

St John's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109197
Local Authority	Bath and North East Somerset
Inspection number	309921
Inspection date	30 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Chris Nye HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	207
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ed Nall
Headteacher	Matthew Cottrell
Date of previous school inspection	7 June 2004
School address	Charlton Park Keynsham Bristol BS31 2NB
Telephone number	01179 863824
Fax number	01179 869943

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, including the use of assessment information, and its impact on achievement and standards; the impact of teachers' guidance on pupils' progress; the personal development and well-being of pupils and the effectiveness of recent changes in leadership and management. The inspector gathered evidence from discussions with the headteacher, staff, the chair of governors, and pupils; lesson and playtime observations; samples of pupils' work; parent questionnaires and a review of relevant areas of the school's documentation. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is a slightly smaller than average-sized primary school, with pupils drawn mainly from the town of Keynsham. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than the national average. When they start school, the attainment of children is broadly in line with the expected levels for their age. The majority of pupils are of White British origin. The school has gained the following nationally accredited awards: the Basic Skills Quality Mark and National Healthy Schools status. The current headteacher has been in post for 18 months.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school where pupils make excellent progress and achieve standards well above those expected for their age and relative starting points. Almost all parents responded to the inspection questionnaire, and almost all expressed positive views on the quality of education and care offered. This is shown by the many comments received, such as, 'This is a happy school where we are delighted to send our children ... I would not want to send my children to any other school ... They flourish in an environment which maximises their learning potential whilst helping them to grow in confidence'. The new headteacher has rapidly established an effective leadership style that has had a very positive impact on the quality of the school's work and has established an atmosphere in which staff and pupils feel highly valued and everyone enthusiastically gives of their best. Together they have worked hard to ensure that standards and achievement have continued to improve throughout the school, and the school's capacity to make further improvements is excellent.

Children get off to a flying start in the Foundation Stage. They arrive in school with the skills and understanding that are expected for their age, but make rapid progress and many reach above expected levels by the time they start Year 1. Pupils make outstanding progress in Key Stage 1 and almost all meet or exceed expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2. The number achieving higher levels in reading and mathematics was well above national averages last year, but fell slightly in writing. However, inspection evidence shows that recent strategies put in place, such as the Story Making project, have ensured that standards in writing, particularly for higher-achieving pupils, have risen this year. This excellent progress is maintained throughout Key Stage 2 and by the time they leave school at the end of Year 6, almost all pupils meet expected levels in English, mathematics and science, and a greater number than is usual exceed this. Last year, there was a larger than average number of pupils in Year 6 with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, but although overall results dipped slightly, especially in mathematics, they were still well above national averages. This demonstrates how very well pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do, relative to their starting points. This is because the quality of the teaching is outstanding throughout the school, pupils' needs are rapidly identified and effective strategies are put in place to support them.

Pupils' personal development and well-being is outstanding. Well-planned initiatives such as their work on social and emotional aspects of learning, visits to a local life skills centre, a wide range of sporting opportunities and activities surrounding the Healthy Schools award ensure that pupils have an excellent understanding about how to keep themselves safe and healthy. The school has a very strong Christian ethos and has close links to local churches with a range of denominations. This helps to ensure very high standards of spiritual and moral development, although pupils' cultural understanding, whilst good, is less well developed. Attendance is good, but the percentage of unauthorised absences, although falling, is still too high because of the number of pupils who go on family holidays during term time. Pupils say that they thoroughly enjoy coming to school and are enthusiastic about their learning. One very young child commented that this was because 'teachers plan nice things for us to do'. Because this is a very caring and well-ordered school community, pupils' manners and behaviour towards adults and each other is exemplary. Pupils make very positive contributions to the local community and take their responsibilities seriously. This is demonstrated by the very responsible way that pupils contribute to the school council and the way in which older pupils care for younger ones.

Pupils demonstrate very high levels of literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology skills. In addition, they are given many opportunities to develop teamworking skills, such as on the school newspaper production team. This is helping to ensure that they develop very effective workplace skills that will positively contribute to their future economic well-being.

