

St John's Church of England Aided Primary School, Shildon

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114285
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	311550
Inspection date	27 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Moira Fitzpatrick

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	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	221
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rvd Rupert Kalus
Headteacher	Mr Andrew Farnell
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Jubilee Road Shildon County Durham DL4 2EQ
Telephone number	01388 773476
Fax number	01388 773476

Age group	3-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the impact of teaching and the curriculum on pupils' achievement and standards
- standards and progress in writing
- the impact of care, guidance and support upon pupils' personal development.

Evidence was gathered from the school's own self-evaluation, lesson observations, examination of pupils' written work and school documents relating to improvements, national published data on the school's performance and the school's own data for tracking pupils' progress. Discussions were held with staff, governors and pupils, and questionnaires returned by parents were considered. A range of school documentation was also examined. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but apart from finding that the school was a little modest in estimating the quality of leadership and management, the inspector found no evidence to suggest that its self-evaluation of other areas was not accurate. These have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The school is average size and nearly all pupils are from White British heritage. It is set in an area of high social and economic deprivation. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is very high, so too is the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There is a higher than average proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need. The school has distinctive Christian values and close links with the local and global community through the parish church.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

St John's is an outstanding school where pupils achieve exceptionally well, often from very low starting points. Excellent, carefully planned teaching has contributed to a rapid rise in standards and progress since the last inspection. Standards in Year 6 have been average for the last two years, and pupils in Year 2 are on course to reach average standards in reading, writing and mathematics in this year's national assessments. This marks a significant improvement over last year's performance, and has been achieved by very effective use of staff expertise, together with high levels of adult support where it is most needed. Parents are unanimous in their praise for the school and are delighted that their children attend here. One parent's view, typical of many, is, 'It is the best school in Shildon.'

The outstanding use of staff to overcome any barriers to learning is a hallmark of the school's provision. Staff are alert to any additional needs children may have when they start in Nursery and at any point during their time in school. The school's response to pupils' needs is swift and effective, drawing in additional expertise from external agencies and upgrading staff with new skills. Pupils who have social and/or emotional problems are extremely well served by the school counsellor, whose strong links with families extend the support that is given from the school to the home. The teamwork that has evolved in response to meeting the complex needs of many pupils is exceptionally high and is one of the school's many strengths. The outstanding care, guidance and support for pupils is driven by the headteacher's determination, shared and supported by all staff, to give every child the best possible start to their learning.

Pupils' personal, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development is outstanding. From the earliest age pupils develop confidence and independence because teachers expect them to think and act for themselves. Behaviour is excellent because pupils are taught to respect themselves and others, and they follow the excellent example set by their teachers in caring for each other. Pupils relish the many opportunities they have to learn about life beyond the classroom. They are taught to be reflective about their learning, the needs of others and the wider world, so they develop good levels of tolerance and understanding. They are proud of their links with a school in Kenya and of the many charities they support with their fund raising activities. They understand the need for a healthy lifestyle and their responsibilities to the community and the environment. Pupils make good use of the opportunities provided to improve the school, through tree planting and suggesting improvements for playtime, and are regular contributors to community events. By the time they leave they are very well prepared for the future and have a really good understanding of what it is to be a good citizen.

Teaching is outstanding because staff work hard to plan learning that excites and brings success to pupils. The well planned curriculum, enriched by visits, visitors and numerous links with other schools and the community, provides an excellent foundation for learning. It is very well adapted to meet the different needs of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and more able and talented pupils. The curriculum supports all groups to achieve as well as they can. Pupils' enjoyment of learning could not be better. They say that learning is fun and there is always someone to turn to for help. Excellent teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants underpins the high quality support that pupils receive. Teachers' generous use of praise makes pupils aware of their success throughout lessons and bolsters their confidence to rise to new challenges. Teachers' detailed and accurate knowledge of pupils' learning allows them to plan activities that pupils tackle independently. As a result time is well used and pupils make a prompt start with their work. Pupils have a good knowledge of their own learning and

how they can improve their work because they have been taught to do this. Their response to suggestions is positive and makes a good contribution to how well they progress. Teachers and teaching assistants leave no stone unturned in their pursuit of the best for every pupil. Parents recognise their dedication, and their views are summed up by one parent's comment, 'Everyone's hard work and commitment is well appreciated.'

