



# St John's Catholic Primary School, Trowbridge

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 126429  
**Local Authority** Wiltshire  
**Inspection number** 295444  
**Inspection dates** 28 February –1 March 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Anthony Shield

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Wingfield Road
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Trowbridge
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11		BA14 9EA
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01225 752006
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	305	<b>Fax number</b>	01225 769606
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Liam O'Driscoll
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Kim Parnell
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 February 2006		

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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

St John's Catholic Primary School is larger than most primary schools, and draws its pupils from a wide area in Trowbridge. On entry, most pupils are a little below expected levels in their language and social skills. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is broadly average. While most pupils are of White British origin, around 20% come from other heritages, including an increasing proportion of pupils with English as an additional language. The school has strong connections with St John's Church, and this helps to provide a strong common framework of Christian values. The headteacher joined the school in the term before its last inspection in March 2006, when the school was judged to require significant improvement and given a Notice to Improve.

## **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 Catholic Primary is a satisfactory and improving school. In accordance with Section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school no longer requires significant improvement. Because of decisive and determined leadership by the headteacher, the school is united in its drive to make things better. The school community has responded positively to change and there is evidence of sustained improvement. Its Christian values provide a strongly cohesive framework. The school has come a long way, and has a satisfactory capacity to improve further. Pupils are making satisfactory progress. Although standards at the end of Year 6 remain below average, this is because pupils, and particularly the more able pupils, still have much to catch up given their previous underachievement. Standards in reading are better than those in writing, mathematics and science. In Years 1 and 2, pupils achieve satisfactorily in all areas and attainment is broadly average at the end of Year 2. Children get off to a satisfactory start in the Reception classes. The school's mission statement, which stresses 'the uniqueness and dignity of each person', is reflected in the school's commitment to the pastoral care and welfare of each child. As a result, pupils' personal development is good. Pupils are proud to be part of the St John's community and show care and consideration for each other. They feel safe. Behaviour and attitudes are consistently good and are key factors in their progress. Pupils enjoy their learning and are enthusiastic participants in lessons, although some lack confidence in their ability to solve problems on their own. They take their responsibilities seriously, and the contribution of the school council is valued. The curriculum is satisfactorily planned to take account of pupils' needs. The school's overall procedures for the care and welfare of pupils, including their academic guidance, are satisfactory. Teaching throughout the school is improving and is now satisfactory. Much is good. Characteristic of all lessons are the good relationships which encourage a positive atmosphere for learning, effective planning designed to meet the needs of all pupils, and the sensitive support of teaching assistants. While teachers are using assessment data with increasing confidence to plan appropriate work, verbal feedback and marking are not used consistently well to adapt planning and set targets for the next steps in the pupils' learning. As a result, pupils do not always know how well they are doing or what they need to do to improve. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The headteacher has set a clear way forward and is well supported by her deputy. Monitoring has become increasingly effective in raising expectations and is beginning to ensure greater consistency across the school. As a result, the school has a reasonable view of itself and is both accurate and realistic in its self-evaluation. Leadership at other levels is satisfactory. Parents are very supportive of the school and recognise the improvements that have been made recently. Typical of many comments received were: 'I am very proud to say that my child attends St John's' and 'the atmosphere and enthusiasm within the school has changed because of recent dramatic improvements.'

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve progress through the school, particularly in writing, mathematics and science to enable all pupils, and particularly the more able, to catch up lost ground.
- Make better use of ongoing assessment, including marking, to check how well pupils are doing, set challenging targets and inform them how to improve.
- Give pupils greater confidence in their ability to organise their own learning and solve problems on their own.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils' standards and achievements are improving. On entry, children's attainment is just below average. Provision in the Foundation Stage has improved significantly and most children are meeting expectations by the end of the Reception year, responding enthusiastically to the teaching. Standards by the end of Year 2 are broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics, although the proportion of pupils reaching higher levels is below average. In previous years, assessments gave an inflated view of attainment. This is no longer the case, and assessments at the end of Year 2 reflect an accurate picture. Standards in Year 6 are broadly average in English, and below average in mathematics and science. While pupils do better in English, writing remains a weaker area. Pupils' performance in national tests has fallen in recent years and many pupils underachieved in 2006, particularly the more able. This underachievement has been reversed as a result of decisive action by the headteacher and the improving quality of teaching and learning. Pupils are now achieving satisfactorily, although for some pupils much ground still needs to be made up. Year 6 pupils are on track to achieve the challenging targets set for them. Pupils with learning difficulties and the increasing number of those with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

