

St John's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109260
Local Authority	Bath and North East Somerset
Inspection number	324935
Inspection dates	14–15 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Joanna Pike

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)	272
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	Peter Daly
Headteacher	Bob Coleman
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Pulteney Road Bath BA2 4EZ
Telephone number	01225 461887
Fax number	01225 442306

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is slightly larger than most primary schools and has provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) in the Reception classes. The infant and junior departments are on different sites two miles apart. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is more than in most schools. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. The school has gained several national awards, including the Activemark Gold award and Inclusion Quality mark.

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 good school, highly regarded by pupils and parents. As one parent said, 'It is a very special place where every individual is valued.' This positive ethos contributes significantly to pupils' outstanding personal development. Pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning are exceptional. These qualities, together with the good teaching, lead to good achievement throughout the school. Children's attainment is below expected levels when they enter the EYFS. By the end of this first year, most reach expected levels. Pupils continue to progress well and reach above average standards in Years 2 and 6. The school has successfully boosted the achievement of more able girls in mathematics and science, so that in Year 6 they are reaching similar standards to those of boys.

Relationships between adults and pupils are excellent and lessons are hugely enjoyed. Pupils work very hard and are given plenty of good opportunities to explain their ideas. Nevertheless, sometimes teachers miss opportunities to challenge pupils' thinking and encourage more independent learning. These shortcomings inhibit the achievement of some pupils, especially of a small number of more able pupils. Pupils benefit when marking tells them precisely what to do next and they are given time to respond. This good practice is not yet consistent across the school.

Comments such as 'They really care about each child' reflect parents' appreciation of the excellent pastoral care their children receive from staff. Children feel safe, and are confident that the school deals with any bullying swiftly and effectively. The increasing number of pupils with English as an additional language, and pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are successfully provided for and make good progress.

Pupils' wider interests and personal development are well served by the curriculum. Religious education and specialist teaching in physical education, music, Spanish and science contribute significantly to pupils' learning and personal development. So, too, do the wide range of enrichment opportunities, such as school productions. Pupils have a good understanding about healthy diets and the need to keep fit. They have a strong sense of being a member of the school and local community; however, their understanding of belonging to a global community is not so well developed.

The headteacher and governors provide strong leadership. They have worked very hard to raise standards and achievement, as well as improve pupils' personal development. Senior and middle leaders are now playing an increasingly significant role in improving pupils' achievement, well supported by the development of a good system for tracking pupils' progress.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Attainment on entry to Reception varies from year to year, but is largely below expectations. Over the last few years, children's language, personal, social and emotional skills on entry have been weaker than before. Because of the excellent care and welfare children receive, they settle quickly and begin to flourish. Parents are encouraged to work in close partnership. Adults are adept at building children's confidence. This skill helps children to have very positive attitudes to their learning. They show the ability to concentrate and work collaboratively. A strong emphasis is put on developing children's speaking and listening skills and, as a result, these are strong.

Children make good progress during the year and by the time they join Year 1, most have reached the expected levels in most areas of learning. Staff use assessment effectively and are quick to identify those who are not progressing as expected. Good support is given to these children, many of whom are at an early stage of learning English, and as a result, they make good progress. Staff plan a good range of exciting and interesting activities which make learning fun. Children benefit from the good balance of activities led by an adult and activities that they can choose for themselves. Sometimes opportunities are missed to extend children's learning through providing more challenging activities, particularly for the more able. Leadership and management are good. Plans are in place to address the current restricted space for outdoor activities, which is limiting children's opportunities to explore, create and physically develop.

What the school should do to improve further

- Maximise opportunities in lessons to challenge thinking and encourage independent learning for all pupils, and especially for the more able.
- Ensure that the quality of feedback to pupils increases their understanding of how well they are doing and how to improve.
- Develop pupils' understanding of their place in the global community.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good throughout the school. Over the last few years, results in Year 2 have been above average. Results dipped in 2008 to broadly average, especially in reading and writing. However, this group had greater than usual proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and pupils with English as an additional language. Pupils nevertheless made good progress from when they entered the EYFS at well below the expected levels, and continue to progress well. Current data indicates that many pupils have moved forward rapidly in reading and writing since the summer term.

End of Year 6 results have been rising since 2005 to significantly above average levels. In the past, results in English have been above those in mathematics and science. The school has successfully tackled this difference so that standards currently are above average in all three subjects. More able girls are now achieving similarly to boys in mathematics and science as a result of the school's effective strategies to boost their achievement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils are exceptionally considerate of the needs of others and enjoy celebrating each other's success. They have a very strong sense of what is right and wrong. The school's Catholic foundation contributes very significantly to pupils' awareness and respect for other people's beliefs. Pupils show perception in thinking about the deeper questions concerning life and its meaning. Their above average speaking and listening skills enable them to explain their ideas clearly.

