

St John's CE (A) Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124309
Local Authority	Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number	292951
Inspection dates	17–18 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Joyce Cox

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	229
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Capewell
Headteacher	Pauline Bloor
Date of previous school inspection	17 November 2003
School address	Wheatley Avenue Trent Vale Stoke-on-Trent ST4 6SB
Telephone number	01782 234989
Fax number	01782 234557

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school was formed in September 2005 by the amalgamation of two primary schools and serves an area with significant social and economic disadvantages. A new headteacher and several new staff were appointed during the period prior to, and after, the amalgamation. The number of pupils with learning difficulties is above average. Ten per cent of the pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds, including a small number who are at an early stage of speaking English. When children start in the Nursery, their abilities are below the levels expected for their age, particularly in their communication and language skills.

The school has achieved a Health Promoting Schools award and is part of the Intensifying Support Programme (ISP), which is a national initiative aimed at raising standards in English and mathematics.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St John's is a satisfactory and improving school. At the time of the amalgamation, there was initially significant underachievement amongst the pupil population in the new school and the poor behaviour of a minority of Year 6 boys was a particular concern. Since then, the school has improved rapidly because of effective action taken by the school's senior leadership team and the good support provided by the local authority. These measures have improved the quality of teaching, behaviour, curriculum and assessment. As a result, pupils' achievement is now satisfactory and improving. Standards are broadly average, with particular strengths in English and mathematics. Pupils' attitudes towards school are positive and their personal development and well-being are good. Pupils are well behaved, polite and considerate to others. They enjoy coming to school and this is demonstrated by their improved attendance which is now above average. They have an excellent understanding of how to live healthy lives.

Teaching is satisfactory overall. There are inconsistencies in the level of challenge in lessons because teachers do not always plan work to match the different needs of pupils, and as a result, learning sometimes slows. However, teaching is stronger in other key aspects. Classes are well managed and relationships are good. Pupils say they find lessons interesting and, as a result, they enjoy their work and are keen to learn. Children in the Foundation Stage make satisfactory progress, although their attainment is below that expected on entry to Year 1. They enjoy a good range of activities and experiences and detailed records are kept. However, these records do not provide staff with a clear enough picture of the progress children make from the time they enter the Nursery until they join Year 1.

Parents and pupils appreciate the outstanding pastoral care. Pupils say they feel safe and that the school is like a 'big family protecting us'. Pupils now have targets to help them improve their work. However, these targets are very new and this, coupled with inconsistencies in teachers' marking, means that not all pupils are completely clear as to how they can improve their work. Consequently, care, guidance and support overall are satisfactory. The curriculum is good and considerably enriched by a very good range of extra-curricular clubs and special events. Although leadership and management are satisfactory, as shown in pupils' satisfactory achievement, they are nevertheless successfully driving improvement. Senior leaders effectively oversee literacy and numeracy and have had a good impact on improved standards and achievement this year. Other subject leaders are enthusiastic but are new to their roles and have not yet had time to be fully effective in raising standards in their subjects. The headteacher's swiftness in establishing good systems that give the school an accurate view of itself, and in building a strong staff team whose members work very well together, has already resulted in considerably improved achievement. Pupils' now satisfactory achievement represents good progress from the position at the time of the amalgamation. Given the extent of this progress and progress in other areas, the school has a good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure teachers' planning matches the needs of different pupils so that work is consistently challenging.
- Give pupils a clear understanding of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
- Improve assessment arrangements in the Foundation Stage so they provide a clear picture of children's progress. A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged

satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory and standards are broadly average at the end of Year 6. The school has successfully tackled the significant underachievement in Years 3 to 6 that was prevalent when it opened and evident in the national test results in 2006. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities also achieve satisfactorily. The most important factors causing the rise in standards and pupils' achievement are the improvement in teaching and especially the huge improvement in behaviour since the school opened. The strategies put in place have transformed the learning environment and most pupils are now ready and eager to learn. From a starting point below national expectations, children in the Foundation Stage make satisfactory progress. This satisfactory progress is sustained throughout the rest of the school. Good progress is increasingly evident in lessons due to improved teaching. This is particularly apparent in Years 2 and 6. The school's good focus on supporting pupils who are at an early stage of speaking English gives these pupils increased confidence and they achieve as well as their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Pupils thrive in the school's strong Christian atmosphere. They are sensitive to the needs of others and respect property and the environment. A clear understanding of right and wrong underpins their good behaviour. Pupils' understanding of living in a multicultural society and of religions other than Christianity is not quite as strong. Pupils enjoy lessons and this is reflected in their improved attendance and behaviour. They have an outstanding knowledge about the need to maintain a healthy lifestyle and this is based on good scientific understanding. They try very hard to keep fit in physical education and swimming lessons, and in the sports clubs they attend. They also endeavour to eat a healthy diet. Pupils' decision making skills are well developed through the school council. They talk proudly of their part in helping to choose new playground equipment. Older pupils relish the responsibility of being good role models for younger ones. Pupils learn the importance of contributing to the wider community through charity collections and participating in recorder performances in the local Victoria Hall. Average standards in the basic skills and opportunities such as handling money as part of charity collections provide sound preparation for the next stage of education and future employment.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Senior leaders have put many strategies in place to improve teaching and learning which are beginning to be effective with good progress being increasingly evident, particularly in Years 2 and 6. Teachers manage pupils well, particularly those with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Relationships are good and talented teaching assistants in all classes support pupils satisfactorily. Whilst much of the teaching has good features, it is satisfactory overall due to

