



St John's Church School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 110856
Local Authority CITY OF PETERBOROUGH
Inspection number 288797
Inspection dates 14–15 November 2006
Reporting inspector Susan Aldridge

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Riseholme
School category	Voluntary aided		Orton Goldhay, Peterborough Cambridgeshire PE2 5SP
Age range of pupils	4–11	Telephone number	01733237543
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Fax number	01733237175
Number on roll (school)	206	Chair	Mrs Jenny Farnham
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Headteacher	Mrs Colette Firth
Date of previous school inspection	30 April 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is of average size. Roughly three quarters of the pupils are from White British backgrounds. A higher than average percentage comes from minority ethnic groups and about one fifth are at an early stage of learning to speak English as an additional language. A much higher than average proportion of pupils join or leave their classes part way through the school year. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or with statements of special educational needs and the percentage eligible for free school meals are above average. Most pupils start school with levels of knowledge and understanding well below those expected. Since the last inspection there has been a series of acting headteachers. The present headteacher was appointed in September 2005, following promotion from her post as deputy headteacher at the school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school rightly sees its effectiveness as satisfactory with several important strengths. It provides satisfactory value for money. The provision made for children in the Reception class is satisfactory. They make steady progress and their achievement is satisfactorily in relation to their starting points. Nevertheless they do not reach the levels expected for children of this age. Although pupils continue to make sound progress by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 standards remain well below the national average. The exceptionally low standards in English, particularly in writing, are due to very low starting points but some underachievement is a result of weaknesses in teaching in the past. The school has worked hard to improve this and teaching is now satisfactory. Pupils are beginning to make up for lost ground and achievement is now satisfactory.

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The pace of change has accelerated with the appointment of the current headteacher, who provides good leadership. Much has been done to deal with the underlying causes of underachievement, particularly weaknesses in teaching, behaviour and attendance. There is frequent monitoring of lessons, and support for teachers has helped to move their practice on. However, lesson observations focus on too many things and do not always identify the most important areas for improvement. Significant changes have been made to the inside of the school which is now bright and stimulating, with eye-catching displays of pupils' work. This is motivating both staff and pupils to value their work. A strong emphasis on improving pupils' learning skills and their active involvement in their learning means that pupils are partners in securing their academic progress. The school knows what it needs to do to improve standards in the key subjects, as self-evaluation is satisfactory. Assessment information in English, mathematics and science in Years 1 to 6 is used well in order to identify where achievement needs to improve. However, similar information in Reception is not used to find out whether children are doing equally well in all areas of learning. Not all subject leaders are involved in monitoring standards and provision in their subjects, so it is not clear how well pupils are doing in subjects other than English, mathematics and science.

The school is particularly good at encouraging pupils' personal development. The broad curriculum is good and provides a wealth of opportunities for pupils to learn about personal safety and healthy lifestyles. Physical activities, including adventurous ones, are popular and the school has started to experience success in inter-school sporting events, which greatly pleases pupils, parents and staff. Pupils enjoy coming to school; all have favourites, but one simply could not decide. 'I like best.....well... everything!' she declared. Pupils contribute to school life and to the wider community in many ways. They are proud of their school and keen to show visitors how they are progressing up their 'learning ladders' towards their personal goals. They also work well together in groups and teams. Good personal development owes much to the strong commitment to care, support and pupils' welfare; staff work effectively with other agencies to ensure that pupils are well looked after and supported. As a result,

all groups of pupils achieve equally well. Parental satisfaction is high and has improved in recent years. One parent describes the school as 'like another family'. The school reaches out to its community and has a programme of family learning to support parents in helping their children learn. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection and the capacity to improve further is satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in English, particularly writing, across the school.
- Ensure that lesson observations are focused and identify clearly the most important areas for improvement.
- Involve all subject leaders in monitoring standards and provision in their subjects.
- Use assessment information in the Foundation Stage to identify the progress that children make in each area of learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Across the school, achievement is satisfactory and this is linked to satisfactory teaching. There is no significant difference in the rate of progress made by pupils with learning difficulties or those learning English as an additional language. When children enter in Reception, their knowledge and skills are well below average. They are particularly low in communication, language and literacy and personal, social and emotional development. Although they make gains at a satisfactory rate, by Year 1 they do not reach the levels expected for children of this age.

Standards are rising. The results of the Year 2 national tests show some improvement in 2005 which has been maintained in 2006. Nevertheless, standards remain well below average in mathematics and exceptionally low in reading and writing. This reflects pupils' very low starting points and a legacy of weaknesses in teaching in the past.

