

St John's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118611
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	313015
Inspection date	15 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Terry Elston

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	658
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Sharland
Headteacher	Andrew Blundell
Date of previous school inspection	14 July 2003
School address	Cunningham Road Tunbridge Wells TN4 9EW
Telephone number	01892 678980
Fax number	01892 678989

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: • the opportunities provided for pupils in Key Stage 1 to develop their writing skills • provision for children in the Foundation Stage • pupils' enjoyment of school and their awareness of how to stay safe and live healthy lives • the contribution to leadership and management made by a range of staff in the school. The inspector gathered evidence from observations of lessons; discussions with pupils, governors and staff; tracking pupils' progress; analysis of attendance; and gaining the views of parents. 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, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is a large school that admits pupils from a wide range of pre-school playgroups in the area. Attainment on entry to Reception is broadly as expected of pupils of this age. Around 20% of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, which is similar to most schools. Just over 11% of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds, but few are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language.

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 school that justifies its high reputation in the local community. An important reason for the school's success lies in the strong leadership and management, not least by the headteacher, whose influence can be felt in all aspects of the school's work. The headteacher is supported well by other senior leaders and the knowledgeable governors, who share his vision and high expectations for the school. The rigorous tracking of pupils' progress towards challenging targets and regular evaluations of the quality of teaching and learning enable the leaders to evaluate the school's effectiveness exceptionally well and rectify any weaknesses. The provision is enhanced by good partnerships with other schools that enable the leaders to share expertise and make the best of each other's strengths. This, together with the consistently good teaching, explains why pupils progress quickly to attain above-average standards in English, mathematics, science, and information and communication technology (ICT) by the time they leave. Children make a good start in the Reception classes and attainment is above average in all areas by the end of the year. This good progress continues in Years 1 and 2, although the school recognises that more-able pupils could do better in writing. Last year, fewer pupils reached the highest levels than was the case nationally.

Pupils think the world of the school and say the best thing about it is the teachers. They appreciate the way that teachers make learning fun and always have time to help them when they are struggling. As one pupil put it, 'They soon see when you are stuck and come quickly to give you one-to-one help until you understand what to do.' Teachers are very good at using computers in their lessons and pupils enjoy moving letters around the large whiteboards in literacy or counting the faces of shapes in numeracy. Teachers have very high expectations of pupils' behaviour, which is outstanding.

Pupils speak highly of the interesting curriculum and the wide range of clubs after school that over half of them attend regularly. The curriculum is enriched by many opportunities for pupils to visit places of interest and take part in residential trips. These help bring the curriculum to life and do much to develop pupils' personal and social skills. The curriculum provides extensive guidance on healthy living and pupils develop an excellent understanding of how to eat the right foods and take good care of their bodies.

The school's very strong focus on pupils' spiritual development means that they learn to think very deeply about issues such as poverty and the wonders of nature. This shows in their vivid and often poignant writing. For example, one Year 6 pupil wrote, 'I could see cracked and fragile leaves dancing in the topaz moon wind.' However, the school is justified in seeing the need to provide younger, more able pupils with more opportunities to develop their writing skills to the full. Pupils have many opportunities to contribute to their community and they relish their responsibilities as members of the school council or as 'Buddies' when they support younger or troubled pupils. By helping to make the school rules, pupils develop an exceptional awareness of right and wrong. This is one reason why bullying is rare and pupils feel so safe at school. Pupils from all ethnic backgrounds work and play well together and there is a strong sense of community. These opportunities, together with pupils' good progress in literacy, numeracy and ICT, make them very well prepared for the future.

The school provides very effective support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and they make good progress as a result. Teaching assistants are skilled and are particularly

good at helping pupils with reading difficulties. Pupils with particular talents benefit from many opportunities to develop their skills in areas such as chess, music, drama and sport.

Parents value highly the way the school cares for their children. They rightly feel that the staff have got the balance just right with, as one parent wrote, 'a healthy commitment to work, play and pastoral care'. Health and safety and child protection systems are robust and monitored closely by the staff and the well-informed governing body. The detailed assessment systems provide a clear picture of pupils' progress and show where the school needs to provide extra support.

The school has done well since the last inspection and has rectified the few weaknesses identified. With such strong leadership and good teachers, it is well set to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The provision in the Reception classes is good. The comprehensive home-school links ensure that children make a smooth transition to school. The detailed assessments provide accurate measures of children's strengths and weaknesses and teachers use them effectively to plan activities at the right level. Teachers and teaching assistants make learning fun and children love coming to school. They make good progress in developing their academic and personal skills so that nearly all are working securely within or beyond the expected goals by the end of the year. The curriculum is planned very carefully to ensure children have the right balance of academic work to improve their reading, writing and number skills and time to develop their independence and social skills through play.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more opportunities in Key Stage 1 to develop the writing skills of more-able pupils.

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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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ 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	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?	2
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?	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	1
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

16 November 2007

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of St John's C of E Primary School, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN4 9EW

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school. I really enjoyed seeing you work so hard in lessons and play so happily in the playground. Those of you who were kind enough to speak to me showed how proud you are of your school. You are right to be, because it is a good school.

What I liked most about your school:

- You are very friendly and kind to each other.
- You work very hard and make good progress. The standard of your work is better than in most schools.
- Your behaviour is excellent, both in class and out in the playground.
- You know a lot about how to stay safe and live healthy lives.
- You do a lot to help people who are not so lucky as you.
- The leaders are good at improving the school.
- You love the many clubs at lunchtime and after school that teach you important skills in things like ICT, music and sport.
- Your teachers are doing a good job. They work very hard to plan interesting work and make your lessons fun.
- All staff at the school take excellent care of you and keep you safe.

What we would like the school to do now:

- Make sure the writing of the younger pupils is as good as it could be.

Good luck for the future!

Yours sincerely

Terry Elston Lead inspector