

St John's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114549
Local Authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	311641
Inspection dates	7–8 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Timothy Feast

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	Richard Pace
Headteacher	Laura Cooper
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2004
School address	School Lane St John's Crowborough TN6 1SD
Telephone number	01892 661189
Fax number	01892 662636

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St John's is an average sized primary school. Nearly all the pupils come from White British families. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below national figures. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average.

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 provides pupils with a satisfactory standard of education. Children make a sound start in the Reception Year and standards at the end of the year are broadly in line with expectations. Standards in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6 are broadly average. Achievement overall is satisfactory, but there is some variation in how well different year groups are doing. Current Year 2 pupils have not made adequate progress over the last year. Pupils in Years 3 and 6 are making greater progress than those in Years 4 and 5. Attendance is good and pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are good, so there is a good base for learning. Despite this, the pace of academic improvement has been slow. There is now greater focus on raising standards but the expectations of some leaders are not high enough in relation to the progress pupils could make. Pupils' well-being and personal development are good in response to the good care and support they receive. Pupils say they really enjoy coming to school and parents agree. Both parents and pupils are particularly appreciative of the wide range of activities and visits they are offered. Links with the local church provide good opportunities for pupils' spiritual and moral development. In lessons, pupils work with enthusiasm and volunteer answers readily. They respond well when asked to take responsibility and to contribute to the community, for example through classes from Key Stage 2 singing in the church and local retirement homes. The quality of teaching is satisfactory but its variable quality hinders pupils making consistently good progress. Historically, pupils have had to make up lost ground in Years 5 and 6 and have done so. Improving lesson planning to meet the needs of all the different groups in classes has been a school focus, but the impact has been variable, particularly in meeting the needs of more able pupils. The curriculum is broad and enriched well with clubs, sporting activities and a wide range of school visits. However, in lessons, the curriculum has not been adapted well enough to ensure that all pupils make good progress in all areas. Work is going on to extend opportunities for writing but this is still in the early stages. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Leaders have had a good impact on improving attainment in science this year but improvement in writing has been slower. The leadership has introduced a number of new systems, for example to track pupils' progress, but this change has not yet resulted in progress being equally good in all year groups. The school's self-evaluation is accurate in identifying priorities for improvement but school leaders have not always been sufficiently focused on ensuring that action taken brings a rise in standards. Overall, however, the school's capacity to improve is satisfactory.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children make satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage. Attainment on entry to the Reception class is broadly in line with expectations. When they leave the Reception class their skills are broadly in line with those found nationally. Progress is good in areas such as personal development but writing skills are rightly identified by the school as an area still requiring improvement. A calm and purposeful learning environment has been created in which the children respond positively to the wellordered routines. The curriculum is satisfactory in meeting the children's needs. However, planning does not reflect sufficiently the differing needs of the children and ensure that they reach the next steps in learning through all the activities. Consequently, some activities, both inside and outside the classroom, lack challenge, particularly for the more able children.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate rates of progress for all pupils in order to raise standards, particularly in writing and for those pupils currently in Year 2, and more able pupils throughout the school.
- Ensure that teachers have consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve and plan effectively to meet the different needs in their classes.
- Ensure that leaders at all levels successfully implement the agreed strategies to improve pupils' progress. A small proportion of the schools whose effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before the next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards in the Year 6 national tests in 2007 were slightly higher than the previous year and broadly average, although better in English and mathematics than in science. The progress of these pupils was satisfactory and this has been the trend for the last three years. Current Year 6 pupils have made up considerable lost ground, particularly in science, and they are making appropriate progress towards the challenging targets set by the school. They are making better progress in reading and writing than in mathematics, but this is partly a reflection of their past underachievement. Standards in science in Year 6 have risen this year because of the increased focus on an investigational approach, a strategy implemented at the suggestion of the pupils themselves. The standards achieved in the Year 2 tests in 2007 were broadly average, being better in reading and mathematics than in writing. There has been a similar picture over the last five years. Standards attained by most pupils in Year 2 are broadly average but too few are working at higher levels. This class's progress over the last year has been inadequate, reflecting some staffing problems. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress in all year groups.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is a strength and pupils respond very well to the wide range of opportunities provided. Pupils enjoy and benefit from many opportunities for cultural development, for example through participation in the school's production of 'Hamlet'. However, pupils have fewer opportunities to learn about the cultural diversity of the country in which they live. Pupils feel safe. 'There's no bullying. Teachers make me feel safe' was a typical comment. Pupils are very active and adopt positive approaches to healthy eating. Pupils respond very well to opportunities for involvement in the community, the school and church, events in the locality and through their charity work which has an international dimension. Preparation for life in the future is satisfactory. Pupils are beginning to develop knowledge of the world of work but links with the local business community are underdeveloped and pupils' basic skills are only average.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Relationships in lessons are good. Teachers manage pupils well and interactive whiteboards and stimulating activities are used to make the lessons appeal to the pupils. The school has had a focus on strengthening lesson planning, which has improved this year, but variations persist in teachers' expectations of the progress pupils can be expected to make. These variations are reflected in the planning to meet the needs of all pupils at all stages of the lessons, particularly through pupils being able to work independently. Work in books is marked but there are considerable variations in the quality of the guidance given to pupils in the marking on what they need to do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Pupils and parents value, as one said, 'the breadth and scope of extra-curricular opportunities, which enables the children to move on to secondary schools as confident individuals if not the best spellers.' Residential visits are considered a particular strength. Good use is made of specialist teaching on a 'carousel' of activities and subjects so that pupils experience and enjoy the full range of statutory subjects. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used extensively in all classes to extend pupils' learning. The curriculum motivates and engages pupils but does not yet result in them making consistently good progress. Activities are not adapted sufficiently to meet all the differing needs in the classes. Changes are being made, for example in providing stimuli to encourage writing, but the impact of these changes varies between classes.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

