

Hindley Green St John's Junior and Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106473
Local Authority	Wigan
Inspection number	319304
Inspection dates	5–6 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Sonja Oyen HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	202
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	T Fisher MBE
Headteacher	Miss Beverley Taylor
Date of previous school inspection	24 January 2007
School address	Atherton Road Hindley Green Wigan Lancashire WN2 4SD
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

St John's is a smaller than average Church of England school a few miles to the east of Wigan. Although most pupils come from the suburban village of Hindley Green, a few live some distance away. Many parents attended the school themselves. Nearly all pupils are White British and none speak English as an additional language. A few pupils are from the Traveller community. A small number of pupils are in the care of the local authority. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. Almost one in four pupils has been identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities and very few pupils have a statement of special educational need. When pupils start school in the Reception year their skills and knowledge are broadly typical for their age.

In January 2007 the school was judged to require special measures. Since then, HMI has inspected the school each term to evaluate its progress.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. St John's now provides a satisfactory quality of education and is in a sound position to improve further.

Since the inspection in January 2007, St John's has improved in nearly all aspects of its work with the result that leadership and management; teaching and learning; the curriculum; pastoral and academic care, guidance and support; and pupils' achievement are now satisfactory. The school has successfully lifted the quality of several key aspects to good, including the provision for those with particular learning needs, pupils' personal development and the quality of governance. It has sustained the good quality provision for the youngest children, who get off to a good start. Their willingness to learn and interest in activities are now evident in all classes. Pupils are achieving better than before and generally meeting their targets.

A good sign of the school's improvement is that Year 6 pupils are loathe to leave. They have enjoyed their last year and been good role models in their positive attitude and application. School councillors comment that life at school is now more fun and pupils are better behaved. Pupils like the choice of fruit and vegetable snacks each day and are finding it hard to wait for the new trim trail to open. During the inspection, pupils of all ages were excited about Airport Day and 'flying' to France, Mexico and India. Their keenness to make items, learn French phrases, sing and dance, as well as the effort and time put in by staff to arrange the day, typify the school's growing confidence to 'move out of the comfort zone'. The pace of improvement is quickening as all see the positive impact of changes on pupils' progress and performance. Governors and senior managers are proud of this new beginning after a tough period. They openly acknowledge that there is still considerable way to go to make St John's the best it can be and to convince all parents that things are truly on the up.

Pupils' learning has accelerated because of improvements in the quality of teaching and the development of effective systems to track pupils' progress. The teachers now have a well-founded picture of how each pupil is doing and where they are heading. In lessons and in their marking, teachers have focused increasingly on ensuring that pupils know what they need to do to make progress. Pupils have relished the range of activities, group work and opportunities to review their own learning. Although there are many good features in the teaching, not least the detailed planning and strong teamwork with teaching assistants, inconsistencies in practice mean that pupils do not always learn as well or as much as they could. Consequently, pupils' achievement is patchy. Not all pupils in Key Stage 2 have caught up on missed learning in previous years. While the more able pupils are starting to fulfil their potential, the teachers do not consistently demand the best from them. A growing strength is the early identification of pupils who have not made the progress expected and those who have a particular learning need. Focused support and the close attention of adults enable these pupils to participate fully in sessions. Many have made significant progress this year.

Standards are broadly average across the curriculum. Most pupils are working at, or close to, the level expected for their age. However, standards could be higher, especially in reading, writing and mathematics. Many pupils find it hard to interpret what they read and this spills over into other subjects. For example, although pupils know how to calculate and carry out investigations, they do not always realise how to go about resolving mathematical problems or how to come to conclusions about their findings in science. Pupils' writing skills have

developed well but too many pupils present untidy work, misspell common words and miss out basic punctuation.

