

St John CofE Primary School, Kearsley

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105241
Local Authority	Bolton
Inspection number	308807
Inspection dates	17–18 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Jane Austin HMI

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	173
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Brian Stevens
Headteacher	Miss Sally Magill
Date of previous school inspection	25 April 2005
School address	Church Road Kearsley Bolton Lancashire BL4 8AP
Telephone number	01204 333101
Fax number	01204 333103

Age group	5-11
Inspection dates	17–18 June 2008
Inspection number	308807

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

St John's is a smaller than average sized primary school situated in Kearsley, to the south of Bolton. It serves a community where social and economic circumstances are less favourable than average, although the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is average. Almost all pupils are White British and speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average but an above average number have statements of special educational needs. The school has gained the Active Mark and Healthy Schools awards this year. The school has suffered significant disruption since the last inspection. The headteacher was appointed in September 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve.

Significant improvement is required in relation to pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching and learning. As a consequence, the school does not give satisfactory value for money.

Overall, pupils do not achieve as well as they should so they do not reach the standards of which they are capable. From starting points lower than those usual for their age, pupils make satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 to reach standards at the end of Year 2 that, while broadly average in reading and mathematics, are persistently below average in writing. By the end of Year 6 standards are below average overall because progress is too slow in Key Stage 2. This is a consequence of teaching and learning that is inadequate and much too variable in quality at Key Stage 2. Teaching is not consistently targeted with sufficient accuracy on each pupil's next steps in learning to result in satisfactory progress. A further consequence is that many pupils, while having satisfactory attitudes to learning, are not developing into keen, active learners because teaching does not capture their interest and enthusiasm. There are some good lessons but not nearly enough for pupils to regain ground once they have fallen behind.

The school's capacity to deal with these weaknesses is satisfactory. There is clear evidence of the positive impact of some actions already taken. Pupils' personal development, including their behaviour, is satisfactory. The new behaviour policy is effective in prompting pupils to consider their choices and the consequences of these. The uncaring behaviour noted at the time of the last inspection is no longer an issue. Pupils are well cared for: they say they feel safe in school and are confident that adults will help them with any troubles. The importance of good attendance has been highlighted this year for both pupils and parents. This has had a positive impact, restoring attendance to average following a dip. The curriculum is satisfactory: it is more effective where planning and groups are tailored well to pupils' needs. Pupils are enthusiastic about the good range of extra-curricular activities they have to choose from. The good uptake of sporting activities helps pupils adopt healthy lifestyles. Academic guidance is satisfactory. As a result of a new assessment system and marking policy, pupils are becoming increasingly aware of how well they are doing in their work and what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management is satisfactory overall. The headteacher is leading improvement energetically. She rapidly gained an accurate view of the school's position and has worked relentlessly to bring about necessary developments. She has introduced a series of well-considered measures such as setting appropriately challenging targets for all pupils, assessing and tracking their progress towards these. Staff are being held to account for their performance. Leadership is less well developed at other levels but leaders are keen to fulfil their roles. Considerable support and training by the local authority is assisting them in this. The benefits of consistent systems for subject management are emerging. Governance is satisfactory: the governing body is increasingly well placed to fulfil its role effectively.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The quality of provision in the Foundation Stage (Reception) is satisfactory and children make satisfactory progress. On entry to Reception children's skills are below those expected for their age. The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are satisfactory. Staff are working closely with the local authority to develop the planning of the curriculum and systems to ensure children's progress is measured accurately. The school does not hold reliable data on children's achievements for previous years. Children are currently working within the goals expected for their age. Teaching, learning and the curriculum are satisfactory. Staff are caring and good at managing children's behaviour. Teacher-led activities usually have a clear focus and adults keep children engaged and interested in their learning. This is particularly the case for aspects of communication and language where children are taught in groups and learning is matched well to their needs. Where children work independently, the activities do not always have a clear enough learning intention. Children are not always purposefully engaged and helped to achieve an appropriate objective so learning slows. The school has made big improvements to the quality of the internal environment. The outdoor area is not immediately adjacent to the classroom and is not fully effective in supporting children's development in all areas of their learning. The school has plans to address this deficiency. The staff work hard to involve parents in their children's learning. Parents appreciate the effective induction arrangements that help their children settle quickly and happily into the Reception class.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement in Key Stage 2.
- Raise standards in writing at Key Stage 1.
- Improve teaching across the school so that it is sufficiently challenging and engaging to secure consistently good or better learning.
- Improve the facilities for learning outdoors in the Foundation Stage.
- Develop the contribution of leaders at all levels to raising standards and improving achievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Overall achievement is inadequate. When pupils join the school in Reception their knowledge and skills are below those expected for their age. Pupils make satisfactory progress in the Reception class and by the time they start Year 1 they are approaching the levels expected for their age in a number of areas of their learning. The weakest aspect of their development is communication, language and literacy. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall in Key Stage 1. Results of the 2007 Key Stage 1 national assessments show that by the end of Year 2 standards are average overall and in reading and mathematics. They are below average in writing with too few pupils reaching the higher levels. The provisional results for 2008 show a similar picture. The school has struggled to raise standards in writing at Key Stage 1: these were an issue at the time of the previous inspection.

