

St John's CE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115618
Local Authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	326233
Inspection dates	10–11 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Christine Huard

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	184
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gary Gillespie
Headteacher	Mrs Jan Wagstaff
Date of previous school inspection	28–29 September 2005
School address	Bowen's Hill Road Coleford GL16 8DU
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 13 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and a group of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at key documents, such as the school development plan, minutes of the governing body, monitoring, evaluation and assessment records as well as 38 parental questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- how the quality of teaching and learning is contributing to the current overall attainment and standards, particularly in mathematics, and of boys and middle attaining pupils
- the quality of the school's assessment systems and tracking of pupils' progress in order to identify strengths and areas for development
- the effectiveness of the systems for monitoring the performance of the school
- the effectiveness of the new subject teams and whether they are improving the curriculum and enhancing teaching and learning.

Information about the school

St John's is a smaller than average primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average and the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs well above average. Almost all the pupils are White British and very few speak English as an additional language. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are catered for in the Reception class. The headteacher took up her post at the beginning of February this year, having been acting headteacher since January and deputy headteacher prior to that time.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. Pupils say they enjoy school and their parents confirmed this. As one wrote, 'My child is happy, growing in confidence and becoming a sociable and inquisitive learner.' That parents are strongly supportive of the school is shown by such comments as, 'It is a friendly and supportive place to learn where every child is encouraged to reach their full potential.' It provides a warm and welcoming learning environment for its pupils. The reception area, corridors and classrooms are enlivened by vibrant displays of pupils' work, which demonstrates how much the efforts of all pupils are valued and appreciated.

Pupils make good progress during lessons. This is because lessons are exceptionally well planned and ensure that all groups of pupils, including the middle attaining pupils, are set tasks that are challenging and meet their particular needs. Questioning techniques are skilfully used to assess that pupils understand what they are doing and also to extend their thinking, which ensures that they fully understand specific processes. Pupils are given enough time to complete the tasks set by their teachers and are given all the resources they need in order to be able to do so. This consistently good teaching is enabling pupils to reach standards that are broadly average in English and mathematics, and above average in science.

The school carefully assesses the progress of all pupils as well as that of particular groups of pupils. This means that trends can quickly be identified and if any pupils are falling behind, extra support can be provided to enable them to catch up. On a day-to-day basis the quality of marking and feedback the pupils receive is excellent. However, pupils do not have enough opportunities to judge for themselves how well they are doing and this can inhibit the pace at which they make progress.

Pupils' personal development is good and there are elements that are outstanding. Pupils very willingly take on responsibilities and make a major contribution to the school and wider community. The worship team, for example, make themselves available for planning, and delivering assemblies on a regular basis. The eco-team ensures that the school is fully involved in 'green' issues. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. They are thoughtful, reflective and care for each other in a practical and sympathetic manner.

The headteacher provides strong leadership. There is a clear direction for the school, strongly focused on continuous improvement within its underlying Christian ethos.

The school effectively checks how well it is doing. However, monitoring is not always sufficiently focused because occasionally success criteria are not precise enough. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and has identified appropriate areas for further development, as seen in the drive to improve standards in mathematics. The success of the actions taken illustrates that the school has a good capacity for further sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Identify more clearly what actions the school will take to improve outcomes for its pupils and how it will monitor its progress.
- Improve the quality of pupils' learning by giving them more opportunities to evaluate their own and each other's work so that they fully understand what they need to do to progress further.

How good is the overall outcome for individuals and groups of pupils?

2

Pupils achieve well in lessons. They want to learn and teachers make lessons interesting for them so that they work hard and really enjoy what they are doing. In particular, pupils' progress in mathematics has improved greatly over the last year. The focus on identifying and addressing specific weaknesses, such as the pupils' understanding of inverse operations, has ensured that standards have leaped upwards. Pupils make good progress in lessons because teachers reinforce strategies and give pupils plenty of opportunities to practise them, often in short, sharp bursts, which consolidates learning effectively. As a result of this, pupils are making good progress and are now firmly back on track to achieve at least average results in tests this summer. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers because their needs are clearly identified and good support provided. The very few pupils who are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language also make good progress.

Since the last inspection the school has sustained above average standards in science. An area for development was standards in writing. The school has tackled this issue effectively. Pupils have been given opportunities to write across a range of subjects, and spelling, grammar and punctuation skills have been taught effectively. The result is that most pupils are reaching the standards expected of them, with some reaching above average standards by Year 6.

