

St John's Church of England Primary School, Sevenoaks

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118606
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	313012
Inspection date	10 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Paul Missin

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	61
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Pauline Cooley
Headteacher	Margaret Pearson
Date of previous school inspection	8 November 2004
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Bayham Road Sevenoaks TN13 3XD
Telephone number	01732 453944
Fax number	01732 740552

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school is much smaller than most other primary schools. Children mostly start the Reception class with knowledge and skills that are very low for their age, however, when they started school, the current class was much closer to expected levels. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above the national average. The most common areas of need are learning, behavioural and social difficulties. A small proportion has autism and severe learning difficulties. Most pupils have White British heritage but increasingly pupils come from a wider range of ethnic backgrounds, including several from Eastern Europe. A small number are learning English for the first time. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average and the mobility of pupils is much higher than in most other schools. There is a significant imbalance between the proportion of boys and girls in the different year groups across the school. The school has Healthy School, Active Mark and Eco School awards.

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 Church of England Primary school provides a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils. It has a prominent profile in the local community and serves its neighbourhood well. The school has adapted well to some recent changes in staffing and in the context of the local area, including a significant increase in families from Eastern Europe. The large proportion of pupils with learning difficulties, the high mobility of pupils and the continuing low standards reached remain significant challenges.

When they start school, children have standards that are well below those expected for their age, and many enter the school with complex learning needs. An increasing proportion speak English as an additional language. On entering Year 1 and by Year 2, standards are still below average in writing and mathematics and well below in reading, but overall, standards have been rising each year since 2004. Standards have remained well below average by the end of Year 6, but most pupils have made sound progress in their learning from their different starting points, some of which were particularly low. Achievement is therefore satisfactory. Teaching is also satisfactory, with some good features. These include the positive way that pupils are managed and the way their contributions to school and classwork are valued. Pupils are expected to behave well in class and around the school and they do. Behaviour, attitudes and the relationships in the school community are all good. However, sometimes the pace of lessons is too leisurely and teachers do not have sufficiently high expectations of the speed at which pupils can work and the depth of study required. Sometimes, the focus of the lesson and the pupils' appreciation of what they are supposed to learn are not sufficiently clear. The curriculum overall is satisfactory. It is enhanced imaginatively by a good range of interesting clubs, visits and visitors which the pupils enjoy. It promotes pupils' personal development well. Pupils feel safe, secure and well looked after and enjoy what the school provides. The school continues to work hard to encourage better attendance. However, the well below average overall attendance is explained by a small number of families with persistent absentees. Pupils have a good understanding of how to be healthy and safe and have a good appreciation of right and wrong. They contribute positively to the school and the wider community.

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The headteacher ensures that school improvement planning is at the heart of the school's work but the new leadership role of other teachers is underdeveloped. Whilst there is a focus on raising standards, the current view is too narrow and does not fully embrace all the targets which the school has set itself. Governors support the school satisfactorily. The school has a satisfactory capacity to secure further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children start school with knowledge and skills that are well below those expected for their age. Standards in social development and early language skills are particularly low. By the end of the EYFS, standards are still below and some times well below average, although in 2008, standards in personal, social and emotional development had been raised considerably. Children achieve satisfactorily in the EYFS.

Children are settled well and soon become happy, secure and confident learners. A good range of appropriate activities is provided both inside and outside the classroom covering the required

areas of learning. An important weakness is that the current curriculum does not sufficiently promote children's independent learning. Although a good range of opportunities is provided, effective access to the full curriculum is limited because activities that are organised by the teacher are timetabled separately from child-led activities. As a result, children do not have sufficient opportunity to learn from purposeful play. There is a satisfactory emphasis on welfare provision and the development of personal skills. Adults mostly intervene skilfully to encourage children's learning and staff make regular assessments of what children know and can do. Plans are already in hand to make the use of assessment more consistent and to use data to set learning targets for the children. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The new EYFS leader has made a good start in taking on her responsibilities and there are good, effective links with work in Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and accelerate progress by improving the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' learning and by using targets more clearly in the school's improvement planning.
- Re-focus the curriculum in the EYFS to ensure that children have more opportunity to learn through play and to make choices about their own learning.
- Improve the rate of attendance. 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