Standards at Key Stage 2 fell in 2007 and pupils did not make the progress of which they were capable. Results of the national tests were below average overall. They were average in mathematics, below average in English and well below average in science. While the proportion of pupils reaching the level expected for their age in the three core subjects was broadly average,

too few reached the higher Level 5. Pupils' achievement is inadequate in Key Stage 2 because the quality of learning is not consistently good enough. The school's tracking data show that progress is very uneven across the year groups and subjects. Where teaching is better matched to pupils' needs, progress increases but there is insufficient good teaching to sustain satisfactory progress and compensate for deficits in pupils' learning.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress because work meets their needs appropriately and they are well supported by effectively deployed teaching assistants.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. The school places an increasing emphasis on raising pupils' awareness of other cultures. Links with other schools, for instance in Ethiopia, are helping pupils understand something of the lives and needs of others. Links with the parish church help promote pupils' spiritual development. Behaviour and attitudes to learning are satisfactory. Pupils know how to behave but a significant minority lack self-discipline both in class and around school. Occasionally not enough care is taken when moving around the school, particularly on the stairs. In lessons not all pupils are keen to take a full, active part so sit back and let others do the work or answer all the teachers' questions. Attendance is satisfactory and in line with the national average. Pupils say they are enjoying school more. They really appreciate the wider range of enrichment opportunities offered to them and are keen to take full advantage of these. They clearly enjoy the quality sporting and physical activities now on offer. Their adoption of healthy lifestyles is well developed. When given opportunities, pupils take on positions of responsibility well. School councillors are proud of the part they played in gaining the healthy school award and in planning playground improvements. Pupils generally get on well with each other; there are examples of good collaboration through paired and group work. At times pupils show more confidence in making a contribution in class when working with others rather than independently. Pupils develop satisfactory basic skills which support their future education and later lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Overall, teaching and learning are inadequate. They are satisfactory in Reception and Key Stage 1 but too variable in quality at Key Stage 2 for pupils to make satisfactory progress. While there is some good practice across the school, there is not enough at Key Stage 2 to accelerate pupils' learning sufficiently to make up for underachievement. In better lessons pupils make more progress because a good variety of appropriate activities engages their interest and resources support learning effectively. The pace is brisk and time is used well. Questioning is carefully directed to develop pupils' understanding. Satisfactory and unsatisfactory lessons have similar weaknesses although not to the same degree. Pupils' interest is not captured at the outset; the purpose of activities is not clear to pupils so their application is half-hearted; resources are not well chosen and both pace and delivery are pedestrian. Not all pupils make the progress of which they are capable because work is not closely enough matched to the next steps needed in their learning. The recently introduced tracking system means that teachers now have a

