

St John's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116400
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	312293
Inspection dates	22–23 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Pritiben Patel

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	238
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Terry Ayres
Headteacher	Miss Catherine Redgrave
Date of previous school inspection	6 May 2003
School address	Kingsmill Road Basingstoke RG21 3JU
Telephone number	01256 324121
Fax number	01256 819049

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St John's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary is an average sized school. It has experienced a decline in roll in recent years. The majority of pupils are of White British origin. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below average. Very few are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well 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 is a satisfactory and improving school with good features. Pupils' personal development and the curriculum are strong features. The headteacher has worked hard to engage parents in school life and in their children's learning. As a result, parents provide strong support and the vast majority are very happy with the school.

The Christian ethos of the school has a positive impact on pupils' personal development. Consequently, they behave well and have positive attitudes to learning. They are very aware of the need to adopt a healthy lifestyle, for example by actively participating in a wide range of activities, some of which are run by the pupils themselves.

The good curriculum is adapted well to engage pupils in their learning. For example, the outdoor school environment is a strong feature of pupils' current work. The wide range of extra-curricular opportunities such as clubs, visits and visitors adds to pupils' good enjoyment of school.

Pupils make a good start in the Foundation Stage. They go on to attain average standards by the end of Years 2 and 6 in national tests and make satisfactory progress as they move through school. However, pupils' progress in mathematics is less strong. This is due to weaknesses in teachers' subject knowledge and insufficient opportunities for pupils to apply their problem solving skills to different contexts.

Pupils make satisfactory, rather than good, progress because teaching and learning are currently only satisfactory. Teachers have positive relationships with pupils and their enthusiasm has a positive impact on pupils' learning. However, not all pupils are sufficiently challenged in lessons, particularly the more able. For instance in some lessons more able pupils participate in the same activities as their peers for long periods before they move on to more challenging activities. Teachers' marking, although regular, does not consistently inform pupils of their next steps in order to improve.

The headteacher provides strong leadership for the school and is effectively supported by an able deputy. They are very clear about the school's strengths as well as areas for development and are working hard to address any shortcomings. For example, they have improved the quality of teaching and learning, and assessment and tracking systems are now more robust. These systems are being used to identify rapidly those pupils who are not making the expected progress, in order to provide them with extra support, and are beginning to improve pupils' overall progress. The systems are also being used to improve accountability by holding individual teachers to account for the progress made by pupils in their classes. Some middle managers are not yet able to show impact because they are new to post.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

When children enter the school, they have the skills, attitudes and knowledge usually expected for their age. Teachers and support staff work well together to provide a stimulating environment, which encourages children to explore the world around them and develops their independence. The curriculum is well designed to meet the needs of all children, to challenge them and stimulate their interest, promoting positive attitudes towards learning. There is a good balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities. Children make good progress and are working securely in all areas of learning by the time they leave the Reception class. Many are expected to exceed the targets set for them at the end of this year. The outdoor

space is small but is used well to support several areas of the curriculum. All adults work together to further pupils' personal and social development and encouraging self-esteem. One parent commented, 'The school has a caring feel to it. A fantastic start to school life'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate pupils' progress by ensuring that teaching consistently challenges all learners, particularly the more able, and that marking shows them how to improve.
- Raise standards in mathematics by developing teachers' subject knowledge and ensuring that pupils have sufficient opportunities to apply their problem solving skills to different contexts.
- Develop the roles of some middle managers so that they have greater impact on improving teaching and learning, and raising achievement.

A small proportion of the 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

There are inconsistencies in pupils' progress as they move through school, for example, boys are not doing as well as girls in English. The school is successfully addressing this by organising additional reading and writing workshops as well as purchasing resources with boys in mind. The much improved tracking systems are helping the school to identify and address inconsistencies in progress made by pupils as they move through the school. Pupils' progress in mathematics in 2007 was weaker than in other areas. Evidence shows that the school's measures to improve pupils' progress in mathematics are beginning to take effect. The school's tracking data show that pupils are on course to meet the challenging targets for this academic year in English, mathematics and science. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress similar to that of their classmates due to the various support programmes in place for them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good. This is reflected in their enjoyment, positive attitudes, good attendance and behaviour. There are opportunities for pupils to take responsibility in the school, for example, older pupils help the younger ones at lunchtimes. One parent noted, 'The children are very supportive of each other'. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good. They have a sound understanding of their own culture and that of some others, although their awareness of other cultures within their own country is less well developed.