Subject leaders have acted on advice from consultants and other schools to improve the quality of provision. They now have a shared understanding of how weaknesses in one area affect pupils' performance in others and of the need to accelerate pupils' learning. The headteacher has supported staff well: the delegation of leadership and management responsibilities has developed shared accountability and ownership of the school's action plan. However, some effective initiatives have petered out when other aspects took priority and not enough has been done to draw out exactly where improvement is needed, especially in pupils' skills and knowledge. The governors' monitoring committee has played a crucial role in questioning the impact of action and bringing a critical edge to leadership. As a result, governors, headteacher and all staff have a realistic view of the school's current performance.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The strong teamwork and good teaching of teachers and teaching assistants are the key reasons why the youngest children settle so quickly into school and do well in the Reception year. All are moving into Year 1 as confident, independent learners. Most have made a sound start in reading and writing and can solve simple number problems. All the adults share a common understanding of how young children learn and of the need to encourage children to do things for themselves. The classroom is well organised to draw children into different activities and the team is looking at ways to increase the use of the awkwardly shaped outdoor area. Children coped well on the ramp, batting balls to each other, while others close by kept up a steady beat on the drums, used water wheels in the water tray, played football and used the climbing frame. The staff use themes well to develop systematically the children's skills and knowledge. In the run up to Airport Day, the children had learnt about Hindu gods, designed their own repeating pattern for a sari and had a go at writing numbers to 10 in Hindi. The staff keep track of each child's progress and give parents ideas on how to help their children at home. The overall good quality of the provision reflects the team's success in being accredited for a second year with the local authority's Quality Standard for Early Years.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards, especially in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Improve the quality of teaching.
- Raise the bar for the higher attaining pupils.
- Ensure that initiatives are carried through and strategic planning is based on a critical analysis of what will make the most difference.

A small number of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The school has stopped the deterioration in achievement and standards reported in the previous inspection. In 2007, the school's results in the end of Key Stage 2 national tests were better than in 2006 and standards were just above the national average in English, mathematics and science. This was not the case in the assessments of Year 2 pupils' performance, especially in

writing, which was well below average. At both key stages, too many pupils had not made the progress they should and underachieved. Pupils' achievement is now generally satisfactory and good for some because the teachers have raised their expectations and are starting to push the pupils to do well. Pupils who find learning hard or who have particular learning needs are meeting their targets because of tailored support programmes and the emphasis on teachers making clear what pupils need to do to improve. Pupils in Year 2 have moved on considerably, especially in writing, where a fair number are doing better than expected for their age because of effective, focused teaching. In some years, however, this approach has only just begun to kick in. As a result, standards are not as high as they could be and pupils' achievement is inconsistent. The school is aware that in this year's national tests, it may not meet its targets for pupils in Year 6. Despite having made leaps both in learning and in self-confidence, too many pupils are working at the lower limit of the level expected for their age and are insecure in aspects of English, mathematics and science.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school. Their attendance is good and they say they feel safe and secure. They like the calmness and purpose in lessons along with recognition for good conduct and learning. Pupils generally behave well inside school and out. School councillors feel their voice matters: they took a lead role in compiling the policy on how to deal with bullying. They commented that bullying is now rare but that a few boys and girls find it hard to control themselves. Having recently asked other pupils for their views on the reward system, they were disappointed that the merit system had not continued: a particular miss was the chance to eat lunch with the headteacher. Pupils' acceptance of situations has meant that some weaker aspects of provision and breaks in practice have gone unquestioned. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good, cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils have a developing ability to reflect on their learning and achievement. Year 6 pupils spoke maturely about how well they have met their targets. Pupils care about one another. Older pupils were sensible when supervising younger ones at lunchtime and pupils worked companionably together during Airport Day when they gained a taste of three differing cultures.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Although the overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, several strengths indicate the potential for the quality to be higher. Highly detailed plans structure each lesson and clearly indicate what groups of pupils are to do. Teaching assistants prepare their own resources, work with groups, keep their own records and take the lead role in delivering support programmes. All classrooms now have displays with key information to prompt and remind pupils of what they need to know. Teachers have recently set up classroom reading areas and flair is increasingly evident in how teachers organise routines and space, and involve pupils in different activities. The compilation of a policy for learning has allowed staff and pupils to discuss and analyse effective practice. Pupils know they learn best, not only when they find the work interesting and challenging, but also when they can talk things out with a partner and when they receive clear explanations of each step. They like teachers' marking to indicate how they could do better and to know when they have met their targets. At present, these aspects are inconsistent

