

St John's CofE VC Infant and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117383
Local Authority	HERTFORDSHIRE LA
Inspection number	312595
Inspection date	24 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Paul Cosway

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3-7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	221
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Martin Bigg
Headteacher	Mrs Katharine Passmore
Date of previous school inspection	31 March 2003
School address	Gills Hill Lane Radlett Hertfordshire WD7 8DD
Telephone number	01923856594
Fax number	01923839656

Age group	3-7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The following issues were investigated: the pupils' achievement and their personal development, the quality of teaching and learning, the curriculum and how well the school's leadership promotes high standards. Evidence was gathered from observation of lessons, the pupils' work, discussion with them and with staff, along with a scrutiny of school documents and parent questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation form, were not justified. These have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

St John's CE VC Infant and Nursery School is close to average size. The school population represents a mix of social backgrounds, but pupils are mainly from White British backgrounds. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils whose first language is not English is also below the national average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is slightly below national average, but there are more pupils than average with statements of special educational need.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. It judges itself to be good, but it is modest in its self-assessment, reflecting its refusal to become complacent and its desire to continue to improve. The excellent quality of education from Nursery to the end of Year 2 leads to pupils making outstanding progress. On entry, they are slightly below the average standard. By the end of their time in this welcoming and happy school they are, overall, well above the standards nationally in reading, writing and numeracy. As is the case nationally, more girls than boys reach very high standards in writing but not as many girls as boys reach high standards in numeracy.

There are several key factors that make this such a successful school. One is the way that the school fosters the outstanding personal development of its pupils. Each one feels a full part of the school community, cared for and valued. As a result, they all enjoy coming to school. Parents testify to this, saying that their children are eager to go to school every morning. One said her son is cross when the school is closed, another that her daughter could not wait to return when she was ill. Another factor key to the school's success is the ethos. The atmosphere in school is very positive. Good behaviour and work are praised in order to encourage positive attitudes. As a result, behaviour is excellent. Pupils enjoy their lessons because they are interested in what is planned for them. The very good use of computer technology by the teachers excites the pupils' interest and allows them to be actively involved in their lessons, as they come to the white board to demonstrate their knowledge to their friends. They learn to collaborate and work well as part of a group. This, along with the excellent progress they make in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology, ensures that they are prepared particularly well for their future lives.

The curriculum is outstanding and this encourages them to enjoy school because they are interested and challenged. Good coverage of world religions and visits, such as the annual trip to a synagogue, help to prepare them for life in our culturally diverse society. There is a good range of clubs and an excellent programme of trips, including a residential visit for pupils in Year 2. French is taught to the older pupils and many subjects, such as technology, are taught in short blocks of time so that projects can be completed in a time scale that is satisfying to young children. Pupils' great enjoyment of school is reflected in their good attendance and very positive attitudes to learning. Pupils willingly take on responsibility to act as helpers and leaders, especially in the playground. The work of the school council is very productive and pupils' participation in it influences decisions which enhance their daily lives. The school's emphasis on exercise and healthy eating enables pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles. They readily explain the reasons for taking regular exercise and enjoy eating healthily. The school is supported well by parents in this endeavour.

Teachers and support assistants know pupils very well. Good teaching underpins the school's caring ethos. Assessment information is used effectively to pinpoint those who are at risk of falling behind and to make sure that they have the support they need to catch up. Good use is made of targets in English and mathematics and these are referred to by teachers to help pupils know how to improve their work. Some lessons are outstanding and over time teaching is very effective in moving pupils forward through the school, including the Nursery. Learning is well-planned, varied and interesting. Some teachers are new to the school and to the teaching profession. The school is providing effective support so that pupils' progress does not decline while newly appointed teachers build further on their skills.

Pupils benefit from excellent care, guidance and support. They say they feel safe and show confidence in staff to deal effectively with any concerns. Child protection and health and safety procedures are all in place and working very well. Vulnerable pupils' needs are well met, resulting in them making excellent progress. Almost all pupils who have learning difficulties attain nationally expected standards. Arrangements for checking pupils' progress are excellent. Parents are given good help and information to assist them in supporting their children's learning and the reports they receive on their children's progress are detailed and clear.

Outstanding leadership and management, under the skilful leadership of the headteacher, ensure that staff concentrate on promoting pupils' welfare and progress. Parents value this and recognise how their children benefit. Many comment on the ways their learning skills develop as well as their confidence and independence. The headteacher and her deputy monitor pupils' work and evaluate teaching rigorously to ensure that achievement and standards are high. The school's view of its own effectiveness reflects their high expectations. The school improvement plan prioritises the correct areas of the school's work for further development. The senior leadership team correctly identified at the start of this academic year that boys' writing and girls' problem solving skills in numeracy could be improved and have put in place good systems to ensure that this happens. Governance is outstanding. Governors monitor the school very well, have a strategic role in its leadership and hold the school to account with a balance of support and challenge. Capacity to improve is excellent, as demonstrated by the improvements secured since the last inspection. Results have risen significantly over the past three years. Most notable is the great improvement in the number of more able pupils attaining higher levels in national assessments.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children arrive in the nursery with skills slightly below the average for the local authority. They make excellent progress because of the quality of the teaching, the wide variety of stimulating activities and the individual care and attention they receive from the highly skilled adults in the setting. By the time they leave the nursery they have made significant progress in their communication, numeracy and social skills. Good teaching, some of which is outstanding, along with excellent support and guidance, ensure that all make outstanding progress. Staff provide a wide variety of activities very appropriate to the needs of children of this age and they help children to settle quickly. The number of adults in both the Nursery and Reception classrooms ensures that children are given excellent support, with very many opportunities to talk with adults about their learning. Children behave very well indeed and enjoy school because of the very good relationships that are quickly established. The rooms are very well equipped and the outdoor provision is excellent in both the Nursery and Reception classes.

The leadership of the Foundation Stage is outstanding. The children's progress is tracked and recorded regularly. By the time children complete their year in Reception, they have, overall, exceeded the expected standards in literacy and numeracy for their age.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to improve and sustain boys' progress in writing and girls' confidence in problem solving in mathematics.
- Continue to share successful teaching practise so that all lessons come up that of the very best.

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	1
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	2
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?	2
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

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

25 January 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of St John's Nursery and Infant School, Radlett, WD7 8DD

Thank you very much for making me so welcome at your school. It was a pleasure to talk to you and I particularly enjoyed watching the way you worked together in pairs or small groups so happily and well. I would like to say special thanks to the School Council, who told me about what it is like to be a pupil at St John's.

You all told me how much you like your school, and I liked it very much too. It gives you an excellent education. You feel safe and cared for because the school looks after you extremely well. By the end of Year 2, you have made excellent progress. You are much better at reading, writing and numeracy than most children in other schools. You behave extremely well and enjoy your learning. You particularly enjoy the visits out of school, which help you learn because you are seeing things first hand. I was also very impressed with the quality of your singing and behaviour in assembly.

The teachers in charge of the school are leading it exceptionally well. Your headteacher is determined that you will have the very best education. She is making sure that boys do as well as girls in writing and girls catch up with boys in mathematics. You can help with this by working hard and doing your very best. I have asked your headteacher to make sure that all your teachers continue to share their very good ideas so that your interesting lessons get even better.

Once again thank you for a delightful day. Keep doing your best and enjoy your time in this outstanding school.

Yours sincerely

Paul Cosway

Lead inspector