As teaching has improved, pupils have begun to enjoy learning much more. They take part in all lessons with a keen enthusiasm and want to do well. Pupils themselves remarked that the headteacher 'has made us feel we are the best', and this new-found realisation that they can achieve has done much to improve their attitudes. Pupils behave with a thoughtful consideration for others. They are, for example, quick to spot others who may need help at the buddy stop in the playground. Bullying is rare and is dealt with swiftly. Attendance is above average. Children's personal and social skills are well developed by the carefully considered provision in the Reception class. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, and the quietly contemplative atmosphere in assembly does much to guide their spiritual development. Good social skills are demonstrated in the productive way pupils work and play together. However, some pupils lack confidence in sorting things out themselves when they get stuck. Pupils know they are listened to and the school council is playing an important

part in making their voice heard, even in the appointment of new teachers. Pupils have a satisfactory understanding of how to keep fit and well by exercising regularly and eating healthily. They are satisfactorily prepared for their future economic well-being.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Improvements in teaching have ensured that pupils are making satisfactory progress. Although satisfactory overall, much teaching is good. A purposeful climate for learning is established in all lessons, and learning is characterised by good relationships and positive attitudes. Pupils said that 'teachers make it exciting and you want to learn'. They recognise that they are making more progress because lessons are more interesting and fun. Teaching assistants offer sensitive and effective support, and pupils respond well to effective questioning. Although expectations have been raised, some pupils, particularly the more able, are not stretched enough. Marking and feedback on progress are regular but pupils are not always clear about their targets or what they need to do to achieve them. In addition, some rely too heavily on the teacher to solve problems for them and are not given enough opportunities to develop the confidence to sort things out on their own.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum is now better planned to meet the needs of pupils of all abilities. While there is an appropriate emphasis on literacy and numeracy, other subjects are not ignored and joint planning across teams is encouraging a more consistent approach. However, although links between subjects are developing, they are not fully embedded. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and the increasing number of pupils with English as an additional language are thoughtfully managed. A good programme of enrichment and extra-curricular activities enhances the curriculum. The school has made particularly fruitful links with the local Catholic secondary school to extend its provision and develop particular aspects, such as modern foreign languages with more confidence.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 3**

The school's commitment to caring for the individual child is what makes St John's special. As one parent remarked, 'There has always been a very strong nurturing and pastoral feel to the school'. Procedures for pupils' care and welfare are well considered and parents are confident that their children are safe and well cared for. Academic guidance and support are not so well developed. The school has worked hard to ensure greater accuracy in the assessment of pupils' progress, and this enables intervention to be planned with greater precision. The school has recently introduced systems to

track every pupil's progress. These are beginning to make a difference to the school's ability to respond to potential underachievement but are not well enough understood by all teachers to be fully effective.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Chief amongst the reasons for recent school improvement is the leadership of the headteacher. She has raised aspirations, created a clear way forward and gained the support and trust of governors, staff and parents in sharing and developing her vision. In this she is well supported by her deputy. The contribution made by other leaders, for example subject coordinators, is improving although their capacity to influence the areas for which they are responsible varies considerably. Improvements in teaching and learning, the curriculum and pupils' personal development are now being matched by improvements in pupils' progress. Staff feel valued and have relished the opportunity to contribute. Monitoring by senior leaders is thorough and effective in identifying weaknesses, raising expectations and leading to more consistent practice. As yet, however, the effectiveness of subject coordinators in monitoring and evaluation is inconsistent. Committed and hard-working governors are supportive but not uncritical. Their increasing involvement in monitoring is playing a key part. As a result, the school's procedures for self-evaluation are satisfactory.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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	3

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	3

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	3

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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**

- Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We greatly enjoyed talking to you, and particularly liked the friendly and confident way you spoke to us. The school has made great strides since we last visited and is providing you with a satisfactory education. What we liked most about your school
- You work hard in lessons and enjoy everything about school.
- You are well behaved and are thoughtful and considerate of others.
- Many of you take your responsibilities seriously as house captains or on the school council.
- Your teachers take good care of you.
- Your headteacher and staff are working hard to make your school even better. What we have asked your school to do now
- Make sure that you do even better in writing, mathematics and science, particularly those of you capable of achieving the highest standards.
- Make sure the teachers check your progress carefully and let you know how well you are doing and how you might improve.
- Give you opportunities to organise and plan your own learning and sort things out for yourselves when you get stuck. Thank you once again for your help during the inspection. Good luck in the future!