In 2005, standards in Year 6 were exceptionally low but results of the 2006 national tests show a big improvement. Standards in reading, science and mathematics were in line with the national average although in writing they remained exceptionally low. In 2006, 25% of Year 6 pupils reached the higher level, Level 5 in mathematics, science and reading indicating significant improvement. The school did not meet its challenging targets for 2006 because they were too ambitious but the targets themselves demonstrated a strong commitment to raising standards. Inspection findings indicate that the upward trend in standards is being maintained throughout the school. The current Year 6 pupils are taught consistently well and are catching up fast. They are on course to reach the challenging targets set for them and attain standards which are broadly average.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. The many opportunities for reflection, in assemblies and in lessons, particularly philosophy are used well by pupils. They play harmoniously together, showing a keen understanding of right from wrong and a sense of fair play. Behaviour is good and has improved significantly in recent years. They understand the need to keep safe and act appropriately in school. Pupils learn about and respect cultural differences. As a result of intervention, attendance has improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. The school council provides good opportunities for pupils to play an increasing role in school life: pupils are keen fundraisers. Pupils act as 'young cadets' with the police or sing in the local church carol concert. They understand well the principles of healthy eating, and most make healthy choices at lunchtime. Although pupils leave school with well below average literacy skills, they are most personable and well able to work with others; they are satisfactorily prepared for the next step in their educational career.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory with some good features. Staff work well as a team in class and teaching assistants make a strong contribution to pupils' learning. Relationships between staff and pupils are good, so pupils feel secure and valued. As a result, they are confident learners. Good use of 'learning logs' and 'thinking hats' has led to older pupils reflecting on their learning, and identifying how they can improve their work.

Although staff have agreed what the characteristics of a good lesson are, they are not all equally good at translating this into practice. For instance, some are better than others at planning for the range of abilities in their class. Monitoring of teaching is not always successful in identifying the most important areas that each teacher needs to work on to improve. Nonetheless, teaching has improved and teachers feel well supported in improving their practice. Teachers are beginning to work in pairs to share practice and successfully learn from one another.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good; it is particularly relevant to pupils' diverse needs and effective in supporting pupils' personal development. Across the school, philosophy sessions develop pupils' ability to listen to others and respect their views. A wide range of visits, popular out of school activities and lunchtime clubs widen pupils' horizons, help them develop interests and make school enjoyable. Activities such as tag rugby, netball,

athletics and football, enable pupils to experience success and take plenty of exercise. There are suitable plans, and funding, to extend learning opportunities through the building of a computer suite and a specialist art room. The creative arts are well catered for; there is an art club and choir, and Year 6 pupils work each year with the Royal Shakespeare Company to produce their own Shakespeare play.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. The deputy headteacher makes a significant contribution to this important aspect of the school's work and staff commitment to pastoral care is impressive. Child protection matters are taken seriously and arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements. Pupils support one another well, and 'play pals' help to make playtimes enjoyable for all.

The quality of academic guidance is good. Pupils who have learning difficulties, special educational needs or who speak English as an additional language are identified early and supported well. Progress is checked carefully and intervention, such as support from learning mentors, is appropriate. Marking is helpful and pupils have a clear understanding of their personal targets and what they need to do to improve. However, analysis of progress in the six areas of learning in Reception is not carried out well enough. This limits the school in its ability to move these children on quickly, especially in relation to literacy skills.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher provides good leadership; she is dynamic, and her enthusiasm and clear vision are communicated well to staff and pupils. She is well supported by her deputy, and they complement one another well. Staff morale is high and there is a firm belief that pupils can achieve well. Staff appointments reflect school priorities. For instance a literacy leader has three days each week to work closely with the literacy consultant and with staff to raise standards in writing. The school's capacity to improve is satisfactory. It is limited at present by two factors; weaknesses in monitoring of teaching and the fact that some subject leaders have not fully developed their roles.

Governance is satisfactory although there are three vacancies which are proving difficult to fill. Governors keep the school's work under review, but have a limited role in school evaluation.

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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	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	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

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	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?	2
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?	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	3
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	3
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?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

16 November 2006

Dear Pupils

St John's Church School, Riseholme, Orton Goldhay, Peterborough, PE2 5SP

Thank you all for making us so welcome in your school when we visited you recently to find out how well you are getting on. We really enjoyed our visit, especially when we talked to you about school life.

We found that you are getting on well enough in your lessons. Your behaviour is good and attendance has improved. You all get on well together and the way you are developing as young people is good. We were pleased to hear that you all feel safe in school and to see how much you enjoy keeping fit and healthy, by taking part in lots of sports activities and making some healthy choices at dinner time. You are lucky to have so many visits and clubs to attend, and you told us how much you enjoy these, and your lessons. Your school council is working well. You also help in the local community, when you are 'young cadets' helping the police, for instance. It was clear to us that you are proud of your school. The staff work hard to make your school a happy place and they take very good care of you all. A lot of people work together to make sure you get help if you need it, and we saw that you help each other as well. You also work well in groups and teams. We were particularly impressed with the way you know your personal targets and follow your progress on your learning ladders, because this shows that you know what you need to do to improve.

The staff are going to concentrate on improving your English work, especially your writing so that you can reach higher standards. They are also going to work out what needs to be done to make teaching better in all subjects, and they are going to measure how well children in Reception do in all the different subjects there. You can help these things to happen by putting on your 'reflection hats', thinking about what sort of things help you to learn in lessons and telling your teachers about these.

Best wishes for the future.

Mrs S Aldridge

(Lead Inspector)