

St John's CofE (C) Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124295
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	328102
Inspection dates	4–5 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Angela Kirk

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	434
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	N S Atkins / Fliss Dale
Headteacher	Stuart Ayres
Date of previous school inspection	28 March 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Hobnock Road Essington Wolverhampton WV11 2RF
Telephone number	01922 476695
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

St John's is a larger than average primary school. Pupils are predominantly from White British backgrounds, with a few from a range of minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than that found in most schools, although the proportion varies between different year groups. These pupils have mainly moderate learning or autistic difficulties. The Early Years Foundation Stage includes part-time nursery provision and two Reception classes. The school also provides a breakfast club and after-school care, which was inspected as part of this inspection. The school has been part of a federation since 1 April 2008, with the headteacher also being headteacher of another local primary school. This arrangement is scheduled to finish at the end of this term with the headteacher returning to St John's full time.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school which consistently gives pupils an all-round, very high-quality education. Central to the school's continuing success are outstanding leadership and management. As a result of the headteacher's continued drive for school improvement and a lack of complacency from all staff, the school has made outstanding progress since its previous inspection and standards have consistently improved over the last three years. Capacity to improve further and value for money are outstanding. Almost all parents rightly hold this oversubscribed school in high regard. Parents are very supportive of the school and are extremely pleased with the education it provides. One parent commented, 'St John's has a terrific "togetherness" feeling. Everyone: staff, head and children all seem to pull in the same direction, giving excellent results. As parents, we couldn't wish for a better school for our child to attend.'

Children enter the school with levels of skills similar to those expected for their age. They make a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and enter Year 1 with standards that are above average. By the time pupils leave the school, standards are consistently well above average and often exceptional. This represents outstanding progress.

A high proportion of outstanding teaching was observed during the inspection. This excellent teaching and a high-quality curriculum are key factors in contributing to the high standards that pupils attain. Pupils are highly motivated to learn and the school ethos of 'work hard, play hard' encourages pupils to do as well as they can and to take part in all that the school offers. Behaviour is outstanding and pupils have very positive attitudes to learning. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well so that they achieve in line with their peers. Pupils thoroughly enjoy their learning because lessons are carefully planned and exciting. Teachers ensure that learning intentions are highly focused and readily understood by the pupils. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and very clear guidance is given to pupils on how to achieve the best standards in their work.

The school's creative and relevant curriculum develops pupils' thinking skills exceptionally well, encourages good personal development and is interesting and varied. There is good progression of skills development and effective links to all subjects. Much writing is undertaken in other subjects and this has helped to develop pupils' writing skills in 'real' situations. For example, as part of their Italian project, some pupils were discussing a lesson that they had enjoyed, which included a persuasive letter, encouraging people to visit Italy. Opportunities for enrichment are diverse and take-up is good. One reason for pupils' excellent academic achievement is their outstanding personal development. The school gives a high priority to helping pupils to become increasingly mature and thoughtful, respecting one another's feelings and taking responsibility. The school's breakfast and after-school care is rightly valued by parents, offering a range of quality activities and mirroring the high levels of care and safety evident throughout the school.

The school works well with parents and outside agencies to ensure that they have the expertise to meet the differing needs of pupils. As a result, in the older classes, there are fewer who need additional support. This is because they are given the skills and confidence to thrive independently.

Equal opportunities and community cohesion are promoted very effectively. The school has yet to use its evaluation of community cohesion to increase learners' levels of understanding of some cultures represented in Britain today. Governors exercise their responsibilities well and

the school consults its stakeholders, taking action where appropriate, for example by starting the breakfast and after-school clubs.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter the Nursery Year with levels of skills and knowledge in line with age-related expectations. On entry, their strengths are in communication through language and literacy and physical development; with creative development being relatively weaker. Progress is carefully monitored showing that there is some differing provision, resulting in a range of achievement by pupils. However, overall, children make good progress in all areas of learning. Activities are carefully organised, allowing children to work on things that they choose themselves as well as taking part in more formal group-work led by adults. Teachers plan activities that stimulate and motivate children, for example, children delighted in the role play observed in a Reception class when the children went on an imaginary bus journey. Parents support their children well and are encouraged to do so, with initiatives such as 'stay and play sessions' which benefit their learning. The personal development of the children and the provision for their welfare are outstanding, as thorough procedures are consistently applied in practice. Children's behaviour and attitudes are excellent. The Early Years Foundation Stage is led well, which has ensured that provision is good with outstanding features. Outdoor provision is in place, but activities are limited by weather conditions, space and resources.

