

St John's CofE (C) Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124297
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	314879
Inspection date	15 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Chris Kessell

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	364
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Blake
Headteacher	David Rowley
Date of previous school inspection	2 February 2004
School address	Weston Road Stafford ST16 3RL
Telephone number	01785 251960
Fax number	01785 251960

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the school's strategies to improve pupils' achievement, whether recent improvements in the quality of teaching are being maintained, and the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels. Evidence was gathered from the school's data on pupils' progress, visits to lessons and analysis of pupils' work and discussions with staff, pupils and chair of governors. Further information was obtained from the analysis of responses to the parents' questionnaire and school documentation. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments of these areas, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Most pupils in this above average size school come from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is increasing, with many coming from Nepalese backgrounds. This is the result of a former RAF base in the school's catchment area being used to locate a Gurkha regiment. The proportion of pupils who either leave or join the school other than at the normal times is above average. Children's attainment on entry has changed over the last few years, and is now below the level expected. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average.

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 provides its pupils with a satisfactory standard of education. It is popular with parents. 'My child feels happy and secure at school,' is a typical comment. Pupils enjoy their learning, actively taking part in class and group discussions and show enthusiasm for their work. Year 2 pupils, for example, chatted maturely with their 'talking partners' when discussing the story of Katie Morag.

Pupils leave at the end of Year 6 with average standards in English, mathematics and science. This represents satisfactory achievement, although progress has been uneven as pupils have moved through the school. This is a result of inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and has been a recent focus of improvement for the headteacher and governors. The local authority has been effective in providing support to improve teaching. Although there is still some way to go, the quality of teaching has steadily improved, as has the proportion of good lessons. Classroom relationships are good and almost all pupils behave well. In the best lessons, teachers have high expectations of all their pupils, lessons are conducted at a quick pace and pupils are continually challenged. The proportion of good teaching is still not high enough to ensure that all pupils make good progress. Too often, teachers' expectations of pupils, particularly the higher attainers, are not high enough and lessons have insufficient pace. Pupils are well motivated but this enthusiasm is not always captured by all teachers to enable pupils to develop new skills and understanding at a rapid rate. Pupils with learning difficulties generally make the same progress as their classmates. Where lessons are well organised and pupils are given work that is well matched to targets in their individual education plans, they achieve more and make better progress.

Aspects of the school's satisfactory curriculum enable pupils to develop good personal skills and qualities. Provision for personal, social and health education is effective and pupils have a good understanding of how to adopt safe practices. Year 6 pupils talk confidently about the dangers of drugs and smoking and are able to point out health and safety concerns out of school, such as busy main roads. All pupils behave sensibly in and out of classrooms. They appreciate the 'loads of clubs' they have for sports and opportunities for exercise. It was impressive to hear about the pupils who participated in the 'Stafford Fun Run' to raise funds for playground equipment and to observe a good number of pupils stretching and warming-up in the jogging club before school. Pupils are aware of the importance of a well-balanced and sensible diet but are less enthusiastic about adopting healthy eating.

Pupils get on well with each other and the adults that look after them. Pupils and parents spoke enthusiastically about the school's recent well-attended 'multicultural extravaganza.' This involved 'visiting' countries around the world to get an insight into the way that different people live. Pupils are keen to take on responsibility within the school community. A good example of this is the work of the anti-bullying council, who offer advice about bullying and try to resolve any ongoing issues between individuals. Pupils are very aware of others less fortunate than themselves and readily take part in regular fundraising for a range of charities.

Provision and progress are satisfactory in the Foundation Stage and pupils are given a sound start to school. The school teaches all of the subjects of the National Curriculum, but basic literacy and numeracy skills are not developed effectively through work in subjects such as science, geography and history. Pupils do not always take sufficient pride in their presentation. The school provides a happy, friendly and caring atmosphere that is appreciated by the pupils

and parents. Pupils' attendance levels are above average. Arrangements to safeguard and protect pupils meet requirements. New pupils to the school settle in well. The school has provided a successful Family Learning programme for the Nepalese children in the Foundation Stage, which has enabled them to quickly become part of the school. As a result of the support provided by the school, pupils from minority ethnic groups make at least satisfactory progress.

Pupils' progress is monitored regularly in reading, writing and mathematics, and the school is in a good position to identify individuals who need additional support with their work. However, this information is not always used well to provide pupils with levels of work that are appropriate to their abilities. All pupils have targets for literacy and numeracy. These are having a limited impact on improving pupils' achievement because many pupils are confused about their use and importance. Pupils' work is marked regularly, often with supportive comments that offer encouragement. However, pupils are not consistently provided with enough information on how to improve their work.

Parents and pupils are appreciative of the thoughtful leadership provided by the headteacher. He and the governors have a clear vision for the school and an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Recent improvements in the quality of teaching and the greater emphasis on consistency in pupils' progress indicate that there is satisfactory capacity for further improvement. The headteacher is well supported by the deputy headteacher and together they make an effective management team. However, they have had to take on significantly more responsibility than one would normally expect in a school of this size because management roles at other levels are not as well developed. Good plans are in place to further improve and enlarge the school's management team, but it is too early to judge their impact. Governors are supportive of the school but a number are still developing their expertise in holding the school to account for the quality of education it provides.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children make satisfactory progress in relation to their starting points. Standards are below nationally expected levels by the beginning of Year 1. The good emphasis on developing children's personal, social and emotional skills successfully promotes children's good attitudes to school and their positive relationships. They listen carefully to instructions and are comfortable playing with one another or undertaking tasks independently. The curriculum is appropriately planned to cover all of the required areas for learning and provides a reasonable balance of adult-led activities and those undertaken by the children. Occasionally, there is an over-emphasis on instruction by adults, which limits the children taking responsibility for themselves. Recent staff disruption has meant a small minority of children have made more limited progress but this has been successfully addressed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all lessons are challenging and conducted at a quick pace and that teachers have high expectations, particularly for the higher-attaining pupils.
- Provide pupils with targets that contribute to improving their achievement, along with clear guidance on how to reach the targets and improve their work overall.
- Develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects such as science, geography and history.

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.

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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?	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?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the 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

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?	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 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	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**

16 April 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St John's C of E (C) Primary School, Stafford ST16 3RL

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school recently to see how well you were doing. I enjoyed finding out about your school, watching your lessons and talking with some of you. I found out that you go to a satisfactory school, which means that it does some things well, but could also improve aspects of its work. Most of you make satisfactory progress so that by the time you leave in Year 6, you reach average standards in English, mathematics and science. You make good progress in lessons when you work quickly, are continually challenged by your teachers and everyone has to work hard, especially those of you who find your work easy. I have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to provide more lessons like this.

I was impressed with your good behaviour and how well you get on with each other. Most of you enjoy school and feel very safe. I was particularly impressed with the work of the anti-bullying council. You know a lot about how to keep fit and healthy. It was good to see so many of you enjoying yourselves at the jogging club before school. Although you know the importance of a good diet, not everyone eats healthily at lunchtime.

Most of you try hard in your lessons to improve your work. The targets you are given in literacy and numeracy are not always as helpful as they could be. I have asked the school to make sure that you are provided with targets that will be more helpful with your learning and that teachers' marking gives you good advice on how to reach the targets and to improve your work. Many of you could help your teachers by trying to present your work more neatly.

I have asked the school to improve one more thing. It would be helpful if you could use your literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects like science, geography and history. Keep enjoying school and doing your best.

Best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Chris Kessell Lead inspector

16 April 2008



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