

St John's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123900
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	328018
Inspection dates	7–8 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Paul Sadler

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)	154
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	Nicky Griffin
Headteacher	Duncan Gordon
Date of previous school inspection	16 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Priory Wellington TA21 9EJ
Telephone number	01823 662541
Fax number	01823 660385

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This smaller than average school serves mixed private and social housing in a country town. Almost all pupils are of White British ethnicity. The proportion with a range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. The school makes provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage in its Reception class. The school provides and manages care before and after school for its pupils. The headteacher took up his post in September 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school in which pupils achieve well. In 2008, standards attained by pupils at the end of Year 6 in national tests in English, mathematics and science were below average. Under the effective leadership of the new headteacher, improvement has been rapid. In the unvalidated 2009 tests, pupils have achieved the challenging targets set for them in English and mathematics, and have exceeded these in science. Children start school with levels of skill and knowledge below those expected and make good progress throughout the school, so that the standards attained by Year 6 in 2009 are at least in line with the national averages for 2008.

- There are a number of reasons for the improvements that have taken place this year. The astute use of data analysing the progress of groups of pupils and individuals is enabling teachers to plan work that closely matches the needs of each pupil. It also enables the causes of any underachievement to be quickly identified and rectified. For example, the school has identified that for a small group of pupils, mainly girls, slow progress is linked to low or declining attendance, and rightly plans to address this quickly. Teachers are using a wider range of approaches to interest and motivate pupils. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 investigated the shape, size, area and perimeter of pens to contain different numbers of sheep. They did this with great enjoyment, collaborating well and pursuing their own ideas. They also showed good skills of mental calculation. 'What would be the area of a pen 35 metres long and 5 metres wide
- 'asked the inspector. After a few seconds thought, '175 square metres!' was the excited reply.

Pupils behave well. Their enthusiasm for school is infectious. For example, during an assembly, an attempt by the headteacher and two local clergy to demonstrate their tennis skills was greeted with great but not uncontrolled mirth. As they left the assembly to the music of the hymn, some pupils continued to sing it just because they wanted to. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and safe and were keen to tell inspectors of the recent Healthy School award, and of the gardening club nominated to represent the town in a regional competition. The school council is innovative as it has a series of committees dealing with matters such as behaviour, worship and travel to school. These initiatives enable pupils to make a good contribution to the school and local communities, but their understanding of the wider world is much less well developed. In part, the recent emphasis on improving skills, such as literacy and numeracy, has led to less attention being given to subjects such as art and music, and to developing a wider understanding of the people and diverse cultures of Britain and the world. The school gives its pupils good care, and all requirements to keep them safe are in place. Targets are used well to improve their progress. These are monitored regularly and pupils know what they need to do to achieve them. Marking is used well in most classes to show pupils how to improve their work, although the approach is not entirely consistent throughout the school. Subject leadership is effective, partly because of good support from the local authority. There is a good understanding by leaders and managers of the school's strengths and weaknesses, although they underestimate its effectiveness in relation to national benchmarks. Challenging targets are used very effectively to raise standards and improve the quality of education in a number of areas. Overall, there has been much improvement since the last inspection, especially over the last year, and the school is in a good position for these improvements to continue.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children achieve well, starting from levels below those expected for their ages, so that the vast majority are at the right level for their age by the end of their first year in school. They are thus well placed to make good progress thereafter. The provision is well led and managed as staff plan and work together very harmoniously. Children quickly settle into school, understand the daily routines, and move confidently around the classroom space and small but well-equipped outdoor area, although doors and a corridor place some restrictions on their freedom of movement. There is a good balance between activities directed by adults and those which the children choose themselves. Their progress is continuously monitored, and staff ensure that those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are quickly identified and given carefully targeted support. Children are kept safe and are cared for well. The personal development and well-being of the children is good. The changes in class structure scheduled for next term will enable staff to look again at the organisation of the accommodation to better suit the needs of the children and the demands of the curriculum.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' appreciation and understanding of the richness and diversity of British and world culture by increasing the range of opportunities for creative and cultural learning.
- Improve the attendance of pupils whose low attendance rates are slowing their rates of progress in their learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress and, by the end of the Reception Year, most have attained average standards. In Years 1 and 2, this good progress continues and, in national tests and assessments at the end of Year 2, standards of reading and mathematics are average. Standards of writing are above average. This was seen by inspectors in Year 1, where pupils were asked to produce alliterative sentences describing a sea scene. An example of their work was, 'The shimmering shell sits on the silky sand.' This is high quality work for pupils of this age. By this stage, spelling is accurate and a cursive script is developing well. In Years 3 to 6, pupils continue to make good progress although, in some years, their work reflects a legacy of past underachievement. Nevertheless, by Year 5 pupils can draw a line graph of their pulse rate after increasing amounts of exercise and interpret the results. The writing of Year 6 pupils reflects the range of styles and command of language required to attain the expected and higher levels in national tests, so the achievement of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is good throughout the school. They attain at least average standards from their below average starting points.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are friendly and welcoming, happy to discuss their work, and talk enthusiastically about their school. They expect to enjoy their lessons and nearly always work with concentration and enthusiasm, whether independently, in pairs or in small groups. They are knowledgeable about how to stay safe and to keep themselves healthy. They move sensibly around the school and generally cooperate well with each other in the playground. Older pupils are caring and

