

The Spalding St John The Baptist Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120613
Local Authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	313694
Inspection dates	12–13 June 2008
Reporting inspector	John Brennan

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	419
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev P Garland
Headteacher	Mr P Reid
Date of previous school inspection	30 June 2003
School address	Hawthorn Bank Spalding PE11 1JQ
Telephone number	01775 722644
Fax number	01775 766196

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This larger than average primary school draws pupils from a wide area of Spalding. This is reflected in children's skills and abilities on entry to the school, which although covering a wide spectrum, are broadly speaking typical for their age. The proportion of pupils receiving free school meals is below average, as is the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or other disabilities. A small but increasing number of pupils from a range of ethnic groups other than White British join the school, several of whom are at the early stages of learning English. The school has achieved the Activemark and Sportsmark awards.

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. Pupils acquire many of the academic and personal skills needed for their future life. The school's successes and its good improvement since the last inspection have not happened by accident. The school is well led and managed. The headteacher, aided by key staff and effective governors, has energetically pursued improvements. Good attention has been given to training in the art of teaching and in leadership. The school's evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses is accurate. It is a sign of the school's continuing ambition that it is modest about its achievements. With the exception of devising a coordinated approach for the increasing number of pupils who join the school speaking little English, plans to secure future improvement are well written. The school's record of accomplishment gives it good capacity to achieve these. However, some leaders, particularly senior leaders, have too many responsibilities and so improvement is too dependent upon a few key players.

Pupils achieve well to reach standards that are significantly above average. This includes science, a weakness noted in the last inspection. Pupils do well because the overall quality of teaching and learning is good. However, there is some variability in this and in the pattern of achievement. In the main, teaching is more exciting and involves pupils in learning more successfully in Reception and Years 1, 5 and 6 than elsewhere in the school. Teachers work, and pupils learn, within a good curriculum. Although yet to be fully achieved, successful attempts have been made to make the curriculum practical, relevant and interesting. Pupils' obvious enjoyment of school is enhanced by the wide range of clubs and enrichment opportunities which many take part in.

Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils are courteous and friendly. Most behave well and get on well with each other. The school has made good attempts to recognise and celebrate different cultures so that it operates as a harmonious Christian community. However, the lack of a coordinated approach to tailoring teaching and learning to the particular needs of pupils at the early stages of learning English has resulted in their academic progress being better in some classes than in others. With this exception, the quality of care, support and guidance is good. Pupils' academic progress is carefully tracked and information used well to identify individual improvement targets and to involve pupils in the quest to achieve these. Pupils and their parents regard the school highly. Many parents rightly feel that their children are secure, happy and do well in their time at school.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

All children, including the increasing proportion that join the school speaking little English, make good progress in Foundation Stage. By the time they move into Year 1, most children reach the levels typical for their age and a growing number exceed them. Children do especially well in their mathematical development and in personal, social and emotional development. Thoughtful induction helps children settle quickly into school. Routines are well established, so that children behave well and enjoy their learning. Staff work together very well. Aided by imaginative improvements to the outdoor area a good balance is struck between indoor and outdoor learning and between adult-led and child-led learning. Teacher-led activities are particularly well taught but children can be left to their own devices too much when choosing activities for themselves. As a result, they do not always make the most of the learning opportunities the wide range of activities and equipment aims to promote.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve achievement in Years 2 to 4 by ensuring that teaching consistently engages pupils in worthwhile activities
- Distribute leadership roles more evenly
- Construct a coordinated approach to provision for pupils who join the school speaking little English.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well to reach standards that are significantly above average. Consistently good teaching sees pupils make good progress, particularly in their early and later years at the school. Children achieve well in Reception with good progress maintained through Year 1. Pupils also achieve well in Years 5 and 6. However, in intervening years, while achievement is at least satisfactory, not all pupils achieve as well as they might. This is because teaching across the pairs of classes in each year group varies in quality. Standards at Year 2 are above average in reading, writing and mathematics although relatively few pupils reach the higher level in writing. By the end of Year 6, significant numbers of pupils attain beyond expected levels. As a result, standards in English, mathematics and science are well above average. Pupils who are finding it difficult to read, write or count receive appropriate support and progress well. There are examples of pupils who arrive at the school speaking little English doing well, in Reception and Year 6, for example. However, this relies on the strengths of individual teachers rather than a managed approach. As a result, their progress in some lessons is no better than satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are enthusiastic and enjoy school. Attendance rates are above the national average. Pupils have a good understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle. At break times and after school, many engage in varied physical activities. Thoughtful collective worship and regular visits to church help pupils to be reflective. Alongside a growing understanding of different cultures, this is indicative of pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The vast majority of pupils behave well both within and outside of lessons. Many pupils show an ability to work together, share ideas and work as part of a team. Playtimes are social as well as active occasions. Pupils say they feel safe and that rare incidents of bullying and misbehaviour are swiftly dealt with. Pupils willingly take on responsibility for school life, such as undertaking peer mediator or playground leader roles. This helps them make a difference not only to individual pupils but also to the school as a whole.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Lessons invariably have clarity of purpose and teachers manage pupils in an encouraging manner. As a result, pupils know what is expected of them and many try hard. The ability of teachers to build on this through setting thoughtful and engaging tasks sets the best teaching apart, such as in Year 6, where pupils successfully devised, acted and edited a long-lost scene from Macbeth. Here perceptive questioning, interesting tasks, broken down into short term goals

