



St John the Baptist Roman Catholic Primary School,

Dartmouth

Inspection Report

Better
education
and care

Unique Reference Number 113461
Local Authority Devon
Inspection number 289639
Inspection date 1 March 2007
Reporting inspector Marion Thompson

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Milton Lane
School category	Voluntary aided		Dartmouth
Age range of pupils	4-11		TQ6 9HW
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01803 832495
Number on roll (school)	84	Fax number	01803 834803
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Margaret Bridges
		Headteacher	Elizabeth Hamilton
Date of previous school inspection	4 June 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

St John the Baptist is a very small school, where the vast majority of the pupils are of White British origin. Pupils come from an area where socio-economic circumstances are broadly average, although fewer pupils than usual are entitled to free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is above average and is high in the Years 2 and 3 class. Standards on entry to the school vary from below average to well below average. Pupils are taught in three mixed-age classes. The headteacher and one other teacher have been recently appointed to the school.

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 the Baptist is a good school and provides a good education for its pupils. Parents rightly appreciate the good quality of care, support and guidance the school provides. Comments such as 'I feel my children have become well rounded individuals caring for everyone around them, but also well developed in their learning' are typical of parents' well founded views of the school.

Good leadership and management by the headteacher, ably supported by staff and governors, are the key to recent improvements. Planning and self-evaluation are good. The school compensates for its limitations of size through an excellent range of partnerships, including those with other schools. A particular strength is provision for the large number of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. Well organised support and excellent liaison with external agencies ensure these pupils integrate successfully into the school and make good progress. Lack of a private office space is a barrier to the headteacher in some of her duties, where privacy is essential.

In the Foundation Stage, pupils make rapid progress from below average starting points. Because of good provision, they reach broadly average standards by the end of Year 1. However, opportunities for pupils to choose outdoor play are limited because there is no direct access to the outdoor area. In Years 2 and 3, standards are below average, because a large proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and disabilities. These pupils make good progress. However, pupils of average and above average ability make satisfactory progress, because work planned for them, especially in reading and writing, represents a satisfactory level of challenge. This is beginning to improve as work set presents a higher level of challenge. In Year 6, standards are above average, and pupils achieve well.

Major contributory factors to pupils' good achievement and their enjoyment of learning are good teaching and a good, exciting curriculum that meets the needs of most pupils. In the main, teachers make effective use of assessment information to plan work that is challenging and well matched to the wide range of abilities and ages in their class. Increasingly, they target individuals and groups for extra support. This is raising standards further, especially for the most able pupils in Year 6. Pupils' good personal development, positive attitudes and behaviour and their good attendance also support their learning. They work safely and have a sound understanding of most aspects of healthy living. They make a responsible contribution to the school and wider community. Good academic achievement and social skills and high levels of consideration for others prepare pupils well for secondary school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more challenging work for pupils of average and above average ability in Years 2 and 3, especially in reading and writing.
- Improve accommodation to ensure that pupils in the Foundation Stage have better access to outdoor play and that there is a private office for the headteacher.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards attained by the current Year 6 are above average and pupils achieve well. They get off to a good start in the mixed Reception and Year 1 class. They make good progress from their below average starting points because of good teaching, high expectations and well organised provision. They reach broadly average standards by the end of Year 1. Pupils' personal development and mathematical skills are particularly strong.

In Years 2 and 3, pupils make sound progress. Standards are below average, because a large percentage of pupils in this class have learning difficulties and disabilities. These pupils make good, and occasionally very good, progress, because of well targeted support from teaching assistants and effective help from other agencies, for example speech therapists. Average and above average pupils make satisfactory progress, especially in reading and writing. The pace of progress is improving as more challenging work is set.