thoughtful towards younger ones. The school council members take their role as representatives of other pupils very seriously and have seen their decisions make real differences to the school organisation through the various committees. Attendance is satisfactory, and there is evidence that those with lower attendance records are not achieving as well as they should. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Their spiritual, moral and social development is good but their awareness of other faiths and cultures apart from their own, and their understanding of Britain as a multicultural society and of the world beyond it, are less well developed. Pupils make a good contribution to their local community through their involvement with the church and other local organisations, and through various sporting links. They acquire good literacy and numeracy skills, and their experience of teamwork, and the good standards of speaking and listening skills achieved in the school, stand them in good stead for later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Strengths of teaching include the good relationships between staff and pupils, and the degree of autonomy pupils are given when learning. This is very effective in developing their skills of collaboration and of learning independently. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and pay attention to detail, as when explaining the meanings of the words 'waving' and 'wavering' to Year 1. Teaching assistants are very effective in supporting those who learn more slowly. Work is planned well to meet the needs of individual pupils, as in the use of different planning sheets for a writing task. Information and communication technology is used well to aid teaching and to support learning. Pupils assess their own and each other's work, enabling them to see how to improve. Marking is generally helpful, although not consistently so in all classes.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets the needs of pupils of different abilities and aptitudes but does not use all available opportunities to develop skills through a range of subjects. It is effective in developing pupils' skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology, and provision for sport and physical education is good, enhanced by the use of external coaches and links with other schools. However, there are too few opportunities to study art, music and other creative and cultural aspects of the curriculum. There is a range of additional activities such as sport and gardening for pupils in Years 3 to 6, but fewer such opportunities for younger pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils receive good care and all requirements to keep them safe and for child protection are in place and meet requirements. There are good links with pre-schools, the local secondary school and with the parents of younger pupils, although the school is less successful at involving the parents of some older pupils in their education. The care provided before and after school is of good quality. Pupils enjoy this time and parents rightly speak highly of the provision. Pupils have clear targets which are regularly reviewed and which they understand how to use

to enhance their progress, so academic guidance, a weakness at the time of the last inspection, is now good.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leaders and managers have been effective in bringing about rapid improvements in standards and in pupils' achievement. The headteacher, with the good support of the local authority, has enabled subject leaders to develop teachers' understanding of the use of data to plan work that meets each pupil's needs better. Monitoring and evaluation, including of the quality of teaching and learning, correctly identify the school's strengths and weaknesses and bring about improvement, but are not always accurately matched to national standards and expectations. However, challenging targets have been used successfully as part of the process of improving standards. The governing body is successful in supporting the school and challenging it to improve. It meets its statutory requirements but has only recently started work on ensuring that community cohesion is successfully promoted within the school.

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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?	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	3
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	3
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	2
The attendance of learners	3
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?	3
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 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St John's Church of England Primary School, Wellington, TA21 9EJ

We very much enjoyed talking to you and seeing your work when we visited your school recently. Thank you for making us so welcome. We especially enjoyed speaking to you because you are confident and friendly, and express your views very clearly.

We agree with you that St John's is a good school. These are some of the most important things we found out about it.

- You make good progress and pupils in Year 6 are reaching average standards in English and mathematics, and above average standards in science.
- Children in Reception are given a good start to their education.
- Teaching is good because you are given challenging work that you find really interesting. We were especially impressed by the way you know how well you are doing and how to achieve your targets.
- You have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and safe, and your behaviour is also good. The staff look after you well.
- We liked the way your school council has committees for different areas of school life, and the way you are learning to look after the world such as through gardening club.
- You really enjoy school. We saw this in many of your lessons and in your assembly.
- All the staff and governors are working really hard to make the school even better.

We have asked the school to do two things:

- Teach you more about art, music and the way other people in Britain and the world live.
- Make sure you attend school as much as possible so that you all make good progress in your work.

You can help by always coming to school unless you are ill.

Yours faithfully

Paul Sadler

Lead Inspector