and a varied approach incorporating talk, to clarify thinking, note taking and acting grabbed and maintained pupils' interests. Such teaching is also found throughout the school including in some classes from Year 2 to 4 but this is not always the case. There are occasions here when teachers talk for too long without involving enough pupils, leading to restlessness and a lack of engagement by less confident pupils. Activities are not always stimulating or thought provoking enough. Marking, especially in writing and science gives pupils perceptive guidance. Many pupils are aware of their improvement targets and there are growing examples of pupils critically appraising their own and their peers' work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has set about making the curriculum practical and engaging and there are signs of this working well. This is seen in an investigative approach to science and to more 'hands on' learning elsewhere but especially in Year 1. Growing examples are found of teachers linking learning across subjects to add interest and purpose but this is still bedding down and is yet to be fully achieved. The well thought out curriculum for pupils' personal development has had a positive impact on behaviour and relationships throughout the school. A broad range of additional activities such as a comprehensive range of well-attended sports clubs and out of school visits adds much to pupils' experiences and enjoyment of school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The good quality of care helps pupils work and play in a safe environment. Safeguarding checks are fully in place. Relationships are such that parents and pupils are confident to approach adults in school and feel that they can readily seek help and advice when needed. The school's systems to monitor pupils' progress are used effectively to spot pupils 'off track' for achieving their targets. Perceptive individual guidance about improving work helps many to become 'on track' again. Pupils with additional literacy and numeracy needs are well supported through a coordinated, personally tailored support. However, the school's approach to supporting pupils at the earliest stages of learning English is somewhat piecemeal and varies from class to class.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher leads the school well and has created a sense of common purpose and ambition. Helped by searching self-evaluation he has focused the school's efforts firmly on achievement. Challenging targets are set and met. Consultation with parents and pupils means that they have positive views of the school. For the most part, the school has targeted the right areas for improvement, with actions captured within a well written school improvement plan. Careful attention has been given to developing the leadership qualities of other staff through targeted training. As a result there are examples of good leadership, for instance in science, leading to improvements in areas of relative weakness. However, at present too many responsibilities are in the hands of too few. In particular, some senior leaders are overburdened with overseeing important subjects as well as leading a phase of the school. Governors give the school good support and are increasingly searching and questioning of its work.

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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?	3
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?	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	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

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	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	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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

16 June 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of The Spalding St John the Baptist Church of England School, Spalding, PE11 1JQ.

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school recently. There are a lot of you but it still felt like we were visiting one big happy family. This is because you behave well and play and work well together.

We thought you would like to know what we thought about your school. We were impressed with how much you knew about the importance of exercise and how active you were at playtimes and through the good range of clubs many of you join. Lots of you know about your work targets, and we could see many of you striving hard to achieve these.

There are lots of nice things happening in your classrooms and many of you are doing very well with your work. You told us, and we could see for ourselves, that you like work that makes you think, work and talk together and which is interesting. Many teachers are good at setting you such work and keeping you on your toes and involved throughout the lesson. This does not happen yet in all classes. We have asked the school to find ways of making sure that this changes and that such interesting work becomes part and parcel of the work in all classes.

Your school is made up of lots of different pupils with lots of different needs. The school does a good job in finding different ways of helping those of you with different needs. We did feel however, that it needed to give more thought to how it helps those of you who join the school from other countries and need help in learning to speak English. We have asked the school to put some plans together for this.

You go to a good school and one which has some good ideas about how to be better still. We have asked the school to think carefully about who should take these new ideas forward so that all staff become involved. You can play your part by continuing to try hard and to giving it your best when new ideas come along.

Thank you once again and good luck in the future.

Yours sincerely,

John Brennan Lead inspector