

Mexborough St John The Baptist CofE Primary School

Inspection report

| | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 106764 |
| Local Authority | Doncaster |
| Inspection number | 309226 |
| Inspection dates | 20–21 May 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | Katrina Gueli 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 | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 206 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr J Riley |
| Headteacher | Mr John Hunter |
| Date of previous school inspection | 24 May 2004 |
| School address | Sedgefield Way Mexborough South Yorkshire S64 0BE |
| Telephone number | 01709 582619 |
| Fax number | 01709 584957 |

| | |
|--------------------------|----------------|
| Age group | 4–11 |
| Inspection dates | 20–21 May 2008 |
| Inspection number | 309226 |

© 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

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

Description of the school

The school is an average sized Church of England (voluntary aided) primary school situated in a village between Doncaster and Sheffield. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average but pupils are drawn from districts which include areas of considerable disadvantage. There are very few pupils from minority ethnic groups and none of these pupils is at an early stage of English language acquisition. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average overall but varies between classes. The school has successfully gained a number of quality marks including Investors in People, Healthy School and Basic Skills awards. The school has been designated as a silver Eco-school for the work it has done to promote ecological awareness and has attained Activemark for the quality of sports provision.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Mexborough St John the Baptist provides a satisfactory standard of education. The strengths of the school are the good quality pastoral care that it provides for pupils and the very wide range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities on offer which make a good contribution to both pupils' enjoyment and their personal development. There have been many changes in staffing since the time of the last inspection as a result of retirements and promotions, but all staff share a clear understanding of the priorities for the school and are strongly committed to improving outcomes for pupils. This is recognised by the pupils and most of their parents.

Pupils typically enter Key Stage 1 having reached standards that are expected for children of their age. Over the last three years pupils' progress has been inconsistent and many have underachieved particularly in mathematics. The school has worked hard to ensure progress is tracked more rigorously, that the teaching quality is improved and that the additional support provided to underachieving pupils is effective. As a result standards are now broadly average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory in both key stages.

Teaching is satisfactory overall with some good teaching, particularly towards the end of each key stage. A focus on improving the teaching of writing, for example, has ensured pupils in all years are now making satisfactory progress in developing their writing. The curriculum is also satisfactory. Recent adjustments such as the introduction of ability grouping for Year 5 and 6 mathematics lessons are helping to meet the needs of different learners more effectively. Pupils' work is marked regularly but marking does not always show clearly what they need to do to improve. Pupils learn in a calm environment and the good pastoral care ensures they feel safe and happy in school. They are well supervised at all times and the school is making further improvements to enhance site security.

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The headteacher's vision that pupils should enjoy their learning and wider school life has driven many positive developments in the school. These developments have made a strong contribution to pupils' good personal development and well-being. In recent years there has been significant improvement in the rigour and accuracy with which pupils' progress is tracked and strategies to raise standards are proving more effective. Targets set are more challenging but as yet they are not being used consistently to ensure all pupils make the progress that they should. Appropriate improvement plans are in place to address the areas for development that the school has identified. However, actions are not always linked directly to securing measurable improvements in outcomes for pupils and this makes it difficult to evaluate impact.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

When children start school their skill levels are as expected for their age. They settle quickly and enjoy their time in Reception class because of the good care and support they receive and the good relationships established with the attached Nursery on the school site. Children develop positive attitudes and make satisfactory progress overall in all areas of learning. Staff in the Reception class are enthusiastic and are working hard to improve the quality of the learning activities. This is ensuring children have the opportunity to explore things for themselves, as well as working closely with a member of staff. Children often make good progress in the teacher-led focussed groups. For example, they concentrated for extended

periods of time and enjoyed tasting real mango and avocado, as they wrote about their favourite part in a story. However, outdoor learning activities do not support children's progress as effectively because they do not have the same clear learning focus.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards by increasing the proportion of good teaching and by using challenging targets more effectively.
- Ensure pupils in Reception have access to a wider range of outdoor learning activities to improve their skills in all areas of learning.
- Improve assessment and marking procedures so that pupils are clear about what they need to do to improve their work.
- Sharpen the focus of improvement planning and evaluation so that leaders are able to demonstrate the impact of their actions on improving outcomes for pupils.

A small proportion of the 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

Standards in 2007 were broadly average at both key stages. The proportion of Key Stage 1 pupils, however, who reached Level 3, was significantly below average in reading and mathematics. This related specifically to the cohort rather than a decline in standards overall. Standards at Key Stage 2 have fluctuated over the last three years with better results seen in English than in the other two core subjects. The number of pupils gaining Level 5 in mathematics and science in 2007 was below average and achievement in these two subjects was inadequate. However, current data from the school's assessment of pupils' progress indicate that standards have improved and are broadly average at both key stages and pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall. This was reflected in the lessons seen during the inspection where pupils made at least satisfactory and sometimes good progress. Progress is however still variable across the school with more rapid progress made during Years 5 and 6. Effective additional support helps those at risk of underachievement or who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities to make similar progress to their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

School strategies to encourage positive attitudes to learning and foster good behaviour work well. Pupils are keen to receive a 'Merit Award' or 'Smile of the Week' certificate and many talk proudly about their work. Good relationships exist throughout school and the good personal, social and health education provided helps pupils to feel confident discussing issues relevant to their own lives and deal with their feelings. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good with the Christian ethos of the school making a strong contribution to these outcomes. Pupils talk confidently about how to stay fit and healthy and enjoy taking part in sporting activities and competitions, ranging from athletics to cheerleading. Attendance has improved to be broadly average although a small minority of pupils still have levels of absence that are too high.

