

St John's Highbury Vale CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100440
Local Authority	Islington
Inspection number	323280
Inspection date	27 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Alison Storey HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	207
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Jennifer James
Headteacher	Mr Alan Ward
Date of previous school inspection	23 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Conewood Street Highbury Vale London N5 1DL
Telephone number	020 7226 4906

Age group	4–11
Inspection date	27 January 2009
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Fax number

020 7226 4785

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following:

- the progress pupils make and the standards they reach, particularly in mathematics
- pupils' personal development and well-being
- the academic guidance and support provided for pupils
- the effectiveness of leadership and management.

The inspectors visited classrooms, looked at pupils' work, attended an assembly, met groups of pupils, held discussions with the headteacher, the chair of governors and other staff, and looked at a range of documents and at the questionnaires returned by parents. Other aspects of the school's work were not inspected in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation form, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

St John's Highbury Vale is a slightly smaller than average school. The large majority of pupils are from a White British background; just under a third are from minority ethnic groups, most commonly of Black or mixed heritage. Few pupils speak English as an additional language and none is at an early stage of acquisition. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average and there are currently no pupils with a statement of special educational need.

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision is made through the school's Reception class, which children join in the September after their fourth birthday. The school runs a breakfast club and a range of after school clubs for its pupils.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Pupils thoroughly enjoy being at St John's Highbury Vale. They think it is a good school and inspectors agree with them.

All groups of pupils achieve well. They make good progress in EYFS and continue to build on this year on year. By the time they leave Year 6 standards in English, mathematics and science are above average, and often exceptionally high, which prepares them well for the next stage of learning and future life. Compared with the national picture, boys do particularly well. As a rule, virtually all pupils reach the level expected for their age and the proportion reaching the higher levels is much higher than found nationally. There are occasional exceptions to this. For example, the proportion of children assessed at the higher level in science at age seven is broadly average and there was a fall in Key Stage 2 mathematics results in 2008. The school is well aware of these exceptions. It has carefully considered the reasons for this and has put in place appropriate plans to bring about improvement. For example, individual tutorials in mathematics are already accelerating progress for targeted pupils.

Equally important, pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They work and play together harmoniously, regardless of background, and rise to the expectation that they will behave well and act responsibly. Pupils are proud of the fact that everyone cares for each other, and parents talk positively of the school's community feel and the way that the older pupils care for and play with the youngest. Most pupils are good attendees and are enthusiastic about school and their learning, appreciating that the teachers make learning fun by planning interesting activities. Indeed, most lessons are good. Teachers develop good relationships with pupils. They create a purposeful learning environment, explicitly sharing the purpose of the lesson with the pupils and encouraging them to be active participants. Teachers know the pupils well and usually plan their questions and activities well to match the different levels of ability, although on occasions there is insufficient challenge for the higher attainers. The curriculum is broad, with a wide range of intervention strategies to give those pupils who need it additional help. For the size of school, there is good provision for extra-curricular activities. Assemblies, religious education and personal, social and health education make a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral and social development and their personal and social skills. They develop a satisfactory understanding of different cultures and faiths, but this is not placed in the very real context of the diversity of the school's own community and the local area.

Pastoral care is strong and all procedures to keep the pupils safe and secure are fully in place. Almost without exception, parents are confident that their children are safe and well cared for, and the introduction of a breakfast club has been a welcome addition for those with a need for before-school care. Pupils develop a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and are well aware how to keep themselves safe in a variety of contexts. Academic guidance is good. Better use of personal targets helps them to understand what they are aiming for and strategies to involve pupils in assessing their own progress and that of others in lessons are developing. Regular marking of their work celebrates what they have achieved, but does not always give them enough information about how to improve.

There is a clear commitment from senior leaders and governors to maintaining high academic standards within a caring, Christian ethos. Challenging targets for pupils are set and their progress towards them reviewed on a regular basis. The school's own evaluation of its strengths and areas for development is generally accurate; it takes account of its own context and national

initiatives, such as the drive to provide extended services, to identify the right priorities and draw up appropriate development plans. These factors, and the development of new leadership posts, demonstrate that the school has good capacity for further improvement. However, senior leaders accept that some of its management systems are under-developed and that its plans do not all have clear criteria by which to measure their impact on outcomes for pupils.

The school recognises the important and active role parents play in their children's education. It is well aware that they would appreciate more communication about pupils' learning and has already taken steps to improve this, such as introducing workshops on phonics and mathematics. Some parents took the opportunity of the inspection to raise concerns about the levels of staff absence. Inspectors investigated this further and were satisfied that senior leaders and governors are taking appropriate action.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children get off to a good start in EYFS. They are eager to come into school in the morning, secure in the comfort of well-established routines and the good relationships they have with the staff. Well-planned induction helps the children to settle well and staff to get to know each child as an individual. The links established with the playgroups and nurseries they attend before joining St John's ensure that from the start staff have a clear picture of what each child can do.

Staff work effectively as a team to ensure good provision for children's learning and personal development. They have high expectations of the children in all respects. Good behaviour is the norm. Children learn to be independent and to take responsibility and develop the literacy and numeracy skills that will stand them in good stead for their future learning. They experience a range of activities in all the areas of learning. Sometimes children are directed to work with an adult, who will develop their learning through talking and asking questions. At other times children choose from a selection of activities and develop their skills to work either independently or with other children. Outdoor space is limited. The area outside the classroom is better used for activities since the addition of a canopy that allows for access in all weathers, but the garden area is still under development. Both members of staff take responsibility as the key worker for named children, keeping track of their achievements and needs. Regular observations give them a clear picture of what children can do, which they use to plan the next steps in learning. As a result, children make good progress. Although the skills and experience of each group of children varies, by the time they move to Year 1 virtually all children have the skills expected for their age and a large majority exceed them.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop more robust management systems and ensure that plans have sharper success criteria.
- Use the multicultural, multi-faith nature of the school community and the local area to enhance pupils' cultural understanding and promote community cohesion.

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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
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 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

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

09 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St John's Highbury Vale CofE Primary School, London, N5 1DL

It was lovely to meet you when we came to visit your school. Thank you very much to all of you who spoke to us in lessons, around the school, in the playground and in the special meetings we had. It certainly helped us to find out more about the school.

We know that you really enjoy being at St John's and you will be pleased to know that we agree with you that it is a good school. You all behave well, have very positive attitudes to your learning and get on with each other in lessons and in the playground. Good teaching makes your learning interesting and helps you all to achieve well.

I know those of you we spoke to found it hard to think of ways your school could improve, but we do think there are some things it needs to continue to work on, and we have mentioned these in the report to remind the headteacher and the staff. Most importantly, as far as you are concerned we think they could improve your understanding of different cultures and different faiths by helping you to appreciate the diversity within your own school and the local area.

You can help by continuing to be as well behaved and enthusiastic about learning as you were when we were there.

Yours faithfully

Alison Storey

Her Majesty's Inspector