

St John's Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108476
Local Authority	Newcastle upon Tyne
Inspection number	324778
Inspection dates	11–12 February 2009
Reporting inspector	David Edwards

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	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	180
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	Ms Mary Nicholls
Headteacher	Mrs Julia Bayes
Date of previous school inspection	27 April 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Teindland Close Newcastle upon Tyne Tyne and Wear NE4 8HE
Telephone number	0191 2735293
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St John's is a smaller than average primary school serving an area of above average social and economic deprivation. Most pupils come from a White British background and the proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds and for whom English is an additional language is lower than seen nationally. A high proportion of pupils are entitled to a free school meal. An above average percentage of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is higher than seen nationally. The school has an Early Years Foundation Stage provision, consisting of Nursery and Reception classes. The pupil mobility of 27.6% is higher than the national figure. The school has gained a number of national awards; these include Healthy School status and an Eco gold award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school where actions are beginning to show improvements in pupils' mathematics and writing. The strong sense of community within the school and the harmonious ethos results in good care, guidance and support that contribute well to pupils' good personal development. The strong sense of pride in the school is reflected in the teamwork and determination of staff at all levels to create a learning environment that successfully embodies the school motto, 'Learning to Live, Living to Learn'. The school is valued highly by the parents who appreciate the care and concern shown to their children by teachers. Its partnerships with others are good and enhance the provision for all pupils.

Children start Nursery with skills and levels of development that are significantly lower than those generally found in children of a similar age. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and satisfactory progress in Key Stages 1 and 2. Although overall standards by the end of Year 6 are well below the national average, this represents satisfactory achievement when pupils' starting points are taken into account. In the provisional 2008 tests there was an improvement in the proportion of pupils gaining the expected Level 4 in writing, but the overall figure for English was well below the national average. Results in mathematics, although improving, were below average and few pupils reached the higher levels. The school has rightly identified that pupils could make more improvement, particularly in writing. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported by dedicated teachers and support assistants and they make satisfactory progress. More able pupils do not do as well as they could because of a lack of consistent challenge in all classes.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory but variable across year groups. Teachers' planning in some lessons is not always sufficiently well matched to the needs of all pupils. The good curriculum is a strength of the school and is helping pupils to make links between their learning in different subjects. This is making what they learn more meaningful and interesting and is aiding them in developing their investigative skills.

Pupil's behaviour is good and they have positive attitudes to learning. They have a very good knowledge of how to stay safe and healthy and they understand the importance of taking regular exercise. They are adequately prepared for their next stage their education. Despite the school's efforts to improve attendance, almost half of the pupils have well below average attendance, which has an adverse impact on their learning.

Leadership, management and governance of the school are satisfactory. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and primary strategy manager have improved monitoring arrangements so that they have a reasonably accurate view of the school's strengths and areas in need of improvement. There is now a clearer focus on the areas of weaknesses and on what the school needs to do to raise standards and improve achievement. Actions taken are beginning to bring about improvements, for example, in mathematics and writing. However, roles and responsibilities are not well distributed among staff, including senior leaders, restricting the monitoring opportunities and involvement of a wider range of staff. Monitoring of key areas is not yet sufficiently effective in raising standards at a rapid rate. The school has a satisfactory capacity to improve and provides satisfactory value for money.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision is good in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Effective leadership ensures that children achieve well and thoroughly enjoy their first taste of school. Children enter the Nursery with very low levels of skill compared with similar aged children nationally. Although they make good progress many children do not meet all of the early learning goals by the time they leave Reception. However, progress is becoming more rapid and this year children are on track to be closer to the early learning goals than in previous years.

They settle quickly as a result of the good care and support they receive and they soon develop an understanding of how to behave, learn and play together. Children are making good progress in most areas of their learning, although communication and language skills do not develop as quickly. Teaching and learning are good. Good use is made of assessment information to provide the next steps in learning. A further strength of teaching is the way that questioning really challenges children's thinking and practical learning is supported well by stimulating resources. For example, adults use musical instruments well to encourage children to improve their speaking and listening skills and understanding of language. The adults work well as a team and provide good care for their pupils. The effective use of indoor and outdoor facilities is planned throughout the day. They encourage independence and the interesting activities provide a balance between activities led by teachers and those children choose for themselves. When combined with the very good care, this ensures that children do well in their personal development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics in Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Ensure teachers make more effective use of assessment information to provide the correct level of challenge for all pupils, especially for more able pupils.
- Extend the range of incentives within school to encourage pupils to attend more regularly to assist their progress.
- Review the roles and responsibilities of leaders and managers and involve more staff in school improvement activities.

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.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are well below average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. From a low starting point in the Nursery, pupils make good progress in Early Years Foundation Stage. They make satisfactory progress in Key Stages 1 and 2, which is reflected in the progress seen in lessons, pupils' books and the school's national test data over time. By the end of Year 2 pupils' standards in reading, writing and mathematics are well below the national average, Standards at the end of Year 6 in all subjects, although improving, are well below national standards overall. Unvalidated results for 2008 in mathematics were below average. Science results were better and closer to the national average. The school's performance in English, although improved with more pupils reaching the expected levels, was well below average with results for reading stronger than for writing. Few pupils reached the higher level in any subject.