inconsistencies in planning, which means pupils are sometimes given work that is too easy or too hard. As a result, the pace of learning slows.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum supports pupils' personal development well. Science and health education lessons are especially successful in supporting pupils' outstanding understanding of healthy lifestyles. Meaningful links between subjects are starting to stimulate interest and enjoyment for pupils of all abilities. For example, pupils talk excitedly about their plans to visit Cannock Chase as part of a project linking science and the environment. Provision for the creative elements of the curriculum, particularly in music, drama and art, is good. Information and communication technology (ICT) is satisfactory and improving. Revision and booster classes accelerate the progress of pupils who slip behind with their work. Pupils' problem solving skills in mathematics are a relative weakness, although extra work is improving these skills in Year 6. Pupils benefit from a very good range of enrichment and extra-curricular opportunities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pastoral care is excellent and staff provide a very caring environment for pupils. They feel very safe in school and say that the rare incidences of bullying are effectively resolved. Pupils with learning difficulties receive satisfactory support that enables them to make satisfactory progress. Pupils with disabilities receive outstanding specialist support so that they can take a full part in school life. Parents are extremely well supported through home visits and family learning classes. The school makes good use of its links with outside agencies to support pupils' learning. For example, the school's strong links with experts in behaviour management are providing teachers with effective strategies for classroom management. Child protection and health and safety matters are secure. Academic guidance is satisfactory. The school now sets challenging targets for pupils. New procedures to check progress are not yet fully established, although they are beginning to be used effectively to identify pupils whose progress is slow. Pupils are not always clear how to improve their work because the process of setting targets is so new and because of inconsistencies in marking. Assessment in the Foundation Stage classes is not yet fully effective.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Since the opening of the school almost two years ago, the good leadership of the headteacher and the recently appointed assistant headteacher has secured significant school improvement. Good partnerships with the local authority and other agencies have been successful in improving the quality of learning and behaviour and in raising achievement. Many parents write in admiration of the headteacher's 'dedication and determination' to establish the new school, despite many difficult challenges during the amalgamation period. The school has effective systems for checking on how well it is doing. This has enabled a rigorous evaluation of why the school did not perform well in its first year, and good use of this information brought about rapid improvement in behaviour and standards of attainment. The quality of teaching is monitored regularly and performance management is used well to guide professional development. Subject leaders have a secure understanding of their role, thanks to this

development, but their appointments are too recent for them to have had a significant effect on raising standards in their subjects. Foundation Stage leaders do not yet have effective ways to track children's progress in Nursery and Reception classes. Governors visit the school regularly and provide a good level of support and a satisfactory level of challenge.

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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?	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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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	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	1
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?	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	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	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

19 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St. John's CE (A) Primary School, Stoke-on Trent, ST4 6SB.

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to inspect your school. We are pleased that you like your school so much. We thoroughly enjoyed talking with you and your teachers and watching you learn. We think your school is properly run and is giving you a satisfactory education. Adults provide satisfactory teaching for you so that you make sound progress. The staff take excellent care of your personal well-being but could do a little more to help you do even better in your work. Your behaviour is good and most of you attend regularly. You know right from wrong, show consideration for others and show good understanding of what it means to be friendly and helpful to each other. You have an excellent understanding of how to keep yourselves healthy. We were impressed by how older pupils take responsibility for helping others within your school and by the way Year 6 pupils set such a good example to younger children.

The headteacher and staff have been looking closely at how well you are learning to decide what needs to be done next. To help them, we have asked them to do the following things.

- Make sure teachers give you work that is not too easy or too hard.
- Tell you how well you are doing and what you need to do to improve your work.
- Make it easier to see how much Nursery and Reception children have learnt from the time they started school till they join Year 1.

You can play your part by always working hard, behaving well and looking after each other.

We wish you all the very best for the future.

Joyce Cox (Lead Inspector)