

St John's CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109271
Local Authority	Bath and North East Somerset
Inspection number	309947
Inspection dates	26–27 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Peter Clifton

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	4–10
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	397
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kay Harvey
Headteacher	Carolyn Banfield
Date of previous school inspection	13 January 2003
School address	Redfield Road Midsomer Norton Radstock BA3 2JN
Telephone number	01761 412019
Fax number	01761 414914

Age group	4–10
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is situated close to the centre of the town. It is much larger than most primary schools. The majority of pupils live in the local town but many pupils come from the surrounding villages. Nearly all pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, although the proportion of these pupils has risen over the last three years. There are few pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals. The school has gained the Basic Skills Quality Mark, an International Schools Award, Artsmark Gold and Sportsmark, as well as Investor in People status and an information and communication technology award.

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 Primary School is a satisfactory school with some good features. The curriculum and care, guidance and support are good, and result in pupils' good personal development and well-being. Pupils enjoy coming to school and attend well. Standards are average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Standards in Key Stage 1 have not been high enough over the past three years but are improving. In Year 6, standards in English are above average whilst those in mathematics are average. The school's most recent results show that several pupils did not make sufficient progress in mathematics from their starting points in Year 2. However, progress is improving and is now satisfactory. Leaders have rightly identified the need to improve pupils' mental skills in mathematics as a key area for improvement. The school's capacity for further improvement is satisfactory.

Parents strongly support the work of the school. Several commented positively about the good start their children make in Reception, where provision is good. They say their children 'settle quickly' and make 'fantastic progress'. Pupils say they are happy in school because it is a safe place and they feel well cared for. They particularly like the excellent range of additional clubs and activities offered at lunchtimes and after school. They have an excellent understanding of the need to keep fit and healthy. They take pride in their school and readily take on additional responsibilities.

Satisfactory teaching in Years 1 to 6 results in pupils making satisfactory progress. Teachers foster good relationships and create a friendly and positive atmosphere for learning. Most pupils are often provided with challenging work, which they respond to well, but provision for the more able pupils is inconsistent. In a few lessons, the pace of learning is too slow and pupils become restless. Whilst leaders have clear procedures in place to improve the consistency of teaching, they recognise that there is more work to do in this area. The school's caring approach leads to well-behaved and confident pupils. Pupils respect and look out for each other and have a clear understanding of right and wrong.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Leaders are clear about the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have maintained a strong focus on pupils' personal and social development and their development as rounded individuals. However, they have not been sufficiently well focused in remedying the decline in mathematics. This is now being addressed more firmly.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children settle quickly so that they feel confident and enjoy learning. There are good procedures in place to gain a clear understanding of the children's needs before they start school. This enables leaders to plan well for individual children and to provide them with a secure environment for learning. Teaching is good and resources are used well to extend and enrich children's learning in both the indoor and outdoor areas. The provision is managed well. Pupils are well prepared for Year 1, with most reaching the expected goals by the end of the Foundation Stage.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards further in mathematics, including sharpening pupils' mental skills.
- Improve the consistency of teaching, especially in challenging the more able pupils.

- Take more robust action to tackle and rectify areas of weakness.

A small proportion of 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

Achievement is satisfactory and standards are average. On entry to the school, children's skills are below expectations in communication, language and literacy, and mathematical development. Their personal, social and emotional development is in line with expectations. They make good progress in Reception and most reach the expected goals for learning at the end of the Foundation Stage, with several exceeding them.

Pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1. Standards are currently broadly average, although overall standards in the 2007 national assessments in Year 2 were below average, with mathematics the weakest subject. Pupils continue to make satisfactory progress in Years 3 to 6. In the 2007 national tests in Year 6, standards were average overall. The results were above average in English and average in mathematics and science. These pupils made satisfactory progress in English from their starting points in Year 2. Although pupils' progress in mathematics is inconsistent, it is now improving. Pupils' mental skills in mathematics and the way they apply their understanding to problems remain weaknesses. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress in relation to their individual learning targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Relationships across the school are good, and pupils say their teachers are friendly and helpful. At playtimes, pupils enjoy each other's company and say there are plenty of additional activities for them to do at lunchtimes. Some pupils take on additional responsibility to help others such as by becoming 'happy lunchtime helpers'. Pupils think these arrangements work well. Overall, pupils' behaviour is good. In lessons, they usually work well together, but on a few occasions, boys show some immaturity and do not concentrate on their work well enough. This affects their learning. Pupils have a good understanding about keeping safe and are confident that adults will help them with any problems they might have.