much clearer and more detailed picture of what pupils have learned. However, this information is not being used consistently or well enough to plan lessons that meet the needs of all pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets statutory requirements but it is not exciting. The school is not yet making close enough links between subjects to ensure all learning is as relevant and engaging as it could be for pupils. There are sound plans in place to introduce more integrated learning into the curriculum next year. Some recent developments show a more flexible approach to improving learning. For instance, groupings for delivering phonics across the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 are resulting in a better match between provision and pupils' needs. A good range of visitors and visits, including a residential trip, adds to pupils' knowledge, skills, and enjoyment. In response to requests from both parents and pupils, the school has extended its extra-curricular provision. Pupils now have a good choice of activities, including a variety of sports that help them to keep fit and healthy. In addition, all pupils in Years 3 to 6 have swimming lessons each year. Although the school's approach to circle time and personal, social and health education is not fully coherent, this provision does help pupils develop their confidence and self-esteem as well as their understanding of how to stay safe. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is satisfactory.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Procedures for safeguarding pupils and measures to promote their health and safety are in place and meet current requirements. There are satisfactory transition arrangements between key stages. The headteacher implemented a new policy to improve pupils' behaviour; this has been effective in ensuring a greater consistency in managing pupils' behaviour in class. Pupils agree this is helping to improve behaviour. They feel bullying is not an issue but are quick to point out that if incidents do occur there is always someone to turn to sort out their concerns. Pupils speak confidently about feeling safe in school and being well cared for. Parents support this view and appreciate the help given to them and their children when it is needed. A more robust approach to monitoring attendance is raising awareness among pupils and parents of the importance of coming to school regularly. It is helping to reduce the level of unauthorised absence as well as improve the attendance of persistent absentees.

Academic guidance is satisfactory: suitably challenging targets are set. The school is beginning to take some helpful steps to improve pupils' attitudes to learning and encourage them to take responsibility for their own work. An appropriate new marking policy has been adopted across the school and as a result pupils are becoming more aware of how well they are doing in their work. They are developing a dialogue with teachers about their learning. This is supported effectively by the introduction of both self-assessment and peer assessments, as well as opportunities for pupils to show teachers quickly whether they have understood a particular learning point.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The headteacher is providing a clear sense of direction for the school and has rapidly gained the commitment of staff and governors to this. Her determined leadership is instrumental in the school's satisfactory capacity to improve. Based on a realistic evaluation of the school's position, she has drawn up sensible plans to remedy the school's weaknesses. A pivotal element has been the establishment of a whole school system for setting suitably challenging targets for every pupil, assessing and tracking their progress towards meeting these. Appropriate training for staff has been provided to secure this development. However, although staff are now held accountable for pupils' progress, this system has not been in place long enough to have the positive impact required on the quality of teaching and learning.

The headteacher has injected enthusiasm and rigour into the school's work and leaders at other levels are rising to this challenge. Their roles and responsibilities have been clarified and the skills required to discharge these are developing with considerable support from the local authority. A systematic approach to subject leadership is beginning to secure some consistency and better equip leaders at all levels to contribute to the school's self-evaluation. However, these developments are too recent to have made a measurable impact on standards and the quality of provision.

Governance is satisfactory, an improvement on the position at the time of the last inspection. Governors are considerably better informed than was previously the case and prepared to challenge the school. They understand their responsibilities, are honest in assessing their capacity to discharge these, and determined to do their best for the school.

A number of appropriate steps have been taken to involve parents and carers more fully in the life of the school. They have been consulted and actions taken in response to their views. Communication is more frequent and parents now receive regular outlines of what their children are learning. Parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire were uniformly positive about the work of the school and praised recent improvements.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4
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?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
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?	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Inspection of St John CofE Primary School, Kearsley, Bolton, BL4 8AP

Thank you very much for welcoming us to your school when we visited recently. We would particularly like to thank those of you who gave up some of your lunchtime to tell us about your school. You helped us find out what it does well and what could be improved.

We were impressed by the following aspects of St John's:

- the way the staff take care of you
- the good range of clubs and activities you can choose from after school
- your keen participation in sporting activities
- the good contributions of the school council to making the school better
- the help those of you who find learning difficult get in class
- your links with children in Ethiopia.

However, there are some important aspects of your school that need to get better so we have given your school a notice to improve. We think you should reach higher standards and do better in all your tests at the end of Year 6. We also think your writing could be better by the end of Year 2. We have asked your teachers to make sure the work they plan helps each of you learn as much as possible in every lesson. Children in Reception do not have enough opportunities to learn and play outside. We have asked your headteacher to make sure that plans to create an outdoor area for the Reception class go ahead.

Inspectors will visit the school again next year to see how you are getting on. We hope that you will help to make your school an even better place by continuing to try your best in all of your work.