and learning varies. For some pupils, learning is fleeting, while others work well within their capability.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The introduction of WOW days, visitors and visits each term to places of interest, is widening the curriculum and developing the use of themes to link and introduce aspects in a meaningful way for pupils. The recent Airport Day, for example, gave older pupils a chance to hear and speak French but there were missed chances to ensure that pupils built on subject knowledge and skills. The work to raise standards in writing has deflected some attention from the provision for reading. The staff are rightly looking at ways to redress the balance and ways to tie in English and mathematics with themes. Year 6 pupils are looking forward to their experience in school of a dramatic production that parents attend. Regular sessions of physical activity for all pupils and coaching by specialists remain strengths of the curriculum. Parents receive information sheets on what their children will be learning but the format and content varies considerably in quality and detail.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Improvements in academic care, guidance and support have lifted the quality to match that of pastoral care. The development of a system to track pupils' progress and increased accuracy in teachers' judgement of pupils' performance, have given reliable, comparable data and provided a secure basis to evaluate pupils' academic progress. Senior managers regularly review each pupil's progress with class teachers and agree revised targets and programmes to help pupils reach them. All required safeguarding procedures are in place. The adults do much to raise pupils' self-esteem and to encourage them to reflect on their achievements. Parents appreciate what the school does to ensure their children are happy, but, as in the previous inspection, not all parents are equally convinced that their children are making enough progress and that staff welcome their comments.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The quality of leadership and management and capacity to improve are slowly strengthening as governors, headteacher and senior managers refine their skills in evaluating what has worked or not, deciding what needs to be done next and taking effective steps to make it happen. The pace of improvement has quickened, although action is often slow to show in outcomes for pupils. The development of a senior management team has engendered a shared sense of accountability. All have willingly acted on the advice, coaching and guidance of consultants and other schools in the local authority to ensure the school has the leadership and management systems it needs. There have been some blips in carrying out statutory procedures to the full and in allowing some worthwhile initiatives to peter out or become inconsistent. Parents were right to raise concern over the differing use by teachers of the attractive planner that pupils take home. Some teachers have developed a welcome dialogue with parents through this booklet. The parents' forum provides a useful channel for the school to gather views about policy and practice.

Well judged appointments have strengthened the pool of teaching expertise and curricular ideas. All staff have taken part in professional development to improve the quality of provision and senior managers have gradually built up their skills in monitoring the work of others and sharing good practice.

A strength of the school's leadership is the work of the governors' monitoring committee which has met regularly to review the school's progress, and to hold the headteacher and other senior managers to account. From this and their links with classes, governors have an accurate, secure understanding of the school's current performance and the management issues to consider in the short and long term. While the school's draft improvement plan for 2008/09 identifies relevant priorities, it is not rooted well enough in a critical evaluation of the school's current performance and what will bring about best improvement.

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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	2
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	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	3
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	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**

Thank you for your friendly welcome on the four occasions when I have visited your school to see how well you are learning. I agree with you that life at St John's is often fun. I could see that you enjoyed Airport Day! You all behaved so well, quietly getting on with, and having a go at, new things. I wonder if you managed to hang up your piñatas at home and can you remember how to ask for an ice cream in French?

St John's has come a long way since my first visit in June last year. Your parents think things are better and I agree, although, just as you pointed out, some good things have stopped. I have asked Miss Taylor to talk to you about that.

This was my last visit to St John's as you are now getting a satisfactory education and the school no longer needs 'special measures'. Compared with this time last year, most of you are making better progress in reading, writing, mathematics and science. However, St John's has still some way to go to make sure that everything is of the best so I have asked the governors, Miss Taylor and all the staff to do the following things.

- Help you to be even better readers, writers and mathematicians. You can help by telling them when things are too hard or too easy.
- Make the teaching as good as it can be. You have already given your ideas of what helps you to learn best.
- Raise the bar for those of you who can do really well - that is, set you a real challenge and expect the best from you. It will help if you try to keep your work neat and tidy.
- Make sure that good things are carried on and that decisions about what St John's should do come from knowing what has worked and what will really make a difference. The school councillors can keep Miss Taylor up to date on what classes tell them has been good.