This area is a strength of the school's work, acknowledged by both pupils and parents. One parent commented, 'The buddy system is excellent and there is a very strong sense of community and friendship at the school.' The effective pastoral care enables pupils to make good progress in their personal development. Effective procedures for ensuring pupils' health and welfare ensure that they are cared for well. The pastoral support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good and they are well included in school. New pupils settle well and quickly to school routines and expectations. New target setting procedures have been introduced recently throughout the school and pupils are increasingly involved in checking how well they are doing against the targets they have been set.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

School leaders have effectively promoted the good personal development and wellbeing of learners. They have been less successful in raising standards and improving achievement. The headteacher has a vision for what is needed to bring about this improvement and is beginning to have some success in implementing it. For example, taking account of the views of pupils and adjusting the curriculum has helped the improvements in science this year. There have

been improvements in the quality of teaching, although it is not yet consistently good. Lesson observations by school leaders correctly identify what staff need to do to improve the quality of their teaching. However, expectations of what pupils might achieve are still not high enough. There have been changes to the school leadership and there is now more focus on how leaders should impact on the school's performance. However, leaders are still not sufficiently focused on ensuring that the work they do brings about improvements in pupils' achievement.

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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?	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?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
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	2
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?	3
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

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

9 May 2008 Dear Pupils Inspection of St John's Church of England Primary School, Crowborough, TN6 1SD Thank you for helping us with the inspection and making us feel welcome in your school. We enjoyed talking with you about your work and about how much you like your school. We think your school gives you a satisfactory education. You make satisfactory progress with your studies, but your progress in some years is better than in others. We have asked the school to work on this, so that you reach higher standards, particularly in writing and particularly in Year 2. We do not think the work in class is always planned sufficiently well to meet all your different needs and we think teachers should have higher expectations of the progress you might make, particularly if you are quick to learn. We have also suggested that staff who are responsible for looking after different subjects make sure that the work that they do helps standards to improve. We saw you working hard in your lessons and it is clear that you enjoy coming to school. You told us that you particularly like all the clubs, sports and visits that you do whilst you are at St John's and nearly all of you take part in many of them. You attend well. Your behaviour and attitudes are good in class and around the school and you really take opportunities to be responsible seriously. We saw that when we talked to those of you who are on the school council. You have some very good ideas of what you want to see improved in the school, for example the provision of more equipment in the playground. Adults take very good care of you and support you well when you need help. You told us there is no bullying and adults are around 'to check everything's ok'. You were able to tell us what your targets are and what you need to do to be able to meet them. We are sure that you will continue to enjoy your time at St John's. We wish you all success and happiness this year and in the future. With best wishes Tim Feast Lead inspector



9 May 2008

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With best wishes

Tim Feast
Lead inspector