Pupil mobility and high levels of absence have an adverse effect on standards. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress overall. The school has rightly identified that more able pupils could do much better. Regular pupil progress meetings are used to identify those pupils who might not be making the expected progress so that interventions can be put in place to support them. These have yet to show a real impact on standards.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils have a good understanding of the different beliefs and backgrounds of people in their community and are tolerant and supportive of differences in the school community. They show a good understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle, the need to take regular exercise and eat sensibly. They even monitor each other so that they do not eat too many unhealthy snack foods. Pupils say they feel safe in school and they know how to look after their personal safety and where to report any concerns about the behaviour of others. Behaviour is good in lessons and in the playground and this creates a safe and harmonious atmosphere in the school. The school council is keen to make improvements to the school, and some members have been involved in helping local councillors improve the local estate with new plants. By the time they leave the school, pupils are adequately prepared for the next stage of learning. The vast majority of pupils enjoy school and all that it has to offer although their overall attendance is well below average. Despite the school's efforts to improve the situation there remains a minority of pupils whose attendance is very low and this reduces their rate of learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Recent attention to improving quality has led to many lessons containing some good features, but these are not found consistently throughout the school. The quality of teachers' planning is variable and where it is good, tasks are planned that closely match the needs of different groups of pupils. This allows pupils to work independently, sustain concentration for long periods and learn at their own pace. In some lessons, teachers talk for too long and this leads to pupils becoming passive or restless. In such lessons, the time left for independent learning is too short for pupils to thoroughly consolidate their learning, so progress is only satisfactory. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well. This makes pupils feel secure so they are able to ask for help if they need it. Teachers assess pupils' learning regularly, though not all make full use of this information to provide good challenge for pupils of all abilities, especially more able pupils. Teachers increasingly make use of assessments of pupils' learning to set short-term targets to help them improve their work. Pupils are learning to assess their own work and this motivates them to work towards their targets. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to the progress of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, though sometimes teachers do not employ them to full effect at the start and end of lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum. There has been good improvement to the curriculum since the previous inspection through creative approaches to both content and making links between subjects. Using the 'mantle of the expert', pupils have the opportunity to investigate a particular theme, such as their local heritage, via links with the Friends of Benwell Community Association. This approach leads them to make links between all subjects from art to science, as they develop a deeper understanding of the topic. Pupils are enthusiastic about this way of learning and develop good investigative and decision-making skills, which enhances their personal development. A good range of visits, linked to the themed curriculum, extends pupils' horizons and ambitions. Good links with English, mathematics and information and communication technology give pupils opportunities to consolidate and develop their basic skills. The provision for personal, social and health education is good, and ensures pupils' good understanding of personal health and safety and relationships. After school clubs are well supported and add to the development of pupils' special talents and their social skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Parents appreciate the good care and support which the school provides and trust the school to look after their children. Members of staff are caring and kind. They know their pupils well. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress because of the early identification of their needs and the timely support they receive from skilled and sensitive teachers and teaching assistants.

Safeguarding and child protection procedures are rigorous. Any pupils at risk are quickly identified and supported. The school's parent and support advisor and a social worker provide valuable support to parents and pupils who have concerns. The induction procedures are good for pupils entering school and as they move through primary school into secondary school. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are satisfactory, making effective use of the school support staff and the strong links with the education welfare officer. However actions have not yet had enough impact on raising attendance, which remains well below average.

The school has good links with the local community and provides many learning and leisure opportunities for its pupils. Academic guidance is satisfactory and new systems are being developed to help pupils improve their work. Pupils know and understand their targets and what they need to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership, management and governance are satisfactory. The headteacher and senior leadership team have a clear focus on raising standards. Leaders have tackled identified weaknesses and are making improvements to standards in writing and mathematics particularly. The school data and work samples seen during the inspection indicate that standards are beginning to rise in writing. School self-evaluation is satisfactory. The school has a reasonably accurate view of its own performance, although it is overgenerous in some judgements of its effectiveness. The main reason for this is that monitoring and evaluation are not rigorous enough. For example,

the school's view of the quality of teaching is based too much on what teachers plan and do and not enough on what pupils do and learn. Too few opportunities are taken for a wider range of staff to contribute to monitoring the school's work and shaping the direction of improvements. As a result, monitoring of key areas is not yet sufficiently effective to raise standards at a more rapid rate.

Governors are supportive of the school and ensure that community links are made and maintained. The school's contribution to community cohesion is satisfactory. Pupils create a strong sense of caring in their own community and are involved with the local community, for example, through fundraising events.

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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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

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	3
The attendance of learners	4
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 learners' needs?	3
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?	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 eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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**

13 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St John's Primary School, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE4 8HE

Thank you for making my colleague and me feel so welcome and for helping us to find out all about your school. We enjoyed being with you and seeing your bright smiles. We were pleased to see how well behaved you are and how kind and considerate you are to each other.

I am writing to tell you about the findings of the inspection.

St John's is a satisfactory school that has satisfactory teaching. It has an exciting curriculum and the school takes good care of you. The teachers and teaching assistants do a good job of helping those of you who find learning difficult. You all seem to enjoy school and you try hard with your learning. You have very positive attitudes towards the staff and are rightly proud of your school. You amazed us by knowing so much about staying safe and being healthy.

Your headteacher and staff team want to do the best for you. To be even better we have asked the school to improve some of what it does. We have asked the school to:

- make sure those of you who find work easy are given tasks which always make you think and extend what you know and do
- ensure they help you to raise the standard of your work so that you can make better progress
- help those of you who have not attended well to come to school more regularly so that you can improve your work
- ensure school leaders share the jobs that they do more equally.

It was a pleasure to visit your school. We would like to pass on our best wishes to you all and thank you once again.

Yours faithfully

Mr Edwards

Lead inspector