The quality of teaching is outstanding. A strong and consistent feature of lessons is the excellent relationships, the way in which they are planned to provide excellent support for learning and the exciting and imaginative activities that motivate pupils very well. Teachers maintain a brisk pace to lessons because they are skilful in their questioning of pupils, have high expectations to which pupils enthusiastically aspire, and work very well with skilful teaching assistants. This helps to ensure that each pupil makes good or better progress in lessons. A very effective assessment policy means that pupils' work is accurately marked and targets are clear and focus closely on pupils' needs, particularly in English. Teachers provide clear and helpful guidance on how pupils can improve their work, although this is more consistent and well embedded in English than in mathematics and more detailed in older classes, where practice is exemplary. The curriculum is broad and well balanced, although the school rightly plans to further develop the links between subjects, with an emphasis on teaching literacy and numeracy through subjects such as history and geography. The provision of specialist teaching in music, physical education and science is enhancing the quality of the curriculum provision; for example, the use of local authority support to teach every pupil in Year 3 to play the violin is a particular strength. A good range of curriculum enrichment activities, such as sports, visits and through links to a local theatre and a veterinary surgery, help to ensure a rich and varied curriculum.

The school is exceptionally well led and managed. The headteacher is highly regarded by staff, parents and pupils. With the able support of the school leadership team, he has effectively raised the profile of subject leaders and they are becoming highly effective in monitoring and developing their areas of responsibility. Curriculum management was a relative weakness in the last inspection but is now a strength. The school sets itself challenging but realistic targets and is rigorous in evaluating its own performance against these. As a result, standards are high and are set to rise further. Resources are well managed and deployed and the school rightly has plans in place to upgrade and relocate the library. Governors are highly effective at both supporting and challenging the school and, because they know the school well, they make a very positive contribution towards its strategic development.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children get a wonderful start to their school lives in the very well led and managed Foundation Stage class. The principle of practical and active learning permeates all that the children do. This means that they quickly develop a very secure understanding of basic skills and this prepares them very well for their future learning and social development. The atmosphere of the classroom hums with enthusiasm because the activities are exciting and well planned and organised. As a result, behaviour is excellent and children make rapid and confident progress, particularly in their social development, mathematical understanding and communication, language and literacy skills. Teaching and support staff are highly skilled and work very well together. Resources are well organised and plans are in place to improve further the currently adequate outside area. The excellent pastoral support and communications with parents mean that the needs of all the children are catered for sensitively and efficiently.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure better consistency in the provision of guidance to pupils on how they can improve their mathematics work.

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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	2
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	2
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?	2
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	1
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	2
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

1 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St John's CE Primary School, Keynsham BS31 2NB

What a wonderful day I had at your school! Thank you for making me feel so welcome and for being so helpful during the inspection. I especially enjoyed talking to you because you are so very polite and enthusiastic about your school. I can certainly see why, because I think yours is a fantastic school that is doing a wonderful job of teaching and looking after you! I also really enjoyed visiting your classes, going to assembly and looking at your work. Here are the most important bits of the report on your school that I thought that you might like to know about:

- You make really good progress in your lessons and many of you are achieving higher standards than is usual for your ages in English, mathematics and science. This is because you are extremely well taught and because you are so keen to learn.
- Your behaviour is excellent! This is because you are sensible, feel safe and valued and enjoy coming to school and because you are so well looked after by the grown-ups. Well done!
- When you first come to school in the Reception class, you get an excellent start to your schooling.
- The curriculum is full of interesting and well-planned things to learn and do, and the school plans to make this even better, which is great.
- The grown-ups who are in charge of the school do a really good job in running the place and in planning how it is going to get even better in the future.

Even though yours is an excellent school, there are always things that can be improved further. To help this, I have asked the staff to:

- make sure that you all get clear guidance on how you can improve your work in mathematics. You can help by making sure that you always ask your teachers when you do not understand something.

Thank you again for what, for me, was a magical day!

Yours sincerely

Chris Nye Her Majesty's Inspector

1 May 2008



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