

# St John's C of E Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117460
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	312622
<b>Inspection dates</b>	25–26 February 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Nichola Perry

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>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	215
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Rev Dr Keith Suckling
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Robert Price
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	3 February 2003
<b>School address</b>	Hertford Road Digswell Welwyn Hertfordshire AL6 0BX
<b>Telephone number</b>	01438 714283
<b>Fax number</b>	01438 712991

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

About half the pupils attending this popular primary school come from the local village and surrounding community. There are high levels of social and economic advantage. Increasingly, pupils also come from outside the normal catchment area. Nearly all pupils come from White British backgrounds and very few use English as a second language. The proportion of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are eligible for free school meals is low. Attainment on entry is broadly in line with national expected levels for this age, although some pupils experience difficulties in language, communication and social skills.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good and rapidly improving school. It has some outstanding features in important areas, including provision in the Foundation Stage and pupils' personal development. The strong Christian ethos and excellent relationships are at the heart of the schools' work. The headteacher provides effective leadership and his clear vision and focus on continuous improvement is shared by all staff. He has worked successfully to develop a committed and increasingly successful leadership team. He has been effective in leading the school through the turbulent period following the previous inspection, when teaching was not as good as the school would have wished, pupils underachieved and academic standards fell to average. The school has tackled issues identified at the last inspection very successfully and standards have risen. Governors are extremely supportive and offer good challenge. The school's assessment of its own effectiveness is accurate so that areas for development are well prioritised. The school provides good value for money and is well placed to improve further.

Parents think highly of the school. They overwhelmingly say that staff care very well for their children and ensure they benefit from all the school has to offer. One parent summed up the views of many when writing, 'My children have flourished with the wide variety of activities offered to them in and after school as well as having responsibilities during the school day ... the school has moved on in leaps and bounds.'

Pupils' achievement is good. Significant improvements in teaching and procedures for checking the pupils' progress are having a positive impact on standards and achievement across the school. Pupils of all abilities and in all age groups are now making good progress and reaching above average standards. Teaching is good and sometimes outstanding. Across the school, there is good use of assessment information to support the teachers' effective planning. Its use is effective in meeting the learning needs of individual pupils, and tracking pupils' progress in order to identify any underachievement. However, teaching across the school is not yet consistently good enough to sustain the recent rapid rate of improvement. The curriculum is good and enriched particularly well through additional experiences, using both the local and wider environment, and a wide range of musical and sporting activities out of school. There has been some good development of writing in subjects other than English, resulting in higher standards. Use of information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum is also developing well. However, these are not yet planned in sufficient detail to have maximum impact on raising standards.

Outstanding systems of pastoral care and the strong emphasis on personal, social and health education ensure pupils' excellent personal development and well-being. They love coming to school and thoroughly enjoy their learning. Pupils say they feel safe and well cared for; they develop into delightful, positive and confident individuals, acting as good representatives of the school. They make a significant contribution to the school, particularly through the very active school council, and benefit from very strong links in the local community.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 1

Parents are rightly delighted with the start their children make in the Foundation Stage. Provision and the quality of teaching in the Nursery and Reception are outstanding and ensure that children thrive from the day they start. The staff team provides very well planned and exciting

activities, which cover all areas of learning, both indoors and outdoors. These meet the needs of all children very effectively. Children develop independence very well through lots of opportunities to make choices, which contribute to their good progress, especially their impressive personal, social and emotional development. They show high levels of confidence and enjoyment of learning and rapidly learn to work together. Highly effective systems are in place to ensure a smooth start in the Nursery through ongoing liaison with the pre-school settings. Excellent assessment and tracking of pupils' progress continue into the Reception and Year 1 classes.

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

- Improve the consistency of good and outstanding teaching in order to raise standards.
- Increase the opportunities for pupils to develop their skills by planning better links between subjects.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Excellent systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress have led to rapid improvement in progress, achievement and standards. Standards are rising in all subjects across the school, especially mathematics and writing where there has been significant improvement because there have been focused strategies to improve achievement. The school sets challenging targets, which have helped pupils to reach above average standards. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 and in Years 1 and 2 are securely on track to achieve their targets. Pupils who find learning more difficult and those whose first language is not English are making good progress.

