

Knaresborough St John's CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133106
Local Authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	316042
Inspection dates	7–8 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Alison Thomson

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	282
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Christine Willoughby
Headteacher	Mrs Emma Higgins
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Stockwell Road Knaresborough North Yorkshire HG5 0JN
Telephone number	01423 863265
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St John's is a larger than average primary school serving an area of average, but mixed socio-economic disadvantage. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average. There is a lower than average percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than average and those holding a statement of special educational need is much higher than is usually found. The school was created in January 2007 through the amalgamation of Castle Church of England Junior School and Manor Infant School. The current headteacher was previously the headteacher of the junior school. Initially, the new school operated on two sites, then came together on its present site in September 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St John's is a new school that provides a good standard of education. Parents consider that it has 'a high profile in the town and has gained the respect of everyone'. The combination of good teaching and learning, a good curriculum and good care, guidance and support has led to the pupils achieving well and their personal development being excellent. Parental comments are very positive and captured by views such as, 'It's a privilege for my children to be part of the school - it is innovative and enthusiastic in all it does,' and 'St John's is an exceptionally good school - the whole package works!'

Since its formation in January 2007, following the amalgamation of an infant and junior school, improvements have been clearly evident. Central to these improvements has been the quiet, yet very effective, determination of the headteacher. Together with her senior leadership team, she has instilled a sense of togetherness, accountability and reflection amongst all the staff. Middle leaders have been given more responsibility in their subject areas and describe the support they receive as 'fantastic'. Governors have worked hard to ensure a seamless transition during the amalgamation of the schools and are increasingly holding the school to account.

From below average starting points on entry, pupils reach standards that are securely average by the end of Year 6. All pupils, regardless of ability, make good progress throughout the school because of the good focused support they receive from the teachers and teaching assistants. Pupils' personal development is outstanding. They have excellent relationships with teachers, behave very well and work very well together in class. They have an excellent understanding of the importance of being healthy; they feel safe, and know that their opinions and views are highly valued. The school council is particularly proud of the part they have played in deciding the new school uniform, play equipment and books for the library. Pupils appreciate the wide range of extra-curricular activities and said how much they enjoyed the 'happy and safe' school. When asked to describe the school, one pupil said, 'I get really excited when I wake up in the morning and know it's a school day.'

The school is well aware of its strengths and weaknesses. Many strategies have been put into place to bring about improvement and there are already signs that some of these are beginning to impact well on progress. For example, pupils are showing improvements in science throughout the school. The school recognises that it is important to embed and sustain all its new strategies to maximise their effect on raising pupil achievement. The school has put comprehensive action plans into place in all key areas. However, the evaluation of these plans could be more incisive with clearer, quantifiable success criteria to enable their impact to be assessed more easily. The fact that the school has achieved so much in such a short period of time indicates that the capacity for the school to improve further is good.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter Reception with skills that are slightly below those typical for their age in personal and social development and in speech and language. Some arrive without any pre-school experience. They settle quickly and make good progress so that by the time they leave the Reception year, most are broadly in line with national expectations in most areas. 'Thanks to the great staff and the positive environment, my child is learning and growing in many ways,' is a typical statement from Foundation Stage parents. Staff provide a language rich, lively and

stimulating environment. Regular assessments to monitor children's progress enable staff to set tasks that help children to learn quickly and plan activities that address the needs of particular groups. This enables, for example, the class where Reception age children work alongside Year 1 pupils to provide a good balance of opportunities for children to learn through play, tasks they choose for themselves or which come from teacher-led activities. Leadership and management are good and the impact of Foundation Stage staff in supporting good practice in learning skills in Key Stage 1 supports transition arrangements well. The school works closely with parents, who have worked alongside staff to create and develop the spectacular outdoor learning and sensory provision for children.

What the school should do to improve further

- Embed and sustain all the new strategies to maximise their effect on raising pupil achievement.
- Ensure that action plans are incisive and have measurable success criteria to allow their impact to be assessed effectively.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress throughout their time in school and this includes pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2 and by the end of Year 2, standards overall are in line with those seen nationally in mathematics, reading and writing. Progress has improved this year compared to last year. Progress from Year 2 to Year 6 is also good and improving. Standards at the end of Year 6 are securely average. Standards in English and mathematics are stronger than those in science, although there are signs that the relative underachievement in science has risen recently. Higher-attaining pupils make particularly good progress because of their mature attitude to learning and the emphasis on self-improvement in lessons. The school has very good tracking systems to identify any pupil who is underachieving and is addressing this with well thought out strategies. Despite being a relatively new school, many of these strategies are beginning to have a positive impact on the progress of the pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