What the school should do to improve further

- Integrate outdoor learning more fully into the curriculum and improve the outdoor area for the Early Years Foundation Stage so it can be used in all weathers.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

By the time pupils leave the school, they reach standards that are consistently well above average and often exceptional. More-able pupils achieve particularly well in all subjects. The quality of writing across the school is exemplary. Last year approximately double the number of pupils, compared to those nationally, achieved the highest grade at the end of Year 6 in English and mathematics. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar good progress to their peers due to effective support. There are no differences between the achievements of any groups. Standards in mathematics in Years 1 and 2 have improved this year to bring them in line with the high standards in reading and writing.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils display an exceptional understanding about 'being healthy': many choose fruit at break-times and older pupils sell healthy snacks. The school achieved its Healthy School Award in 2008. A love of school and enjoyment of all it has to offer can be seen in pupils' first-rate attitudes in lessons and about the school. They say they feel safe and 'wear their school badge with pride', respecting one another, and say that any incidence of inappropriate behaviour is rare and when it does occur (such as some name calling) it is dealt with promptly. Overall, behaviour is outstanding; pupils are mature for their age, highly confident and thoughtful. They reflect on their own and others' achievements and this is a spur to encourage them to do better. They work together exceptionally well in class and have strong social skills. They are

very clear about right and wrong and have a good understanding about different religions. Attendance is above average. The day-to-day conversations that the pupils have with their teachers and other staff ensure that they make an important contribution to school life; however, at the time of the inspection, there was not a more formal arrangement for them to express their collective views. Learners make impressive progress in developing basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. Nearly all pupils express their views with a high level of confidence, whether talking in a small group or in assemblies. They demonstrate an understanding of the need to persevere with tasks and activities they may find challenging, giving them a good grounding for future workplace requirements.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Excellent planning, drawing on a broad range of different activities, inspires the pupils to do their best. Pupils across the school are so well involved in their learning that they rarely need to be redirected to pay attention. Teachers are highly skilled at asking the right questions and demanding extended answers. In this way the pupils are able to explain their thinking clearly. Teachers also display superb subject knowledge, especially when teaching literacy, using a range of technical terms which are understood and used by the pupils. Teaching assistants contribute strongly to the learning of the lower attaining pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in making sure they are well challenged by providing just the right level of support. Teaching identifies key features of the work that need to be included and therefore, pupils are given high quality support in lessons to help them strive for continuous improvement. This also enables pupils to fully participate in assessing their own work. On a few occasions in mathematics, pupils are asked to complete too many sums before moving on to more challenging work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is creative, with literacy and numeracy at its core. It features skills linked to a range of subjects and ensures that all pupils are provided with activities appropriate to their level. Pupils benefit from the good range of trips each term to widen their experiences and support learning. The curriculum is enhanced by a wide and varied range of well-attended extra-curricular clubs, including a range of sporting and artistic activities. A number of residential visits are offered to Key Stage 2 pupils, including trips to France and Denmark for older ones. The school has a very effective integrated programme for personal, social and health education which supports pupils' personal development and well-being extremely effectively.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Staff are highly committed to ensure that the pupils enjoy all aspects of school life and achieve highly. There are excellent arrangements to ensure pupils work and play together well and that the atmosphere in the school is one of sharing, harmony and celebrating success. Safeguarding is robust and at the time of the inspection met all requirements to ensure that pupils are safe and secure at all times. Learners are helped to achieve exceedingly challenging targets and pupils have a good understanding about what they need to do to improve from the feedback

they get in marking and through discussions they have with the teachers about their work. The discussion with teachers enables the pupils to be clear, for example, about what makes successful writing and how it can be adapted for a specific audience. Staff are very aware of pupils who may be 'at risk' and arrangements to monitor how well they are doing so that any required action can be taken are securely in place. There is still some variability of marking between classes and some teachers are not always consistently setting clear steps for improvement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The outstanding and innovative leadership and management of the headteacher have ensured improving standards and progress over the last three years. Supported by the excellent leadership team, he sets a clear vision for the school, which is shared by all staff promoting a strong sense of team spirit. The school self-evaluates itself thoroughly and accurately, with a number of teachers leading and managing initiatives and all teachers involved in the monitoring process. All staff expect the highest standards from pupils in their work, behaviour and attitudes. There is good support provided for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. St John's is a highly inclusive school. Promotion of community cohesion is good; the audit undertaken earlier this year showed many areas were already strong. The governing body is well led and monitors most areas of the school effectively, including finance, standards and achievement and health and safety. However, much of the governors' monitoring is from reports rather than from their first-hand experiences in school.

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?	1
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

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

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	1
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	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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**

8 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St John's C of E Primary School, Wolverhampton, WV11 2RF

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school recently. My colleagues and I thoroughly enjoyed talking to you and were very impressed with St John's. You clearly enjoy everything about school and are very well prepared for when you go to secondary school. You have mature attitudes and your behaviour is excellent. You are growing up to be confident and responsible young people.

St John's is an outstanding school and with the outstanding teaching, pupils in Year 6 reach standards that are much better than in most other schools. You are also making outstanding progress in your learning. The subjects and topics that you study are excellent and you told us that you find your lessons both interesting and challenging. The school is outstandingly well led and managed and those in charge, including the headteacher, make sure that you are very well cared for. This helps you to feel safe.

Although all the staff have worked hard to make the school outstanding, they are committed to continuing to make your school even better. Together we have decided that:

- the children in the Nursery and Reception need a better outdoor learning area. This is so that they can continue to learn outside in all types of weather and so their teachers can include good activities using quality resources in their lessons.

You are excellent ambassadors for your school. Keep up the great work! We wish you all the best for the future.

Yours faithfully

Angela Kirk

Lead inspector