

# St John's CofE Aided Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	125164
<b>Local Authority</b>	Surrey
<b>Inspection number</b>	328302
<b>Inspection dates</b>	6–7 May 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Selwyn Ward

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.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	451
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
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Susan Gibbin
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Liz Wombwell (Interim)
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	19 June 2006
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Markfield Road Caterham CR3 6RN
<b>Telephone number</b>	01883 342 009

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	6–7 May 2009
<b>Inspection number</b>	328302

**Fax number**

01833 343 836

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

In this large primary school, the great majority of pupils are from a White British background. The number of classes in each year group rises from two to three in Year 3 because, in addition to those who start off in the Early Years Foundation Stage, a number of pupils join St John's from a local infant school. A below-average proportion of pupils have mostly moderate learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school offers an extended day through breakfast and after-school clubs. It is part of a loose confederation with a group of other Surrey schools. There have been various temporary leadership arrangements since March 2008. The interim headteacher joined the school in February 2009 and has been appointed to take over as substantive headteacher from September 2009.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to consistency in the quality of teaching and learning and in achievement and standards in mathematics and science.

Despite a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, St John's is providing an inadequate standard of education for its pupils in Years 1 to 6 because of inconsistencies in teaching. These have led to significant underachievement, especially in mathematics and science. Although standards are above average in English by the end of Year 6, they are only average in mathematics and science and have declined in these subjects since the last inspection. Standards in the Year 2 assessments are average, even though the children's Foundation Stage profiles show that they are capable of doing better. Pupils make less progress than they should because teachers do not always match work closely enough to their different capabilities and to what they have already learnt. Where teachers do not expect enough of their pupils, they do not push them to do their very best. This is a picture that is very much recognised by parents. Many complain that there has been far too much inconsistency over recent years. In the words of one, 'Teaching standards seem to vary greatly from class to class, rather like a lucky dip.' It is the wide variation in the quality of teaching and learning that makes the school inadequate overall, despite the fact that there is within the school much good and even some outstanding teaching. Teachers routinely set out learning objectives at the start of each lesson, but often these merely show what the pupils should do rather than what they are expected to learn. In many classes, an over-reliance on worksheets leads to some dull classroom activities and limits opportunities for pupils to make their own choices in how they record work. Nevertheless, the curriculum is appropriately broad, with some good opportunities to practise and apply literacy skills in subjects other than English, although this cross-curricular activity is not matched in the application of numeracy skills.

Pupils' personal development is satisfactory and arrangements for ensuring pupils' welfare are good, although the targets for some pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are not sharp enough. Throughout the school, pupils have individual targets but these are not routinely referred to in every class. Marking, too, varies widely in quality. Some marking gives pupils helpful pointers on how to improve their work but much just offers sometimes random words of praise. Parents have observed that, in some classes, homework is not marked for weeks at a time.

Many of the school's difficulties stem from interruptions and gaps in leadership and management since the last inspection. These have taken their toll in the monitoring of teaching and learning and in training and support for staff. Many parents bemoan what they see as an extended period of 'instability and lack of direction'. There is, however, a universally optimistic mood among parents with regard to the recent improvements and the news that the interim headteacher is taking permanent charge. 'There is a strong sense amongst the parents that the new headteacher has already made a positive difference and there is a real confidence that the school will be very well managed from now on.' This view from a parent summed up the comments of a very considerable number. Many wrote to point to the positive changes made and to say, 'Things are already progressing at a pace.' The school has drawn well on the support

of the local authority over the past year but, under the skilled guidance of the new headteacher, school leaders are showing that they are not solely dependent on external support to secure the improvements needed at St John's. The introduction of rigorous monitoring has led to uncompromisingly accurate self-evaluation and, critically, firm action to plug gaps and address weaknesses. There have already been significant improvements, for example in pupils' behaviour, and a stepping up of training and support for staff. Governors, who previously had been unaware of their lack of knowledge, now have a very accurate picture of the school and are challenging leaders and staff to help drive improvement. Although the school still has further to go, these very recent improvements and the now more stable management demonstrate the school's good capacity to improve further.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Children's skills are above the expected level for their age when they start in the Reception Year, particularly in their communication and language skills and their early counting skills. Because of the good care provided for them by all adults, in careful partnership with parents, the children settle into school quickly. They make rapid progress in their ability to share and play with each other and are confident when joining large groups, for example in the dining hall and assemblies. Despite several staff changes in recent months, the present team work together well to make sure that they all understand what they want the children to learn and that the learning environment is exciting and lively. Children are encouraged to make choices for themselves, and to 'plan, do and review' their work, which helps them develop as independent learners. They achieve well and, by the time they enter Year 1, exceed the levels expected of them in all areas of learning. A recent effective initiative is the allocation of a key person for each child. This is particularly helpful for parents and carers, who can link up with the person who can tell them most about their child's progress. Although they are effective in supporting the children, the current staff are not fully conversant with how to assess the rate at which children are progressing, using the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile. There has been effective guidance and support for them from an external consultant and ongoing training is planned.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise standards by matching work more closely to pupils' capabilities and help them build on what they have learned before, especially in mathematics and science.
- Focus attention in all lessons on what it is that pupils are expected to learn and give pupils more opportunities to make their own choices about how they record work.
- Give pupils clear guidance through marking and their everyday use of individual targets, and ensure that the targets for pupils with learning difficulties are sharply focused and frequently updated.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 4**

