

# St John's CofE Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	111334
<b>Local Authority</b>	Cheshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	310568
<b>Inspection dates</b>	23–24 January 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Paul Bamber

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	163
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Rev J Bacon
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Phil Mellen
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	24 January 2005
<b>School address</b>	Heath Road Sandbach Cheshire CW11 2LE
<b>Telephone number</b>	01270 762859
<b>Fax number</b>	01270 759506

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a smaller than average sized village school. Most pupils live outside the immediate catchment area and an above average proportion come from relatively advantaged backgrounds. Few pupils are from a minority ethnic heritage or speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is consistently below average but around an average proportion has a statement of special educational need. There are a few children from Traveller families.

During the last academic year, the school has encountered considerable disruption to its staffing. The headteacher is currently away from school because of illness. In her absence, the deputy headteacher ran the school until January 2008. An experienced headteacher from another school has been appointed to the acting headship. In addition, several other experienced teachers have left the school for a variety of reasons.

## 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, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

The school is not effective enough in ensuring that pupils achieve as well as they should, or in providing them with good enough teaching, an appropriate curriculum and with adequate guidance. The school has been through troubled times recently and the rapid decline in pupils' standards and achievement in 2007 can be partly attributed to the upheaval that resulted. However, there are more deep-rooted weaknesses that have led to the school's inadequacies.

The school has made a start in addressing its weaknesses. This has coincided with the very recent appointment of an acting headteacher who has quickly identified the main deficiencies. He has introduced a number of initiatives that have the potential to improve pupils' achievement, the quality of teaching and assessment and the effectiveness of leadership and management. Staff have welcomed these and are beginning to implement them. However, the school is unable to demonstrate any sustained improvement and its failure to address successfully three out of four key issues from its last inspection in 2005 means that its improvement since then has been inadequate.

Pupils do not achieve as well as they should. This is especially so in Years 3 to 6, but currently there is also some underachievement in Years 1 and 2. After entering the school with skills that were above expectations, pupils left Year 6 in 2007 with below average standards. This is not good enough and means that the progress pupils made between Year 2 and Year 6 was in the bottom 5% nationally. Weaknesses in the curriculum also contribute to pupils' underachievement. The time allocated to science and using computers is too little, for example. There is not enough emphasis placed on involving pupils in their learning or in assessing their own progress.

Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. Pupils are generally cheerful and confident but, because of few opportunities, they lack independence in their learning and do not take enough responsibility for their own improvement. Not all parents are sure that behaviour is as it should be, but staff and governors report improvements in pupils' conduct and attitudes over the last twelve months. Behaviour is satisfactory: in the lessons observed it was often good. Pupils are keen to learn. However, the overall quality of teaching is not high enough and pupils' enthusiasm is curbed because lessons lack pace or sufficient challenge. This applies to the more able pupils particularly. Pupils have good knowledge about what constitutes a healthy lifestyle, through sensible eating and taking regular exercise, and their spiritual development is good.

While everyday care is good, systems to support the pupils' academic progress are not effective enough. It is only very recently that systems to track pupils' progress rigorously have been implemented. While having the potential to help improve pupils' achievement, they are not used consistently to ensure that the information gained results in teachers planning work that fully matches pupils' needs.

Despite the good work of the acting headteacher over the past two weeks, the overall impact of leaders and managers on pupils' achievement is not strong enough. There has been a lack of professional development for staff, the school's performance has not been evaluated rigorously enough and systems to manage the school's provision have either been neglected or are ineffective. The lack of training has left subject leaders de-skilled so they contribute

little to the oversight of their subjects or to improving achievement, standards or provision. Governors, despite providing good expertise in finance and buildings, have not been vigilant enough in monitoring the school's performance or active enough in helping arrest its decline. The governing body is only just emerging from a lengthy period during which its role has been predominantly as a passive partner, which has merely supported rather than helped to develop the school.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 3**

Children in the Reception class are taught alongside some Year 1 pupils. They enter Reception with skills above those expected of children their age. They make satisfactory progress and enter Year 1 with standards above those expected in most areas of their learning. Children's progress in their physical development and personal, social and emotional development is good. However, there are some weaknesses in what they are taught because the curriculum focuses more on what Year 1 pupils should be doing rather than the entitlement for children of Reception age. Leadership and management are satisfactory and children are well supported by the teaching assistants.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise pupils' achievement, especially in Years 3 to 6.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and the use of assessment.
- Provide a curriculum that better meets the needs of all pupils.
- Ensure that academic guidance for pupils is effective in helping raise their achievement.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management so that improvements in the school's provision and in outcomes for pupils are established and sustained.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 4**

