



St John's CofE Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 110818
Local Authority CAMBRIDGESHIRE
Inspection number 288787
Inspection date 5 February 2007
Reporting inspector Keith Edwards

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Sallowbush Road
School category	Foundation		Huntingdon
Age range of pupils	4-11		Cambridgeshire PE29 7LA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01480 375026
Number on roll (school)	160	Fax number	01480 375180
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Andrew Mayes
		Headteacher	Miss Helen Curtis
Date of previous school inspection	29 October 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector in one day.

Description of the school

This small primary school serves the Oxmoor estate, a large London overspill community in Huntingdon. All of the 160 girls and boys on roll live locally. Most of the pupils are of White British heritage and almost all come from homes where English is the first language. The proportion of pupils entitled to a free school meal is above average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, including those with statements of special educational need, is well above most schools.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St John's CofE Primary School is a good school that has improved significantly since the last inspection and is well set to maintain this momentum. Standards are rising, the quality of teaching is much improved and the school provides a caring environment where the pupils feel safe and secure. The pupils now have a clear voice, through the school council, in the affairs of the school. St John's Primary is held in high regard by the community that it serves and works well with other schools.

Standards in Year 6 are broadly in line with national expectations and the school's data shows that the pupils are well set to meet the challenging targets for their year group. Because they are well supported, those pupils who find learning difficult make good progress. The school is consistent in enabling the higher attaining pupils to reach their potential in reading and writing. However, weak spelling and untidy presentation often mar pupils' work. Although the girls acquire the basic skills of literacy and numeracy more readily in the infant classes, there is little difference in the achievement of boys and girls by the age of eleven.

The curriculum is satisfactory. It supports the pupils' learning in literacy and information and communication technology (ICT) well, but places too little emphasis on developing the pupils' independent thinking skills throughout the school. One consequence of this is the decline in pupils' performance in science tests in recent years. The curriculum does, however, promote healthy lifestyles, and physical education is a growing strength of the school.

St John's makes good provision for the welfare of its pupils. Each member of staff knows all the pupils by name and the adults are very good role models. As a result, relationships and standards of behaviour are good. The school's ethos, based securely on its Christian traditions, strongly supports their personal development and keeps them interested. As one parent commented, 'Both of my children enjoy every day spent at St John's School. It gives me peace of mind knowing that they are happy and improving in every area of their education.' The pupils are very keen to come to school and attendance rates are improving. The school checks the pupils' progress carefully and assessment procedures have been refined to provide an accurate picture of the children's starting points. This priority has not only sharpened the quality of teaching, but also raised the expectations of the pupils' achievements. Older pupils are now involved in the target setting process and are keen to improve.

The school's view of itself is accurate and has resulted in a clear strategy for further improvement. The school's capacity for further improvement is good because the headteacher provides effective leadership and has the confidence and support of her colleagues. The restructuring of the management roles of the staff is designed to further improve the process of evaluating the work of the school. The quality of governorship has improved markedly since the last inspection and is now good. They have a very business like approach to promoting school effectiveness. The school provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the curriculum to provide more opportunities for the pupils to increase their thinking skills.
- Take steps to improve the quality of the pupils' handwriting and the standard of spelling.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards have risen in both the junior and infant classes since the last inspection. Children start school with attainments that are below national expectations, and well below average in their communication skills and their personal development. They make good progress in the Foundation Stage because they feel safe and secure and the quality of teaching is good. They continue to make good progress in the infant classes because the teaching builds on what the pupils already understand and can do. By the end of Year 2, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are broadly in line with the national picture. The school is particularly successful in enabling most of the pupils to reach the nationally expected Level 2 at the age of seven.

