

St John's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124781
Local Authority	SUFFOLK LA
Inspection number	315057
Inspection dates	10–11 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Andrew Matthews

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	208
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Beryl Whayman
Headteacher	Mrs Helen Picton
Date of previous school inspection	18 April 2005
School address	Victory Road Ipswich IP4 4LE
Telephone number	01473 727554
Fax number	01473 723948

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St John's is a popular and oversubscribed Church of England primary school on the outskirts of Ipswich. The great majority of pupils in this average sized school are White British, and very few pupils have English as an additional language. Children enter the Reception class with the expected abilities for their age. Few pupils are eligible for free school meals. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. The school has received several awards, including Investors in People, Activemark for sports and Healthy Schools accreditation.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

St John's is an outstanding school that has made significant improvements since the previous inspection. It provides an excellent education and level of care for its pupils. The pupils develop extremely positive relationships with their teachers and each other that help to promote their excellent personal development and well-being. Pupils' behaviour is extremely good because they know the rules and how they lead to an orderly and happy place for them to work and learn.

The staff are a very strong team and they have worked hard and most successfully to raise standards for all pupils, most markedly in mathematics. Pupils' targets are challenging and regularly reviewed and revised. Rigorous scrutiny of pupils' work enables teachers to plan lessons that have the maximum impact on learning. Any underachievement is quickly identified and steps taken to provide extra support. As a result, pupils achieve extremely well as they move through the school and standards are exceptionally high in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6, with a very high proportion of pupils performing above expectations. Pupils also make very good progress in music and sport and achieve well in information and communication technology (ICT), where the new resources have greatly improved the provision.

The school is extremely well led and managed. The headteacher is very well supported by her staff and governors and has a clear vision for the school that is firmly focused on raising standards further. The staff have a strong team spirit and a united confidence that they can make things better for the pupils. Leadership and management in the curriculum have been strengthened because the headteacher is very good at using teachers' individual strengths. The school has an extremely good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses because of its very effective self-evaluation procedures. Its priorities for future development are well chosen and accurate and, as such, the school is extremely well placed for further improvement. Overall the school gives excellent value for money.

The quality of teaching is excellent because teachers are regularly observed and helped to develop their practice. Lessons are well paced and challenging, resulting in well motivated pupils who learn at a fast pace. Teachers make very effective use of interactive whiteboards to enliven learning. The needs of different abilities are met by the careful grouping of pupils to ensure all are appropriately challenged. Teachers' marking has a real impact on the quality of pupils' work and pupils greatly value teachers' comments. The curriculum is now outstanding and provides pupils with an exciting range of learning opportunities in the classroom, through music tuition and on the sports field. The creative dimension is being developed by the careful combining of subjects. Year 2 pupils, for example, have produced some really exciting written work about Florence Nightingale.

The large majority of parents are very supportive of what the school offers and speak highly of the quality of care and support that their children receive. However, a minority of parents expressed concerns about some aspects of the school's provision. Inspectors found no evidence to substantiate these views, which they felt had come about by the school's failure to share all its considerable strengths and successes with parents and the local community.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children make an outstanding start to their education at St. John's. The Reception class provides a secure and challenging environment and children settle quickly and happily. There is very strong emphasis on developing children's self-confidence and independence. Relationships between adults and children are very good. The carefully-planned curriculum meets the children's needs well and the outdoor area is used effectively as an extension of classroom learning. The school has rightly identified the need for an outside covered area so activities will not be affected by wet weather. Teaching is very good and sometimes outstanding, with the teaching assistant a valued and valuable member of the team. There is a strong and successful emphasis on teaching children the relationship between letters and the sounds they make. As a result, children are rapidly gaining the tools to develop their early reading and writing skills. Standards are above national expectations by the time children start in Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure regular communications keep parents informed of the school's achievements and successes.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