In the most recent national tests and teacher assessments, standards in Year 2 were below average in writing and mathematics, but well below average in reading. By Year 6, standards in English, mathematics and science were well below average. However, pupils' progress and achievement is satisfactory. The value that the school adds to its pupils between Year 2 and Year 6 is similar to that in most schools. The school's assessment information and the evidence of pupils' most recent work indicate that pupils are continuing to make satisfactory progress. Most pupils in Year 6 have met their previous targets and are on track to meet their current ones. Those who need extra help with their learning make satisfactory progress because of the sound support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils demonstrate good social skills and a mature awareness of right and wrong. They behave well in the playground and around the school, and in lessons they are eager and ready to learn. Relationships across the school community are good. Pupils' enjoyment of school is evident in observations of lessons and through conversations with them. However, despite the school's hard work, attendance is very low. There is a continuing problem of a small number of persistent absentees whose parents fail to send them to school regularly. The situation is compounded by high mobility amongst pupils, which causes new issues to frequently arise. Pupils feel safe and they confidently rely on staff to sort out problems they may have. Pupils have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles. They are keen to be involved in the school community and make the most of what the school has to offer in clubs, trips, the school council and the eco team. They are prepared satisfactorily for their secondary education and beyond.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers manage pupils well. Classrooms are well ordered and organised. Pupils behave well, relationships are positive and attitudes are constructive. Teachers often provide appropriate practical activities for the pupils to follow; for example, a lesson for a Years 5 and 6 group had 'real' containers for pupils to use to measure and record the volume of contents. Pupils are given good opportunity to work together and they have a good understanding of their learning targets. However, teachers' planning does not consistently show the activities which are planned for pupils of different abilities in each class and which are clearly matched to National Curriculum criteria. Sometimes, teachers' expectations of the pace at which pupils need to work are too low.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides a sound focus on the provision of basic literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils' personal development is promoted and encouraged well. Pupils know how to stay safe and be healthy and they get good opportunity to take part in physical activities, in lessons and after school. The curriculum is carefully and sensitively modified for pupils who may be vulnerable or in need. Provision is made interesting and relevant by additional opportunities through special focus days, through work on the 'Eco School' and through the teaching of French. A good number of interesting visits and visitors to the school also help to make learning fun for the pupils. There are good links with the local community and through opportunities to visit other schools. Work is being done to provide stronger links between different subjects. This new approach has only been recently introduced. The curriculum, especially in EYFS, is not sufficiently refined to ensure that pupils consistently make better progress in their learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Procedures are in place to ensure that all pupils are well looked after. Child protection procedures, and those to minimise risks and ensure that all adults with access to pupils are fully police checked, meet requirements. Pupils with learning difficulties and those speaking English as an additional language are identified effectively and their needs are met satisfactorily. Confusion in the school's recording procedures in distinguishing clearly between the two groups has been clarified. There are good links with outside agencies to support vulnerable pupils. Support for pupils' academic guidance is satisfactory. Assessment data are used well to set pupils useful learning targets which are prominently displayed in classrooms and which pupils know and appreciate. However, the marking of pupils' work is not consistently effective in helping them to know the next steps in their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

There have been recent changes in leadership which have affected the school's capacity to move forward. Many of the middle managers in this small school are new to their posts and

their roles are still being consolidated. However, the school has enthusiastically and successfully embraced new and innovative school support procedures through local authority intervention. This has brought rigour and coherence to the process of planning for improvement. The headteacher has ensured that school improvement planning is at the heart of its work but the focus is not fully on the drive to raise overall standards in English, mathematics and science. Sometimes the school does not work out clearly enough how to judge the success of different initiatives, particularly in relation to raising standards. The school serves its community well. Its effective co-operation with local schools and its work with the different ethnic groups in the community help to promote community cohesion, which is satisfactory overall. Governors have an increasingly detailed knowledge of the working of the school and are finding more effective ways to support and challenge its work.

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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	3
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	3
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	4
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 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?	3

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 eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

11 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St John's Church of England Primary School, Sevenoaks, TN13 3XD

Thank you for making us so welcome when my colleague and I came to the school recently to see how well you were doing. We enjoyed talking to you and seeing you at work and at play.

Here are some of the best things about your school

- You enjoy school, and you are pleased with the opportunities which the school provides.
- The curriculum is made interesting by a good number of visits, visitors to the school and after-school clubs which you can attend.
- The school uses links with other schools effectively.
- You behave well in class and around the school. You all work and play well together.

There are a few things that we think could be even better

- You need to work hard with your teachers to ensure that you continue to raise the standards of your work in English, mathematics and science, and make the best possible progress in your learning.
- Teachers need to make sure that their marking of your work, and the focus of each lesson shows you more clearly what you have to learn and how to get better.
- The school should work more closely with your parents to ensure that more of you attend school regularly. Thank you again for your welcome.

We wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Paul Missin

Lead inspector