Standards in English and mathematics in Year 6 are average and this represents good progress from the pupils' starting points. Standards in reading are above average. The high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities benefit from sensitive support that breaks down their learning into small steps. Throughout the school, the teachers and pupils now have a much clearer idea of what is needed to improve provision. For example, the school recognises that weak spelling and untidy presentation often slow the pupils' progress. The school has clearly identified why standards in science have slipped recently and is taking remedial action. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) have been improved through better resourcing and training for staff.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The pupils' personal development is good. They benefit from a climate in school that enables their confidence and self esteem to grow despite the fact that there should be more opportunities for them to think for themselves. The children are kind and considerate towards each other and they enjoy trusting relationships with the adults in school. They are confident and work very well together. Their behaviour is good. Attendance is satisfactory and pupils thoroughly enjoy their time at school because they feel safe and secure and appreciate the range of opportunities provided.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the children is good with particular strengths in the spiritual and moral aspects. Pupils have a growing awareness of the wider community and of different cultures and are keen participants in the school's drive to encourage healthy lifestyles. A school council has been introduced

and this has already strengthened the voice of the pupils. The school prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching is good and pupils benefit from the staff's broad range of interest and experience. A common denominator in all classes is the warmth of the relationships that promotes good behaviour, encourages the pupils to try hard and sets a good climate for learning. The teachers have high expectations of the pupils' performance and in most lessons the pace is good. Teaching assistants provide valuable support. Interactive whiteboards are used successfully to demonstrate new techniques clearly. In the classes for the infant children and in Years 5 and 6, the work set is closely matched to the range of ability in each class, and this enables the pupils to make good progress. The good match of work to pupils' abilities is not consistent throughout the whole school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory. Two out of the three issues from the last inspection have been dealt with effectively. The provision for music and for the range of activities in the Foundation Stage have improved since then and are now satisfactory. There remains scope for developing the pupils' independence in learning as there are too few opportunities for them to come up with their own solutions to problems. There is a good programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) which, together with elements of other subjects such as science, encourages children to lead healthy lifestyles, and enables them to learn about personal safety.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good care, guidance and support. Arrangements to ensure the pupils' safety and well-being are fully in place. The school recognises that it can do more to develop opportunities for older pupils to learn outdoors, safely and productively. Parents trust the headteacher and the staff to deal sensitively with any issues their children might have. A key figure in this process is the family liaison officer who provides valuable support for those pupils who are experiencing emotional difficulties. This support enables the children to settle into school readily and there is a strong sense of racial harmony.

The good pastoral care provided by the school is matched by the quality of academic guidance that the pupils are given. The school has developed new assessment and target setting procedures that are being used to further support the pupils' progress. This data is used well to plan work for different groups of pupils. There is good support

for those pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. Their individual education plans are sharply focused and the teaching assistants provide valuable support.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the school are good. The recently appointed headteacher, strongly supported by the teaching staff, is already building successfully on the culture of improvement evident since the previous inspection. She has rapidly gained the respect of the whole school community and has ambitious goals for the school. A new management structure for monitoring school effectiveness is being introduced because staff are not yet accountable enough for the provision in all subjects and pupils' standards of work.

Governors are committed to the work of the school and provide conscientious support. Under the guidance of the new chair, the governors' awareness of their responsibility to challenge and hold the school to account for its performance has grown, particularly in terms of monitoring pupils' standards and the school's budget.

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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?	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	3
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	3
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.

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	3
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

6 February 2007

Dear Pupils

St John's Primary School, Sallowbush Road, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, PE29 7LA

I really enjoyed my visit to your school earlier this month because everybody was so helpful and friendly. I was very pleased to be able to see you at work in your classrooms, join your morning assembly and to listen to your singing. I noticed how hard you were trying with your work, not only in reading, writing and mathematics, but also in subjects such as PE. I can understand why you enjoy your school so much as there are so many things that make it very special. Here are some of them:

- You clearly want to do your best to learn in lessons and are prepared to work hard.
- Everybody understands the school rules and you behave well.
- Everybody tries to be friendly, thoughtful and helpful. Well done!
- All of your teachers work very hard to keep you safe and help you to learn.
- You are trying really hard to be fit and healthy.

Miss Curtis is a very special headteacher and she and the staff work very hard to help you to learn. You must remember to thank them. St John's is a good school and there is little that needs improvement. I am suggesting that there are times when the work that you do could make you think more. Also, many of you could be neater in the way that you present your work and more accurate with your spellings.

I would like to wish you all the very best for the future.

Keith Edwards

Lead inspector