The achievement of all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is excellent. Standards have improved since the previous inspection and are now exceptionally high in English, mathematics and science by the time pupils leave Year 6. Children start in Reception with standards in line with national expectations and make excellent overall progress that continues right through the school. In Year 2, pupils' attainment is well above average and standards in mathematics have really taken off. Pupils' achievement is most noteworthy in Years 5 and 6, where teaching is of the highest order. Pupils also achieve well in subjects such as ICT and personal, social and health education because their learning across the curriculum is effectively woven into these subjects. Standards in music are also very high and many pupils learn instruments and play in the school orchestra. The school also experiences much success in sporting competitions because of the coaching expertise of staff.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. They greatly enjoy school, get on very well together and their attendance is above average. They are extremely welcoming, polite and their behaviour is outstanding. Pupils flourish in this environment where each individual is helped to play a full part within the school community. An active school council represents the pupils' views well and gets things done. Pupils respond very well to their roles of prefects and house captains. They contribute to local community activities and raise funds for charities, such as Seeds for Africa. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent, with pupils showing mature respect for the views, values and beliefs of others. Pupils feel safe and comfortable at school. They understand well the need for healthy lifestyles. Tasty vegetables grown by the pupils themselves are understandably popular at lunchtimes.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are excellent because teachers know their pupils very well and plan exciting lessons which challenge and motivate their classes. As a result, pupils are extremely enthusiastic about school and work hard in lessons. The interactive whiteboards and computers are used very effectively to challenge pupils and keep lessons moving at a fast pace. The work of experienced learning mentors is well planned to meet the varied needs of pupils. The support and planning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is very effective and they are extremely well integrated with the work of the classes. Teachers' marking is supportive and gives pupils very clear guidance on how to improve their work and move towards their next targets. Standards in music are very high because of the school's great encouragement of pupils to learn an instrument.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is most effective in giving pupils key skills to develop their learning, with English, mathematics, physical education and music being noticeable strengths. Older pupils enjoy learning French from a specialist teacher. Enrichment weeks motivate pupils well and contribute to their enjoyment of learning. A strong feature is the personal, social and health education programme that is very successful in developing pupils' understanding of safe and healthy living. Out of school clubs, visitors to the school and residential and day visits all contribute significantly to pupils' enjoyment. The curriculum supports the needs of all pupils well and prepares them effectively for the next stage of their education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Provision for all aspects of pupils' safety and well-being are extremely thorough. Secure safeguarding and child protection procedures meet current requirements. There is a really caring and supportive environment in which pupils feel happy, safe and valued. Incidents of bullying and racism are very rare and there are good procedures to deal with them, should they occur. Pupils who have learning difficulties are quickly identified and supported very well. Links with outside agencies are good and there are profitable links with local schools to support gifted and talented pupils. Learning mentors support pupils well. Procedures for tracking pupils' achievements work very well, ensuring that all teachers know their pupils' capabilities and how to move their learning forward.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher provides excellent leadership and management for the school and has very successfully created an ethos of high expectations where everyone feels valued, cared for and respected. The highly effective management systems ensure staff know what to do and how to do it. The school has developed excellent self-evaluation procedures that ensure planned developments are most effective in helping the school improve. Parents, pupils and governors

are consulted and their views carefully considered in this process. However, the school is sometimes reticent about sharing its successes and so some parents remain unaware of how much better the school has become. Targets that are set really stretch the pupils and challenge the teachers. Subject co-ordinators carry out very effective monitoring, and the best teaching practice shared. The school's very effective staff development is recognised in the Investors in People award. Resources are used very effectively to enhance learning. The higher than average financial carry-forward into this year has been earmarked for the development of the Reception class outdoor area.

Governance is good and governors are now more adept at providing a critical challenge to the school as well as giving knowledgeable support in areas such as finance and health and safety. Their work has made a significant contribution to recent developments and the school's ability to improve further.

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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?	1
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	1

Achievement and standards

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

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?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
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	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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

14 October 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of St John's C of E(VA) Primary, Ipswich, IP4 4LE

Thank you for being so welcoming and helpful when we came to inspect your school. We really enjoyed talking with you and watching you working with your teachers. It was good to speak with your teachers about how well you do at school. We also enjoyed your singing in assemblies. We think that you and your teachers have worked very hard together to make a wonderful school that does so many things really well. There is only one thing it needs to do better.

What we liked most about your school

- Your headteacher is doing a fabulous job. She knows just what to do to make the school better for you.
- Your teachers and learning mentors look after you very well and help you reach high standards in English, mathematics, science, ICT and music.
- You have lots of opportunities to say how the school can get better.
- Your behaviour is excellent and you get on really well with each other and your teachers.
- Your governors work hard to help your school improve.
- Those of you who find work difficult are getting the right sort of help and you use it well.

What we have asked your school to do now

- Make sure that your parents know about all the great things going on in the school and about your sporting successes.

Andrew Matthews Lead inspector