

St John's CofE (VA) Primary School, Clifton

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107571
Local Authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	309435
Inspection date	3 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Allan Torr 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	216
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs D Spivey
Headteacher	Mrs C Graham (Acting HT)
Date of previous school inspection	14 June 2005
School address	Towngate Clifton Brighouse West Yorkshire HD6 4HP
Telephone number	01484 713036
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Age group	4-11
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Introduction

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

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the quality of teaching and learning; the effectiveness of leadership and management; the quality of care, guidance and support; and provision in the Foundation Stage. Evidence was gathered from brief observations of lessons; discussions with senior managers, governors and pupils; and scrutiny of pupils' work, school documents and parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but HMI found evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were justified.

Description of the school

This is a slightly smaller than average primary school. Most pupils are White British and most pupils who start at the school stay through to the end of Year 6. The proportion of pupils eligible to take a free school meal is very low. Although the proportion of pupils with a learning difficulty and/or disability is below the national average, the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is above average. There are no pupils looked after by the local authority. Over the last three years, attendance has been around 97% which is well above the national average. At the time of the inspection, the deputy headteacher was acting as headteacher and a senior teacher was acting as deputy headteacher. The school achieved the Inclusion Quality Mark in 2006 and had its national Healthy Schools Status re-validated in 2007. It has a number of other awards including: Basic Skills, Sports, ICT (information and communication technology), and Investors in Pupils.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Everything about St John's is high quality. A typical parental comment was: 'St John's is a fabulous school where the children are making outstanding progress. The staff work extremely hard in order to maintain these excellent standards.' Relative to their broadly average starting points, pupils, including those with a learning difficulty and/or disability, make outstanding progress. By the time they leave Year 6 they attain exceptionally high standards in English, mathematics and science. In 2007, every pupil gained the expected Level 4 and over 80% attained the higher Level 5. Standards at Key Stage 1 are well above average. Most pupils attain the expected Level 2 in reading, writing and mathematics and over a third of pupils attain the higher Level 3. Standards in reading, in Key Stages 1 and 2, are higher than standards in writing. This is particularly noticeable in subjects other than English, where pupils' writing skills are not extended fully. Teacher assessments indicate that standards in other subjects are equally high: for example, a large proportion of pupils in Key Stage 1 gained higher than the expected Level 2 in geography and in design and technology.

Parents and pupils are overwhelmingly positive about the school. Another typical comment was: 'This is an excellent school with teachers who have a real passion for what they do. This passion is passed on to the pupils who have the same drive as a result. All children are encouraged to do well. It is a happy, well managed, organised school which instils good life skills in the children.' Pupils enjoy school because the curriculum and teaching and learning are so exciting and engaging. This is reflected in their outstanding attendance which is regularly over 97%, well above the national average. Their behaviour is impeccable. They are respectful, polite, well mannered young people who have highly developed social skills. Boys and girls work very well together and all pupils articulate their views confidently and listen carefully to the views of others. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding, aided by the very close and productive links with the local church; their cultural development is good. They demonstrate a very good degree of mutual support and understanding. A strong befriender system encourages older pupils to look after the younger ones. In an ICT club, for example, older pupils enjoy the opportunity to teach and support younger pupils, helping them to improve their skills. There is very little bullying and no recorded racist or homophobic incidents because pupils treat one another in the way in which they would like to be treated. Consequently, pupils feel safe and free from harassment.

Pupils have an outstanding understanding of how to keep healthy, both within and outside the school. Most pupils take a high quality nutritious school meal and take advantage of fruit, vegetables and water provided by the school. Pupils' contribution to the local and worldwide community is outstanding. In addition to the school and eco council, pupils take on a full range of roles in the school such as sports' leaders, monitors, house captains, safety officers and class buddies. Worthwhile suggestions about how to improve provision within the school are taken seriously by staff. As a result they feel valued and feel empowered to influence key decisions. They take part in forums to discuss aspects of the curriculum and aspects of school life; for example, the planning and review of their day-to-day work and play, and the appointment of new staff. Workplace skills are outstanding and this is partly as a result of the projects and positive links with a local high school which has a business and enterprise specialism.

The curriculum is dynamic and exciting; it is enriched and enhanced by a very wide range of additional activities, both within school and through out-of-school clubs. Pupils have an input into what they learn: for example, in a topic about ancient Greece, they decided which aspects

of history they wanted to focus on and learn more about whilst developing generic skills in the subject. Excellent whole-school planning and teamwork ensure that a wide range of teaching strategies is built into the curriculum to suit pupils' different needs. For instance, teachers use research and collaboration to motivate pupils and add to their enjoyment. Similarly, the school makes very good use of interesting and exciting visits and visitors to expand pupils' knowledge and experience of the world. Pupils in Key Stage 2 learn Spanish and some pupils learn French in La Jolie Ronde club. Signs around the school are in dual languages. Pupils benefit from specialist teaching; for example, in music. All Year 3 pupils were particularly impressive playing 'We will Rock You' together on guitars. They also benefit from links with a high school which has a specialism for physical education and sport. ICT is used widely and supports pupils in developing good skills for their future in education and as adults in the workforce.