This is an exceptionally healthy school. Pupils' physical development is evident in the good level of activity in the playground during playtime. They participate well in the many additional sporting opportunities available. Pupils have an exceptional understanding about the need for a healthy diet and the value of regular drinks of water; many pupils enjoy having fruit to eat at playtime.

The pupils have a strong voice through the school council and actively raise money for different charities. There are good opportunities for them to become involved in the school community. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school celebrates others cultures in displays which are much appreciated by the pupils.

Pupils' acquisition of literacy skills to help them in the future is satisfactory. Pupils' information and communication technology skills are developing well and they are using these confidently in their work. However, weaknesses remain in the development of key areas of mathematics. Overall, pupils are prepared satisfactorily for their next stage of learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers foster good relationships and treat pupils with respect and, as a result, the pupils have confidence to ask questions when they are stuck or need extra help. Questioning often helps the pupils to clarify their thinking and provides them with opportunities to explain what they understand. At times, teachers' questions do not probe deeply enough to extend the learning of the more able pupils. Interactive whiteboards are used well to support learning and this often captures the pupils' interest. A weakness in teaching is the lack of consistency in challenging more able pupils. Teachers do not always make it clear enough what different groups of pupils are expected to produce and, on a few occasions, the pace of learning slows because the pupils sit on the carpet for too long and get restless. The specialist teaching in music and art are strengths. Teaching assistants provide good support for pupils of different abilities including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Marking usually identifies the next steps in learning and there are some examples of pupils using these to improve their next piece of work. However, this is not consistent practice across the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school's curriculum has strong creative elements, with topics that are planned to link different subjects together. There are many examples of good art work throughout the school, especially the pupils' clay models. The provision for music is good. However, opportunities for pupils to build their mental skills in mathematics systematically and apply these to problems are underdeveloped.

There are excellent opportunities for pupils to be involved in the many clubs and activities at lunchtime and after school, some of which are run by the pupils. The range of opportunities is wide and includes pottery, dance and a variety of sports. Good opportunities exist for pupils to develop their understanding about what life is like in other cultures. The school's personal, social and health education curriculum is very well developed. Many visits to local places and the special 'theme' weeks engage pupils' interest and promote good enjoyment.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care is good and helps pupils build their confidence and self-esteem. Staff have high levels of commitment to the welfare of all pupils. Pupils are confident that they can confide in adults in the school, and playtimes are supervised well to ensure that the pupils remain safe and secure. Child protection procedures are securely in place. Health and safety checks are regularly carried out. Very strong links with external agencies ensure that specialist support and help are available.

Pupils are usually clear about how to improve their work and there are some good examples of them using targets to judge for themselves how well they are doing. However, this is inconsistent across the school. As a result, some pupils are not using targets sufficiently well to help them with their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leaders in the school have worked effectively to create a team of staff who have a desire to provide the best education for the pupils in the school. The school improvement plan has identified appropriate priorities but leaders have not tackled the key weaknesses in mathematics with sufficient vigour. Although this is being addressed, the success of the changes introduced is not yet evident. Procedures to monitor the quality of teaching and learning are well established, and the feedback given to teachers provides useful information for improvement. However, not enough has been done to iron out the inconsistencies in practice, especially in giving suitably challenging work to the more able pupils. Procedures to measure pupils' progress are good.

The views of staff, parents and pupils are regularly sought and acted upon. The school is striving to involve parent in the school's work. Leaders provide a good range of helpful information. Governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses well.

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
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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?	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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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	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

28 November 2007

Dear Pupils Inspection of St John's C of E Primary School, Midsomer Norton BA3 2JN

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you and were impressed with your friendliness and confidence. You clearly enjoy school and attend well. The valuable information you gave us was a great help.

We think that your school gives you a satisfactory education and helps you to become well rounded individuals. Some aspects are good, for example, the curriculum and the care, guidance and support you receive. The leadership and teaching in your school are satisfactory.

What we most liked about your school

- You make a good start in Reception.
- There are strong links with your parents or carers.
- The school ensures that you are safe and secure.
- You are polite and thoughtful towards each other.
- You have very positive attitudes to learning and most of you behave well.
- Teachers are keen to help you with your work.
- There are excellent opportunities for you to extend learning in clubs and other activities.

We have asked your headteacher and others to do these things

- help you to develop your mental skills in mathematics so that you can make better progress in mathematics
- give some of you more challenging work to do
- take stronger action to tackle those things that need to be improved.

With your hard work and help, we think that your school will continue to improve.

Yours faithfully

Peter Clifton Lead inspector