'The sports leaders make playtimes such fun,' a pupil said as they left the lunch hall to join one of the many activities organised by Year 6 pupils in the playgrounds. This typified the enthusiastic response of pupils both to join in lunchtime clubs, take responsibility around the school and their exceptionally good awareness of healthy living. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and their attendance is good, exemplifying their outstanding enjoyment of school and learning. A strong Christian ethos supports pupils' understanding of right and wrong and contributes to their exceptionally friendly, confident and open manner with each other and with visitors. They have raised, with the support of their school council, considerable funds to support charities, and to supply a school in Sierra Leone with books. Pupils are proud to participate in community and school performances that celebrate their musical, artistic and dance skills. Behaviour is exemplary and makes a very strong contribution to pupils' learning and achievement. Pupils demonstrate a very sensitive awareness of their own and others' safety and are keen to stress how older pupils regularly take care of younger ones. This, along with their good progress in the basic skills of numeracy and literacy prepares them well for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers show enthusiasm for their subjects and plan their lessons well with appropriate and varied activities. There are excellent relationships between the pupils and their teachers and pupils show very good respect for each other. Literacy is used well to support learning in other areas, such as the emphasis on using correct scientific terminology. Learning outcomes are shared well with pupils and they are encouraged to help assess their own learning and that of their peers. Sometimes, however, not enough time is left at the end of the lessons to check how well the learning objectives have been met by all pupils. Teaching assistants work well with lower-attaining pupils so that their achievement matches that of their peers. In an outstanding lesson on writing police accounts, the work was matched extremely well to the capabilities of all the pupils so that most were able to make excellent progress in the lesson. Here, the teacher not only encouraged pupils to keep checking how well they were meeting the success criteria throughout the lesson, but also expertly guided them to reflect on how their work could be improved. Marking is carried out regularly and informs pupils well of the next steps they need to take in their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A good range of extra-curricular activities, a number initiated and sustained by pupils, makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development and enjoyment of school. A focus on the emotional aspects of learning is integral to supporting the raising of achievement throughout the school. There is a strong focus on themes, such as the Healthy Caf, Day. This increasingly supports numeracy, information and communication technology and literacy. Time devoted to issues such as equality, raises pupils' awareness of their responsibility to others. Parents especially appreciate the contribution that the school makes to their children's musical and arts achievements. The introduction of phonics is beginning to have a positive impact on standards. An important emphasis in the curriculum on sporting skills is making a dramatic difference to pupils' lifestyles. It has opened up leisure activities such as karate and dance to many pupils who would previously never have considered them. The chance to go on residential visits is valued by the pupils, as is the opportunity to grow their own vegetables in the school allotment.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well and make excellent progress in their personal development because of the very good pastoral care and strong academic guidance they receive in a strong supportive family atmosphere. Parents recognise this and their views are summed up by the comment, 'We appreciate the high quality care from the head and all the staff.' Praise and positive rewards lead to pupils' excellent behaviour and attitudes. Pupils say that an adult is always available if they have any concerns, but add that that there is, 'not much falling out here'. Staff pay careful attention to health and safety, including regular risk assessments. Child protection arrangements are robust and the school works very well with other agencies to support vulnerable pupils. Throughout the school, pupils are given clear advice on how to improve their work. They are developing good skills in evaluating their own work and that of others. There are good

partnerships with parents and other local schools to ensure smooth transition of pupils when they join and leave the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school has moved forward considerably under the strong leadership of the headteacher and is in a good position to improve further. The fresh start following the amalgamation of the two schools has been sensitively managed. There is a common commitment amongst the staff to raising standards and middle leaders work together well to monitor their subjects. There are detailed action plans in all areas, but many of these are not sharp enough in providing quantifiable measures of success. This means that it is not always easy to evaluate their effectiveness. Pupils are set challenging targets and there are good systems in place for assessing pupils' progress. There are many strategies in place to help raise pupil achievement. The school acknowledges that some of these strategies are still in their infancy and need time to become part of the school routine, before their full impact may be seen. There are good partnerships with outside agencies to promote learners' achievement and well-being. Parental response indicates a high level of support for the school's work and demonstrates the confidence they have in the school. Governors are supportive and increasingly becoming more effective in helping to bring about improvements.

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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	NA
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	3
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	2
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	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	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	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

We would like to thank you very much for the enjoyable time we spent with you when we inspected your school. You made us very welcome and we enjoyed talking to you and seeing all the interesting things that you do.

We liked many things about your school.

- You really enjoy school and behave exceptionally well, both in lessons and around the school.
- You understand very well how to be safe and healthy and you are very well prepared for your future.
- You enjoy the many clubs and visits the school has to offer.
- You look after each other very well and the adults in school also look after you well.
- Your teachers make your lessons exciting and interesting.
- Your teachers give you good advice on how to improve your work so that you can achieve well.

There are two things that we have asked the school to improve.

- Ask teachers to keep using all the new and exciting ideas they have to help you do even better than you do at present.
- Make sure that the school is very clear about how well it measures improvements.

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave us during our inspection.