposeful, well-resourced activities which lead to in-depth learning because they sustain children's interest for extended periods of time. Practitioners are skilled in working alongside the children, picking up their individual ideas and engaging in conversations which extend their understanding. In Years 1 to 6, most teachers have high expectations of their pupils in English and mathematics where lessons are consistently well planned and prepared to meet the range of different abilities. In Year 6 and in mathematics, where there is a high level of subject expertise, teaching is often outstanding. In English, good use is made of a variety of teaching methods to capture the interest of pupils who learn in different ways; for example, the use of drama and video clips to gain the interest of boys and motivate them to write. Where teaching is satisfactory rather than good, it is mostly in subjects other than English and mathematics and often involves the overuse of published worksheets, which are the same for all pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Well-planned learning opportunities promote children's curiosity and independence in all the areas of learning in the Nursery and Reception classes. There is good planning for English and

mathematics in the rest of the school, and provision for more able pupils and pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is generally good in these subjects. In other subjects, more able and lower-attaining pupils sometimes miss out because of insufficient planning for their needs. The curriculum is enriched well by visits, visitors and special events such as 'arts week'. Increasing use is being made of links between subjects. However, opportunities for pupils to apply their good literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects are more limited. Good provision for pupils' personal, social and health education and citizenship makes a significant contribution to their personal growth. Pupils from families that travel are given suitable additional support, both in school and while they are away, to help them keep up.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils feel safe and secure, and know that staff will listen if there are any problems. The majority of parents are justifiably confident that pupils are well looked after at school and appreciate the way that the acting headteacher keeps parents well informed through clear and regular newsletters. Child protection procedures are in line with government guidance and regular health and safety checks are carried out. Well thought out procedures help children to settle quickly into the Nursery and Reception classes and to move on confidently at the end of Year 6. Pupils from fairground families are given good support to settle back into school on return from their travels. The use of assessment to support and guide pupils' academic progress is good in the Nursery and Reception classes. The 'learning diaries' in the Nursery are a particular strength. In Years 1 to 6, assessments and their use to support learning in English and mathematics are good. Pupils know their targets and their progress is carefully tracked. However, assessment procedures in other subjects are not always used as effectively to help pupils know how they are getting on and to guide their next steps in learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the school ensure that most pupils achieve well. The acting headteacher has succeeded in providing a stable and supportive atmosphere and kept the school moving forward through a time of change. She has been well supported in this by the acting deputy headteacher. Self-evaluation procedures are good. The views of pupils, parents, governors and staff are sought and there is good analysis of assessment data. As a result, the school has an accurate view of its strengths and where it needs to concentrate its efforts in order to raise standards. The school's plan for improvement is thorough and identifies the right areas for attention. This has resulted in improvements, for example in pupils' writing skills. The leadership and management of mathematics are excellent and those of English, special educational needs and the Foundation Stage good. However, in other subjects, monitoring procedures are not systematic enough. Governors are very committed to the school and its community. They make suitable use of data to check the school's work but their visits to the school for this purpose are not sufficiently formalised.

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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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

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	3
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
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?	2

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?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

5 July 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St. John's Mead Primary School, Chipping Sodbury, BS37 6EE

Thank you for making me feel so welcome when I visited your school. I really enjoyed talking to you and watching you learn and play. I can see why you are so proud of your school and why you like your headteacher and teachers so much. I decided that St John's Mead School is a good school.

What I liked about your school

- your school is well led and managed and your headteacher is doing a good job in making the school a better place for you to learn; all your teachers and governors support her well in this
- you work hard and your teachers are helping you all to make good progress so that you reach good standards in reading and writing and very good standards in mathematics
- you go on a lot of interesting visits and have special weeks such as 'art week' to help you learn
- most of you act in a confident and grown-up way and do a lot to look after the school and make the school a happy place
- the school takes very good care of you and gives you all the support you need, particularly those of you who find learning difficult.

What I think needs to be improved

- I think that the work that you do in subjects other than English and mathematics is sometimes too easy for you and sometimes too hard, and needs to be better planned to help you make progress
- there needs to be a carefully planned programme to help the teachers in charge of different subjects as well as the governors of your school find out how well the school is doing and how they can help it to get even better.

You can help in all this by continuing to behave sensibly, work hard and make the school a happy place.

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline Ikin Lead Inspector