The school council is not yet fully developed in giving pupils a chance to play a more significant role in helping the school improve. Nevertheless, pupils have a good range of other ways of contributing to the school and local community, such as through raising money for a number of charities. Pupils benefit from the frequent opportunities they have to work in teams. Pupils' above average literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills

prepares them well for their future economic well-being. As one parent said, 'My child will be well prepared and a well-rounded individual ready for secondary school.'

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers use questions well by giving pupils time to think through their answers. Because of the positive atmosphere in classrooms, pupils feel confident to explain things even if they may be wrong. Good use is made of resources and teachers are well organised. Tasks are structured effectively to make learning active and this keeps everybody concentrating hard. Teaching assistants give good support to individuals and groups. Pupils really benefit when well-chosen examples of the small steps they need to make in the lesson. However, sometimes activities do not provide as much challenge or opportunities for independent learning as they should, particularly for a few more able pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A rich and varied curriculum is reflected in the words of one parent, who wrote: 'My children are encouraged to make the most of their talents.' Good emphasis is given to literacy and numeracy. Flexible use is often made of groups of similar age or ability in Years 3 to 6. This approach has helped improve achievement, particularly in mathematics and science and for girls. However, opportunities are sometimes missed to apply the skills of literacy and numeracy across other subjects, such as history. In contrast, subjects are often grouped together into topics in Years 1 and 2 and good links between subjects help pupils to apply their skills. Provision in ICT has improved and pupils use computers more regularly as a learning tool.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Excellent pastoral care is the strongest aspect of the school's overall care, guidance and support. Procedures to ensure that pupils are safe and secure are robust. Children know that the school has their well-being at heart. Vulnerable pupils and families receive extremely good support. The school works very effectively with a range of outside agencies to provide further help when necessary. Most pupils have good attendance and the school does all it can to encourage this. Despite its best efforts, however, a few families who take pupils out of school for long-term visits affect overall attendance figures. Academic assessment is good. Nevertheless, pupils do not always know precisely what their targets are because they are not referred to regularly enough in lessons, nor do pupils get all the feedback they should on how to make their work better.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school's focused attention on improving its academic performance and increasing equal opportunities has been successful in lifting achievement and standards in mathematics and science, and in increasing the progress of more able girls. The school has a clear and accurate

view of its strengths and weaknesses. Improvements to monitoring mean that leaders now have a sharper overview. Communication is managed well between the infant and junior departments on the two sites. Middle leadership has a clear role in identifying underachieving pupils and takes effective action. This new development is already having an impact and the school's improvement overall shows its good capacity for further development.

Good use is made of challenging targets to raise teachers' expectations further, and the school is now refining its assessment practices so that it has more focused information about the progress of different groups. The school successfully promotes the needs of the community through extending pupils' understanding of faiths and cultures present in the school and local community. This awareness is supported through activities such as 'Polish Saturday school' and 'Mad science'. Provision for building understanding of the global community is not so strong. Governors are well informed. As a result of a recent review, they are now well placed to ask searching questions to challenge the school. A steering committee plays a full role in strategic planning, which ensures that the school concentrates its efforts where they are needed most.

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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	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?	1
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which 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	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**

16 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St John's Catholic Primary School, Bath BA2 4EZ

It was good to come and see you at your school! Thank you for making us so welcome, talking to us and helping us during our visit. We especially enjoyed the good discussions we had with some of you, when you gave us lots of information. Your school is giving you a good education. It also has some outstanding features. Here are some of the most important parts of the inspection report that we thought you might like to know.

- You work hard in lessons and make good progress and, as a result, you reach above average standards.
- You really enjoy your time in school and your behaviour is outstanding.
- You look after each other extremely well because you enjoy doing things for other people.
- The staff work hard to give you a stimulating curriculum, which helps you to develop your talents in areas such as art, music and PE as well as English, mathematics and science.
- The school makes sure that you all feel safe, settled and secure.
- The staff and governors are working hard so that you all do even better.

To improve further, we have asked the school to do the following:

- Make sure all of you are challenged to do your very best in all lessons.
- Make sure you have a really clear understanding of how well you are getting on and that you each know precisely how to improve your work.
- Develop your understanding of what it means to be a member of the world community.

Thank you again for all your help.

Yours faithfully

Joanna Pike

Lead inspector