Teachers establish very good relationships with pupils and manage their classes very well. The working atmosphere is relaxed and purposeful. Teaching and support staff have an excellent understanding of pupils' changing needs and adapt their approaches in class accordingly to maintain the pace of progress. Their questioning skills are outstanding and challenge learners of all ability levels to develop their thinking and confidently contribute to class discussions. In some outstanding lessons, pupils were encouraged to continually think, reason, and to justify their opinions. In some subjects, the development of pupils' writing skills is hindered by an over-reliance on low level worksheets. In general, resources such as interactive whiteboards and individual whiteboards are used well to accelerate pupils' learning and to help the teacher to monitor and intervene in pupils' progress. Teachers use assessment and marking effectively to ensure that work is well matched to individual and group needs and that pupils know what they need to do next to improve. Pupils are not always given sufficient time to correct or improve their work in response to teachers' written comments, and this means that the impact of teachers' suggestions for improvement is not as effective as it could be. The school has a wealth of data on pupils' progress. It analyses this meticulously to identify where additional help or challenge are needed, and to support planning for school improvement. Teachers focus on the development of basic and key skills. Frequent and regular individual and group reading accelerates pupils' reading skills. Carefully selected intervention programmes ensure that every pupil is challenged and encouraged to succeed. Well qualified and skilful teaching assistants support individuals effectively. Systems and procedures to safeguard pupils are in place and meet government guidelines and regulations. There are high levels of supervision at break times and few accidents. This is partly because pupils are engaged in a variety of games using a wide range of play equipment.

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher are strong leaders who manage the school very well in the headteacher's prolonged absence. Disruption to pupils' learning has been kept to a minimum and the school has continued to progress. They are supported by an able and committed staff team. Subject leaders have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in their subjects. Some action plans have imprecise success criteria and some subject leaders do not monitor teaching and learning as fully as they might. This slightly hinders their ability to accurately monitor the effectiveness of initiatives and actions to improve their subjects. The school regularly seeks and acts on the views of parents and pupils, and works extremely effectively with a wide range of partners both within and outside the local community. The school is outward looking and always willing to take on best practice. With many leading teachers and managers, the school also works well with the local authority to enable other schools and professionals to benefit from its expertise. The governing body is well established, stable and

has a sophisticated system of committees that work very effectively. Governors are knowledgeable and well informed about the school and provide very good support and positive challenge to staff. They have a strategic view of the quality of what the school does and about its future direction. The school has made very good progress since the last inspection. It provides excellent value for money and has an outstanding capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children enter the Reception class with skills that are broadly typical for their age. They make outstanding progress in their communication, language, and literacy skills and very good progress in other areas of learning, with the result that by the end of the Foundation Stage most pupils have reached the early learning goals and a large proportion have exceeded them. First-rate leadership and management ensure that activities are exceptionally well planned. There is a very effective balance between teacher-led and child-initiated activities. Teaching and learning time is maximised and assessment and observation of pupils is used creatively to personalise learning for individual pupils in order that they make rapid progress. Children are actively involved in influencing the curriculum. For example, after an assembly about the Chinese New Year, children decided that they wanted to count in Chinese and asked to learn about other aspects of China. The Foundation Stage leader planned a series of activities that built on this enthusiasm whilst at the same time developing children's skills. Systems and procedures indoors and outside are so well established that children very quickly become independent learners. Children play and learn happily together in a safe and stimulating environment.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' writing skills across the curriculum.
- Further develop the role of subject leaders.

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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?	1
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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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 all for giving me such a warm welcome to your school. You were all exceptionally polite and helpful, and I really enjoyed talking to you and finding out about your school. Thank you, especially to those of you who gave up your lunch break to talk to me.

Your school is outstanding. That means that it is one of the best in the country and you are right to be so proud of it! You make excellent progress and reach standards that are well above average for children nationally. Your behaviour is impeccable and at over 97% your attendance is impressive. Your teachers work very hard to make learning exciting and interesting. You said that they are always willing to give you extra support if you find things difficult, and that no-one ever feels bad about having to ask for help.

Even schools that are outstanding have some things that they could improve. I have asked your teachers to find ways of developing your writing skills in different subjects. I have also asked the school to develop even further how teachers lead subjects.