Pupils enjoy school and this is reflected in their rapidly improving attendance. This is currently broadly average but is improving well because of the efforts made by the school with the pupils and their families. Pupils develop excellent social and moral attitudes, which are firmly underpinned by the strong ethos that is an essential element of this lively learning community. Assemblies allow pupils a chance to be quiet and reflective. They explore the faiths and traditions of other cultures; strong links with schools in the United Kingdom, Southern Ireland and Kenya considerably

enhance their understanding of different faiths and cultures in this and other countries.

Pupils feel very safe and are adamant that bullying doesn't occur. They have an excellent knowledge of the dangers of smoking, alcohol and drug abuse as well as Internet safety. They have a good knowledge of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. Pupils have a voice through the highly effective school council. Most leave the school having reached the standards expected. These, with their very good personal skills, especially confidence and self-esteem, give them a good preparation for the next stage in their education and later life.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	2
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	2
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	2
How well do pupils behave?	2
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	2
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	1
Pupils' attendance	3
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	1

The quality of the school's work

Teaching and learning are effective because teachers show flair and imagination in their planning in order to make learning relevant and fun for pupils. Good subject knowledge gives teachers the confidence to be adventurous in the classroom. Good use of resources, such as interactive whiteboards, makes learning interesting for pupils. Teachers are careful to make tasks relevant to boys and girls alike with the result that pupils tackle them with vigour and enthusiasm. Pupils in Year 5 avidly discussed and wrote about various forms of punishment in Tudor times, discussing artefacts, such as a ducking stool, with gruesome relish. In Year 6, they discussed various types of angles confidently and went on to measure and draw them accurately. Tasks are very well matched to the needs of all pupils. Relationships are strong and pupils feel confident to ask questions if they don't fully understand. Teaching assistants are generally well deployed; however, occasionally too much support is provided for pupils with learning difficulties, which means they don't always have the opportunity to think things through for themselves. Marking is a particular strength and older pupils say they find it helpful to know what they need

¹ Grades for attainment are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; 4 is low

to do to improve their work. However, pupils have too few opportunities to assess for themselves how well they are doing in their work.

The curriculum is effectively designed to promote enjoyment of learning in all areas, including the main priority of developing pupils' basic skills in literacy and numeracy. Planning for mathematics identifies a range of opportunities for pupils to use their skills in practical situations. A well-planned programme contributes very well to pupils' excellent personal development. A range of visits and visitors enables pupils to not only enjoy additional experiences but helps develop their self-confidence and independence effectively. Pupils especially value events such as book and arts weeks and the good range of extra-curricular activities which considerably enhance their learning. Strong links with the local secondary schools provide a very good preparation for their next stage of education. Teachers from these schools visit the school regularly to work with groups of pupils and this considerably aids transition. Pupils are cared for very effectively and well supported in their personal development. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good and the school works well with outside agencies to provide additional support where necessary.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

High quality teaching and purposeful learning	2
Effective assessment	2
An appropriate curriculum which meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, provision through partnership with other organisations	2
Support, guidance and care	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher's first action on taking up post was to redefine the values of the school. Staff, children and governors were all involved in the formation of these and as a result all have ownership. They have helped to revitalise the learning environment and staff, pupils and governors are tackling the work of the school in a purposeful and focused way. The headteacher has initiated changes to which all staff have enthusiastically responded. These are successfully improving the quality of the curriculum, so that teachers are able to provide their pupils with exciting and challenging learning experiences. The idea of introducing subject teams rather than individual subject leaders works very well. It ensures that the talents and expertise of all staff are utilised, not just those of individual teachers. Governors too are linked with these teams and this means their monitoring is that much more effective. The school effectively promotes equal opportunities for all pupils to achieve as well as they can by closely monitoring the progress of different groups of pupils such as boys or those learning English as an additional language. The actions taken by the headteacher and senior leadership team to raise standards in mathematics have been successful for all groups of pupils. The senior staff have a good view of how well the school is doing because the procedures for monitoring the quality of the work of the school are robust. The school is working towards challenging, but realistic, targets and the development plan sets out an appropriate programme for

the improvement of the school's work. However, the success criteria are not always sharply defined. Governors are very active and fully involved in the strategic development of the school. Its community committee effectively promotes community cohesion and monitors the effectiveness of the school's many links in the local, national and international communities well. For example, a visit was recently organised from a member of the clergy involved with the mission in Tanzania. This successfully gave the pupils a much greater insight into Tanzanian culture and strengthened links further.