In Years 4, 5 and 6, pupils make good, and often very good, progress and exceed their challenging targets. This is because a careful check is kept on their progress, and work is well planned to support and extend their learning. This process is particularly successful with the most able pupils, who are achieving very well as a result.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' good attitudes to learning and their above average attendance support the progress they make and their enjoyment of school. They work safely, taking good care of each other. Pupils with disabilities are treated with respect and are included in activities. For example, pupils use sign language for the class prayer, to include a pupil who has hearing difficulties. Behaviour is good, although occasionally there is some bullying. The school deals swiftly with bullying when it arises, and no racist incidents have been recorded. Pupils have a clear idea about the importance of diet and exercise in keeping themselves healthy, but have more limited understanding about sex education and the effects of drugs. They make a good contribution to the wider community through local events, such as joint musical performances with other schools, as well as raising money for charity. Pupils take seriously responsibilities within school, such as being members of the recently formed school council. Their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good and develops their confidence. Good basic and social skills and a good awareness of the needs of others prepare them well for secondary school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Lessons are well planned, making good use of assessment information to meet the wide range of pupils' needs. This is made more effective by the sensible deployment of skilful teaching assistants to support groups of pupils. In Years 2 and 3, where the range of needs is exceptionally wide, work provides a satisfactory level of challenge to average and above average pupils, especially in English. This is improving as a result of good staff development. Relationships are good, enabling lessons to be conducted at a brisk pace. A number of well planned strategies help the youngest pupils to develop independence. In Year 1, for example, some writers use vocabulary on a word wall to help them spell correctly. Marking provides clear guidance to pupils on how to improve their work and reach their learning goals. From the earliest age, pupils assess their own learning competently.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage and Year 1 is good and promotes pupils' learning, independence and self-esteem. However, there is no access to the outdoor area, so pupils cannot choose to play outside. The curriculum provides a broad and stimulating range of experiences, with particular strengths in developing pupils' creativity. A range of extra activities, often undertaken in conjunction with other schools, extends the provision offered and adds excitement. Only the weakest swimmers in Years 4, 5 and 6 have swimming lessons all year round. Specialist teaching adds interest and variety for older pupils. The school makes curriculum modifications increasingly rapidly to respond to the needs of individuals, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities. A Year 5 pupil commented that extra support in mathematics was helping her to improve her work and increasing her confidence. Such support is less well developed for more able and average pupils in Years 2 and 3.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Good systems are in place to ensure pupils' health, safety and well-being and as a result pupils feel safe in school. Pupils' personal development, with the exception of drugs and sex education, is promoted well. Very effective liaison with external agencies provides high quality support in several areas of school life, especially for the large number of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. Because pupils remain in each class for at least two years and class numbers are small, adults know their pupils well. Pupils' academic progress is monitored closely using a recently introduced tracking system. Carefully focused targets help pupils to improve their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher, staff and governors work well together and have the support of parents. The headteacher places a strong emphasis on staff development. As a result, teaching has improved and is leading to a better match of work to pupils' needs in Years 2 and 3. Pupils' achievement is improving. The school's evaluation of its work is accurate and provides a firm foundation for carefully prioritised planning. Closer monitoring of pupils' progress has resulted in better progress for pupils of all abilities. Leadership of the Foundation Stage is good and pupils now achieve well. Subject leadership is uneven. Each teacher is responsible for several subjects so, sensibly, most emphasis has been on English and mathematics. Governors monitor the work of the school increasingly effectively and provide a good level of support and challenge. Excellent use is made of partnerships, extending what the school offers. Recent improvement on the issues raised in the previous inspection has been good. The school has good capacity to improve further. Lack of office space prevents the headteacher from operating effectively when privacy or concentration is required.

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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?	1
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	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	3
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?	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?	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	3
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

Thank you for making me welcome during my visit to inspect your school. I really enjoyed talking to you and finding out what you thought about your work and your school. Most of you said you enjoyed school, so you will not be surprised to hear that I think it is a good school. Here are some of the most important good things about your school:

- You make good progress, because you concentrate well. Those of you with learning difficulties and disabilities make especially good progress.
- Your teachers and other adults in school make your work interesting and plan your work well.
- You behave well in school and accept responsibilities. You treat others with politeness and respect.
- You enjoy the exciting things the school plans for you to do. You really enjoy the creative work you do in dance, music and art.
- You have a very good understanding of how to keep yourself safe.
- The headteacher, staff and governors run the school well and work well with other partners to improve things for you.
- Your parents are right in thinking that the school is good. They work closely with the staff to help you.

We have asked the school to plan work that is a bit harder for some of you who find work easy in Years 2 and 3, especially in reading and writing. We have also asked it to provide an office for the headteacher, so she can talk privately to you and your parents when she needs to, and to make a door in Class 1, so children can choose to play outside.

We hope that you will continue to make the good progress you are making now and that you will carry on enjoying your learning as you grow up.