Pupils take on many responsibilities within the school including roles as Energy Officers, playtime buddies, play leaders and school council members. Involvement in these activities helps pupils develop their life skills such as working in a team, looking after others and caring for the environment. Pupils learn important lessons for their future economic well-being through the 'financial management' based rewards system and on-line shop, and by being 'enterprising' to raise money for good causes.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching quality ranges from satisfactory to good and there is an increasing emphasis on incorporating fun and creative activities to stimulate pupils' interest and promote better progress. Good teaching features clear planning and work that is interesting and well matched to the needs of different learners, reflecting high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Pupils know what they are going to learn because success criteria are shared and understood. In these good lessons pupils are well motivated by having the chance to explore their ideas through speaking and listening activities and learning independently and, as a result, they make good progress. The introduction of 'Learning Logs' for older pupils has been effective in supporting their learning further at home. They are keen to complete their logs as they enjoy choosing how to present their work, explaining, 'We can make our own ideas up.'

A higher proportion of teaching is satisfactory rather than good. Often pupils are passive rather than actively involved in learning tasks and time is not always used effectively. Work is sometimes not sufficiently challenging and many learners feel that the work they are given could be harder. There are only infrequent opportunities for pupils to assess their work themselves and marking, although often praising work, does not always show pupils clearly how to improve. Support staff make a satisfactory contribution to improving pupils' progress in most lessons, but do not always promote the development of independent learning skills as effectively as they might.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is broad and balanced and provides a good range of interesting additional activities. These include themed weeks for subjects such as the Arts, English and mathematics. Events involving other local schools add interest and enjoyment to pupils' learning and promote their personal development well. Links between subjects to enhance learning are beginning to emerge. For example, older pupils designed posters to encourage people to put up blackout curtains and wrote a diary extract from the viewpoint of an evacuee to support their learning during a topic on the Second World War. Similar practice is, however, not widespread or systematically planned across the school, so there are limited opportunities to improve key skills across a range of curriculum areas. Pupils have increased opportunities to use information and communication technology to develop their computer skills and enhance their learning in other subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

All staff have a high degree of concern for the welfare of the pupils. Pastoral support is good, especially the monitoring and help given to the most vulnerable pupils. Pupils feel happy and

secure, confident they would find someone to help if they had a problem. As a group of older pupils agreed, 'If you need something, adults at school try to fix it for you.' Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are in place. Links with parents are good and the school website communicates useful information well, in addition to showcasing the many exciting activities that have happened in school.

Academic guidance is satisfactory and helps pupils make satisfactory progress overall. Systems for checking how well pupils are making progress have been improved and the school has a clearer picture of how well individuals are progressing. This information is used effectively to identify pupils who are not doing as well as expected or those who may have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils work towards targets in English and mathematics and these are reviewed three times a year. These subject targets, however, are not always sharply focussed and are not used consistently to show pupils how to improve their work further.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leaders and managers are more effectively directing activity to improve provision and pupils' achievement. Most recommendations from the local authority review, undertaken at the school's request in 2007, have been quickly implemented and the impact on pupils' outcomes can already be seen. This recent improvement and the systems for self-evaluation that are in place provide the school with a satisfactory capacity to improve further. Targets are being set with an increasing degree of challenge but there is inconsistency in their use to raise standards for all pupils and some groups are still not making the good progress that they should. The tracking of progress has been refined and is better informed by more frequent and more rigorous assessments. This allows underperformance to be identified more quickly and data to be used effectively to hold teachers to account for the progress of pupils in their class. Coordinator roles are developing but the skills of some colleagues to drive whole school improvement are currently under-utilised. Governor's skills are used well to support the work of the school, such as providing help with regard to financial management and supporting aspects of the curriculum. They are generally aware of the school's strengths and areas for development but not sufficiently rigorous in challenging variability in the effectiveness of some aspects of the school's work.

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? | 3 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | Yes |
| 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? | 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 | 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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 2 |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 2 |
| The attendance of learners | 3 |
| The behaviour of learners | 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? | 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 | 4 |
| 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 | 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 |

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

As you may remember I recently visited your school with another inspector. We would like to thank you for talking to us about your school and the work that you do as this was an important part of the inspection.

We found that the education that the school provides is satisfactory. The care that you receive and the range of trips, visitors and other activities that you take part in are good.

You told us that you enjoy school and that, 'If we need something, adults at school try to fix it for us.' You behave well and are keen to work hard. You make satisfactory progress because the teaching and curriculum are satisfactory. All staff are committed to making sure you do well and the extra support that you receive helps you to get back on track if you are falling behind. You know a lot about how to live a healthy lifestyle and many of you stay fit by taking part in sporting activities. The headteacher and other leaders are trying hard to improve your school and we could see where their work is already making your learning better.

There are a few things that we have asked the staff at St John's to do to improve the school further and these are:

- to help you make good progress by making sure there is more good teaching and by making better use of your learning targets
- to make sure you can do more learning outdoors when you are in Acorn class
- for teachers to show you clearly how you can improve your work
- to check that all the work done to improve the school is making a difference to how well you are learning.

I am sure you will help the school to do these things by continuing to work hard and coming to school regularly.