Leadership and management of the school are excellent. The headteacher's inspirational leadership has created a highly dedicated and professional team. He ensures that staff expertise continually improves in response to new demands from the pupils and the community. The headteacher's vision of the best for every child is fully supported by staff and governors and is realised in the exceptional achievement of pupils throughout the school. All staff are involved in improving the school. Senior leaders set a very good example in the quality of their own work and give good support and encouragement to colleagues. They know the school's strengths and areas for development very well and give a good lead to improvements. Staff support these wholeheartedly so there is a vibrant sense of purpose about the school's work. Morale could not be higher, especially now that the school is settled into its exciting new building. Pupils, staff, governors and parents all contributed ideas to how the new school should be and they are rightly pleased with the results. Governors bring high levels of expertise and commitment to the school. They have a sharp understanding of the needs of pupils and how the school can meet these with clear strategic developments which are focused on continually improving provision and raising standards. The school has made excellent progress on many fronts since the last inspection, including raising standards and achievement significantly in that time. Given its record of success, the school is exceptionally well placed for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children start school in the Nursery with attainment that is very low. Many have poorly developed speech, language and social skills. Excellent provision, based on a thorough knowledge of children's needs allows them to make very good progress during their time in the Foundation Stage. By the time they leave Reception they have made exceptional progress in their personal and social development, though many have not reached the goals set for all areas of learning. Children feel safe and very happy and are ready to learn because of the extremely good care that adults take of them. Adults are vigilant about children's relationships and establish clear routines to help them to learn to share and take turns. This increases children's confidence and they quickly become independent and are able to direct their own learning for increasing lengths of time. Children in the Reception class are exceptionally well supported to improve their literacy skills. Staff expertise is well used to teach letter sounds to small groups of children so that individual needs are well assessed and planned for. The Foundation Stage is very well led and managed. The use of staff to support learning is excellent and is a strength of the provision.

What the school should do to improve further

- There are no areas for improvement that the school has not already embarked upon.

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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	3
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	3
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	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	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

Age group

3–11

Inspection date(s)

27 March 2008

Inspection number

311550

Letter to pupils explaining the findings of

27 March

29 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St John's Church of England Aided Primary School, Shildon, Durham, DL4 2EQ

Thank you all so much for the interesting and happy time I spent in your lovely new school recently. You made me feel very welcome and helped me to find out very quickly why your school is not just good - it is excellent! This means that your school is up there with the best schools in the country. There are many reasons for this and some of them are to do with how much you put in to making your school so good.

First, you all work very hard and it was obvious that you really enjoy learning. This helps you make really good progress and have the confidence to 'have a go' at new things. Your behaviour is excellent, because you respect yourselves and care for your friends and other children who aren't in your class, so that everyone feels safe and happy in school. This makes a big difference to how well you learn so keep up your high standards of behaviour and care. I was thrilled to hear how much you contribute to making the school such an exciting and lively place through your focus groups and by, for example, starting up a school newspaper to keep everyone informed of the good things that happen in school. You have a real belief that you can tackle anything and you show determination in both your learning and improving the life of the school. You really are learning to be good citizens.

You told me that your teachers and all staff take very good care of you and I agree. I could tell that they know you very well and are always ready to sort out any problems you have. They want the very best for you and take great care when planning your learning. This is the reason lessons are so interesting and why you are so successful. I noticed the lovely displays of your writing all around the school and was very impressed by how well you present your work. It does you credit and shows your teachers expect the best from you.

Another reason why your school is outstanding is that your headteacher and all the staff work extremely well as a team to get the best out of you. They are so good at spotting when things need to improve that I have no suggestions for anything that they aren't already doing. You and they just have to continue to find the things that you want to add to make your excellent school even better.

My very best wishes to you all for the future!

Yours sincerely

Moira Fitzpatrick

Lead Inspector

Annex B