Pupils have a good understanding about how to keep themselves safe. They are well supervised in the playground and peer mentors help them to sort out problems. Pupils are eagerly anticipating the completion of the new activity equipment in the playground. Good adoption of healthy eating is supported by nutritious lunches provided by the school and commitment to healthy snacks. Pupils are adequately prepared for the next stage of their schooling as demonstrated by their satisfactory progress in basic skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory overall although some good lessons were seen during the inspection. Strengths of lessons include good classroom management and brisk pace. Pupils collaborate well when working in pairs or small groups and respond well to the enthusiastic approach and high expectations of some teachers. However, in some lessons pupils are not sufficiently challenged, particularly those that are more able, as they are sometimes given tasks that are too easy and this affects their achievement during lessons. There are weaknesses in teachers' subject knowledge in mathematics.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has put much thought into developing the curriculum and making it relevant and exciting for pupils. A comment made by a parent exemplifies this: 'The staff are fantastic - making learning inspirational and fun'. At the end of a unit of work, pupils produce a creative outcome. For example, pupils invited parents to a Viking celebration where they ate food and listened to music. Pupils are encouraged to take ownership through 'Working at Home Opportunities' and COOL (Choosing Our Own Learning) where they choose what they want to learn, plan how they will learn it and then evaluate what they have learnt. The school is currently developing literacy and numeracy across the curriculum particularly to address pupils' progress in mathematics and boys' progress in English. Information and communication technology skills are effectively taught across the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils feel safe in a secure, supportive environment and their teachers know them well. They are well cared for and feel confident about receiving help from all adults in the school. The school has good links with outside agencies and fully involves parents in helping pupils to achieve their potential. One parent said, 'Every effort is made to engage parents in the children's learning'. Vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified at an early stage in order that appropriate provision can be made. Policies and procedures to protect pupils and ensure their health and safety are made clear to all staff and are carefully implemented. Pupils' work is monitored on a regular basis and assessment and tracking procedures have recently become more robust. However, teachers' marking does not always give pupils enough information about what they need to do next to improve their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has not been afraid to make tough decisions and has improved the quality of teaching and learning in school by tackling unsatisfactory teaching. She has restructured the leadership and middle management teams to enhance their impact and accountability at all levels. This has already had some effect, as can be seen in the early improvements in pupils' progress in mathematics, and is evidence of good capacity to improve. However, there are still

inconsistencies in the effectiveness of some middle managers, some of whom have only recently taken up responsibility.

The school development plan is being used as a tool to drive school improvement. Appropriate priorities have been identified and governors are rigorously monitoring progress. Governors contribute well to the school's evaluation, visit lessons, provide good support and offer challenge to the headteacher when necessary. Overall, the effectiveness of self-evaluation is good.

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	2

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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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	2
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**

5 December 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St John's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Basingstoke, RG21 3JU

Thank you for being so welcoming and helping us when we came to inspect your school to find out how well you are getting on. You go to a satisfactory and improving school with good features. Here are the reasons why.

- You behave well, enjoy school, have positive attitudes and get on really well with each other and your teachers.
- All of the adults in your school make sure that you are well looked after.
- You have a good curriculum and a wide range of extra-curricular activities such as football, dance and hockey. It is impressive that some of you help to run some of these clubs yourself!
- The governors at your school work hard for you.
- Your headteacher, deputy and teachers are working hard to improve your school further.

Inspectors think that your school can be better and this is what needs to happen. The progress you make ought to be faster, so I have asked teachers to ensure that you all receive work in lessons that is challenging, particularly those of you who are capable. This will also help you reach higher standards in mathematics. Teachers' marking needs to inform you about what you need to do next to improve your work. Finally, we have asked your headteacher to help other managers develop their roles so that they have more impact on your learning. I am sure that you will continue to work as hard as you can.

Yours sincerely,

Pritiben Patel

Lead Inspector