Having entered the school with above expected levels of attainment, pupils underachieve, especially in Years 3 to 6. In 2007, albeit a difficult year for the school community, standards fell to below average in Year 6. The amount of progress pupils make between Year 2 and Year 6 fell over the last three years to a very low point last year. Standards in mathematics and in writing are lower than in reading. Reading is much stronger and many pupils are fluent readers by the time they leave Year 6. Too many pupils have weaknesses in spelling and in their use of punctuation. In consequence, the gap between pupils' standards in writing and those in reading is greater than that found nationally. The proportions of pupils attaining at higher levels in all subjects in Year 2 and Year 6 are declining. The pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, the few pupils from Traveller families and those who speak English as an additional language make similar progress to other pupils.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils' moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Their spiritual development is good as a result of, for example, assemblies and the effective links with the church. However, pupils have too few opportunities to develop an understanding of the traditions and beliefs of different groups of people who live in this country. Recent systems to improve behaviour have had a beneficial effect and most behaviour in lessons is good. However, some behaviour in the

playground is over boisterous. The play-leader scheme, in which older pupils encouraged younger ones to join in games, has been suspended because younger pupils did not respond well. Pupils' enjoyment of lessons is satisfactory, as is their attendance. They have a good idea of how to lead healthy lifestyles, which is reflected in their choice of play-time snacks and lunches. Through the work of the school and class councils, pupils make a satisfactory contribution to the school community and take on responsibilities willingly.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 4**

There is not enough strong teaching to ensure that pupils achieve as well as they should. Too many lessons lack sufficient pace and fail to motivate or challenge pupils effectively. Teachers do not have the skills to use assessment information to plan lessons or to set work that matches different pupils' needs well. Where there is good teaching, the pace of lessons carries pupils along, well-focused objectives are set and shared with pupils and tasks interest and challenge them. There are too few examples of teachers' marking that point out to pupils how they can improve. Where this does happen, there is no evidence of pupils acting on this advice. Some of the inadequate teaching observed resulted from inappropriate activities given to pupils and from a lack of subject knowledge or understanding of the specific needs of pupils of different ages.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 4**

The curriculum does not fully meet pupils' needs and this has led to underachievement. Although there is a due emphasis on English and mathematics, teachers do not have enough information to match the work that individual pupils do to what they need to learn. Too little learning is practically based or planned to involve pupils in their own learning and assessment. There are moves to improve this situation, for example, by providing pupils with targets in writing. These initiatives are very recent and it is too early to judge their impact. The amount of time devoted to science in Years 3 to 6 is too little so pupils do not make enough progress. They also rightly feel they have too few opportunities to use computers to support their learning. Pupils make too few visits to places of educational interest linked to the work they do in class. Consequently, there is a lack of stimulation for interesting, enjoyable and relevant work, especially to stimulate their writing. A satisfactory range of visitors into school does, however, add some enjoyment and relevance to what pupils do. There is a good range of musical activities available, including instrumental tuition, and a satisfactory range of clubs outside lesson times.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 4**

Day-to-day care and relationships are good and pupils feel safe and secure. Appropriate safeguarding procedures are in place. The school takes instances of inappropriate behaviour seriously and pupils appreciate this. The school has very recently introduced systems to gauge how well pupils are doing in their work. Teachers, however, do not use the information well enough to plan tasks to help all pupils make the progress they should and raise achievement. There is a satisfactory level of guidance and support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Other plans lack enough detail about what should be done and how to recognise

that progress is being made. The school recognises that some pupils have barriers to their learning and makes some provision for them. These pupils make similar progress to their classmates. The school's partnerships with linked secondary schools help pupils to transfer comfortably from Year 6.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 4**

The acting headteacher has made perceptive evaluations of the school's weaknesses and very recently introduced strategies and systems to bring about improvement. He is well supported in this by the deputy headteacher, who has managed the day-to-day running of the school effectively over the last two terms. However, leaders and managers have not yet effected sustained improvement in provision or arrested the decline in pupils' standards and achievement.

Over time, too little has been done by leaders to equip staff with the necessary skills to cope with change and to sharpen their practice. Systems to track pupils' achievement and to ensure good quality teaching have been ineffective and the school's view of itself has not been rigorous enough. There has been neglect of the training for middle managers, which has detracted from their effectiveness. This is evident in their inability to track achievement, standards and provision in their areas of responsibility or to take effective action to improve areas of weakness. Governors are only just coming to terms with their responsibility to monitor the school's performance and to challenge the school enough about areas that require improvement.

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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?	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	4

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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	4

### 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?	4
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	4

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
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	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

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

Inspection of St John's Church of England Primary School, Sandbach, CW11 2LE

Thank you for the friendly and courteous way in which you welcomed the inspectors when we visited your school recently. You will know that we were finding out about how well you learn and develop as young people.

We found out that your school helps you to understand the benefits of eating healthy meals and taking lots of exercise and adults look after you well when you have upsets or hurt yourselves. Over the last two terms your behaviour has improved. Well done! I also know that there are a lot of things that could be better.

We have judged that the school needs 'special measures' to help make these improvements. This means that that your school will have extra support and inspectors will return regularly to check on its progress. This is to help make sure that all of you make as much progress as you should, especially in Years 3 to 6.

I have asked that teachers give you more interesting work that makes you concentrate hard, and that you enjoy, all the time. I have also asked the school to make sure that the adults who teach you know exactly what progress you are making and what they need to do to help you achieve much more. Finally, although your new acting headteacher has already started to improve the school, the other people who run the school need to be trained to help you make better progress and to make sure that what you are taught suits you really well.

You can help your teachers by working hard and always trying to do your best. You especially need to improve your spelling and punctuation and to learn your basic mathematics well.

I wish you well for the future.