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

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptional. They show a great awareness of the needs of others. Pupils have a very good understanding of the diversity of cultures both within British society and in the wider world. By taking part in local events or raising funds for charity they are fully involved in the wider community. Behaviour is good. Pupils believe that bullying is very rare and know that there is an adult they can turn to if they are in difficulty. They enjoy their education immensely, which is reflected by their above average attendance. Pupils also have a very good understanding of the need to stay healthy, through eating well and taking regular exercise. They are well aware of the need to keep safe. Pupils are prepared well for the further stages of education through increasingly good development of basic skills and in their very good ability to work together in lessons and in other activities.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Rigorous monitoring by the headteacher and subject leaders has led to a close match of the curriculum and lessons to pupils' needs. Consequently, teachers are now fully aware of the range of abilities in their classes. Excellent relationships, pupils' very positive attitudes to learning and the effective work of teaching assistants are integral to successful teaching. Teachers and pupils are very clear about what they are to learn and how successful learning has been. There are stimulating classrooms and dynamic and informative displays around the

school. These help pupils to see what they can strive to achieve as well as supporting their own learning. Resources, including interactive whiteboards, are used creatively and confidently by teachers and pupils so that learning is practical as well as meaningful. Pupils love their learning.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

Provision for English, mathematics and ICT is effective, resulting in good progress in these subjects. The school offers Spanish as a modern foreign language to pupils in Years 3 and 4 and firm plans are in place to extend this into Years 5 and 6 in the next two years. The school already makes links between subjects, for instance developing pupils' writing through the study of Tudor exploration in history. However, it has not yet identified all the opportunities for pupils to develop their basic skills across all subjects. There are very good methods to develop the skills of collaborative and teamwork in lessons and in the wide range of extra-curricular clubs on offer. A good range of visits, including residential trips for Years 5 and 6, and visitors into school enriches the curriculum very well. Excellent links have been established with others, such as the local secondary school, a school in Africa and a local museum to add interest and enjoyment to learning.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Care guidance and support of pupils are good overall. The pastoral care for pupils is outstanding. Staff have a high level of commitment to pupils' well-being and provide very good support for all, including vulnerable pupils and those who need support in their learning. Requirements for safeguarding pupils are met fully and there is very good provision for care before and after school. There are exceptional arrangements for smooth transition into the school from other settings and on transfer to secondary school. Attendance is carefully monitored. The school goes to great lengths to improve the attendance of the few pupils who find it difficult to come to school. Academic guidance is good. Pupils feel that teachers' marking helps them to improve their work and understand their helpful group targets. The school tracks pupils' progress well through regular assessment of their work in English, mathematics and science.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Good relationships prevail at all levels. The headteacher provides resilient and dedicated leadership and has a crystal clear vision for ongoing and rapid improvement. This has galvanised staff, particularly the senior leadership team. Teachers, parents and governors all respect and share this focused approach to improvement. Leadership is effective in identifying key areas for development and subject leaders are continuing to develop their roles well. Therefore, they are taking a greater part in the planning and monitoring processes. Training, professional development and challenging targets are firmly linked to high expectations of what staff and pupils can achieve.

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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?	2
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	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

### 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	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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	2

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

<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>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
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	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

27 February 2008

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of St John's C of E Primary School, Digswell, AL6 0BX

I want to thank you all for making our recent visit to your school so enjoyable. You made us feel very welcome and we can see why you enjoy coming to school so much. My particular thanks go to the pupils who gave up some of their lunchtime to talk to me. I was impressed by your thoughtful answers and what you said was very helpful. I would like to share some of our findings with you.

You go to a good school, which has improved a lot recently. The children in the Foundation Stage get off to a super start to their time in school. We saw how well you behave in lessons and around the school and we were very impressed by the way in which you all care about each other and about other people who are less fortunate than yourselves. You told us that you really enjoy coming to school, feel very safe and well cared for in school and know whom to go to if you have a problem. We were also very impressed by the work of school council. They have done well in improving life in school for pupils - especially the shelter in the playground.

We think you have a good headteacher who has worked well with the teachers to find out a lot about how well you are all making progress. All the adults work hard as a team and have plans to keep on improving how well you do at school. In most lessons you make good progress in your learning. We have asked your teachers to work on making sure that this happens throughout the school, so that you all do even better in maths, English and science. You can help your teachers by trying your best at all times. We have also asked your headteacher to ensure that you have more opportunities to develop and practise your reading, writing, number and computer skills in other subjects so that you improve them even more.

Keep working hard at all those things you enjoy doing at school and we wish you every success in the future.

Best wishes

Nichola Perry Lead inspector