The school's relationships with parents and carers are good. Their views are sought through questionnaires and they are provided with good information about the school through regular newsletters. The school has a good range of links with outside agencies and organisations which effectively promote opportunities for pupils' academic and personal development.

The school meets all the statutory requirements for safeguarding pupils. Rigorous checks are made on all adults who work in the school. Health and safety checks as well as regular risk assessments are conscientiously carried out.

These are the grades for leadership and management

Communicating ambition and driving improvement	2
Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination	2
Ensuring that safeguarding procedures are effective	2
Ensuring that the governing body provides effective challenge and support so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities are met	2
Promoting the school's relationship with parents and carers, including their involvement in decision-making about matters relating to learning and well-being	2
Developing partnerships with other providers, organisations and services	2
Ensuring the school contributes to community cohesion	2
Deploying resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

The youngest children get off to a good start. When they enter Reception their skills and attainment are well below the levels expected for their age, and very low in communication, language and literacy. Their mathematical skills are also very limited. Children make good progress in all areas of learning. They do particularly well in their personal and social development and in developing early skills in speaking and listening. Progress in these areas is enhanced through the very good use of the outside area and the role play opportunities provided. Children re-enacting the tale of Goldilocks and three bears in the wooded area at the back of the field, and those planting the bulbs in 'Percy's Park', all had numerous and exciting opportunities to express themselves, work together collectively and negotiate whose turn it was, for example, to push the wheelbarrow.

There have been significant improvements in provision since the last inspection. The environment has been reorganised to provide very good opportunities for children to learn through practical activities. The outdoor area is well equipped and is in constant use. Children's progress is tracked systematically, with good use being made of observational notes and photographs to record their achievements. These provide good information for parents, who are welcomed as partners in their children's learning. However, links with local pre-school providers, particularly the children's centre on site, are somewhat tenuous at present and this means that not enough is understood about what is expected of children when they first enter the school.

How good are the outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
What is the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
How effectively is the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	2
Overall effectiveness: how well does the setting/school meet the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2

Views of parents and carers

Thirty-eight questionnaires were returned representing 52 pupils attending the school. The responses were generally very supportive of the school. Parents feel the quality of teaching is good and many mention how much their children enjoy their learning. They appreciate the care and concern the school shows for the welfare of their children and the speed with which problems are sorted out. The inspectors fully endorse these positive views. A few parents felt they were not always given enough information about the progress their children are making. The school has rightly recognised this and has recognised the need to review current arrangements.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

- Attainment:** the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
- Progress:** the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
- Achievement:** an overall measure of the pupils' success in their academic learning. The term combines attainment and progress. Pupils might make good progress, for example, but if their attainment remains low, inspectors may judge that their achievement is only satisfactory.
- Capacity to improve:** the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
- Leadership and management:** the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.

12 March 2009

Dear Pupils



Inspection of St John's CE Primary School, Coleford GL16 8DU

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. You certainly seem to be very happy and it was good to hear how you enjoy your work and all the extra activities in which you are involved. Your school gives you a really good education and is working hard to make it even better.

These are the things we liked best:

- You behave very well and are really keen and enthusiastic about your learning.
- You reach the standards you should in English and mathematics, and do really well in science.
- You take on a lot of responsibilities and carry these out really effectively.
- You have a very good understanding of different cultures and faiths through your links with other schools.
- Teachers make learning fun for you, and you know how to improve your work from marking and target setting.
- You have an interesting curriculum and the special activities arranged to enhance it are excellent. Your work from the Arts week is stunning.
- The teachers and staff take good care of you while you are in school.
- Your headteacher, assistant headteachers and governors lead the school well and are very keen to make it even better.

A very few things could be even better:

- One of the reasons you do well is because senior staff make regular checks to see how well the school is doing. We have asked the headteacher to make sure that these checks are really sharply focused.
- You say that the marking really helps you improve your work, and we agree with you. We have asked that you now be given more opportunities to judge for yourselves how well you are doing in your work so that you can begin to identify some next steps in learning for yourselves.

I am glad you enjoy your school and hope you will continue to work hard.

Very best wishes

Mrs Christine Huard
Lead inspector

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