Pupils are not helped enough in Years 1 and 2 to capitalise on the good start they have made in the Early Years Foundation Stage. As a result, standards in the Year 2 assessments have been only average, which represents underachievement in relation to the pupils' above-average starting point when they join Year 1. Standards are not high enough as pupils move through the school, and, in the Year 6 tests, pupils have not done as well as they should in mathematics

and science. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do not achieve appreciably better because their individual learning targets are too broad and are only infrequently updated. Pupils' underachievement, and particularly their weaker than expected progress in numeracy, means that they are not as well prepared as they could be for the next stage of their education.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils are generally positive about school, which they enjoy attending. One girl stated, 'All the people are nice, and there is nothing not to like about the school.' Pupils generally want to succeed and achieve, although they are not always enthusiastic in lessons, especially when they find them uninteresting. Nonetheless, they have good relationships with staff and with each other. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils have a strong sense of right and wrong and the link with the local church contributes well to their spiritual development. In lessons and around the school, behaviour is good. The pupils themselves say how much behaviour has improved over the past few months. One boy explained, 'The class rewards have certainly made a difference to the behaviour in our class.' Pupils report that there is little bullying in the school and that staff deal with issues quickly and effectively. When given the opportunity, pupils support and work with each other well, but this is not seen throughout the school. They have a satisfactory understanding of healthy lifestyles and enjoy physical activities. However, as at the time of the last inspection, St John's still describes itself as 'working towards' rather than having attained a Healthy School Award. The pupils' understanding of staying safe is good and the school councillors have contributed to the safety rules for the play area and games. Their contribution to the school and wider community is satisfactory and improving as they feel their role is increasingly valued. Pupils collect money for a range of charities, providing cattle for African villages as well as funds for blind people abroad.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 4**

Lack of training and support in recent years have led to a wide variation in the quality of teaching and learning. Although there are some good and even outstanding lessons, where pupils make excellent progress, there are a number where progress is too slow and too many where it is plodding. In the main, this is because teachers do not all have high enough expectations of what their pupils can do. Too often, pupils all do similar work, regardless of ability or what they have already learnt. In many classes, often unchallenging worksheets stifle creativity and lead to pupils describing lessons as 'boring'. Teachers regularly set out at the start of lessons what are referred to as 'learning objectives'. Often, however, these merely set out the task for the lesson, which means that pupils know what they should be doing but not always why, or what they should be learning from it. This limits their opportunities to evaluate how well they are doing.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

There are ample opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills in a range of different subjects but few similar examples for using and applying numeracy skills. The curriculum is supported by a wide range of extra-curricular activities that are attended by a large number of

pupils. The school also utilises a range of visitors and external visits to enrich its provision further. These enhance the pupils' understanding and skills, while at the same time helping to make learning more interesting. Some of the work in history is particularly effective because it draws together pupils' skills in literacy and art, makes use of interesting artefacts and local visits, and motivates the pupils to find things out for themselves. For example, pupils writing about the Tudors and about London Bridge had learnt much more detail about these topics than is routinely seen. The breakfast and after-school clubs provide a good environment in which the pupils can develop their social and independence skills further. School leaders have begun a review of the curriculum to ensure that it meets the needs of all pupils fully. However, it is too early to evaluate the impact of this recent monitoring.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

The caring climate throughout the school contributes positively to pupils' achievement and personal development. The school meets all current requirements for safeguarding its pupils. There are robust recruitment procedures in place and all required checks are carefully carried out. There are good procedures in place to follow up any pupil absences. Pupils' progress is now carefully tracked, with teachers identifying any pupils who are falling behind and taking responsibility for giving them extra support, with the school drawing on the support of external agencies as required. However, the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are not monitored closely enough and some have targets in their individual education plans that are inappropriate because they have already achieved them. Teachers do not all make effective use of marking to guide their pupils on how to improve their work.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

In the short time since her appointment, the new headteacher has set out a clear direction for the school and has already made a positive difference by uniting the staff, pupils and parents in a common aim for St John's. One parent echoed the thoughts of many when she wrote, 'The new headteacher has given a fresh lift to the whole school. Both my children are excited about her arrival.' Governors have greatly strengthened their role and now hold the school to account well, offering both support and challenge based on a thorough knowledge of the school's work. The school development plan has been reviewed and now sets tight time-lines for action, with review dates to help all leaders and governors evaluate the impact of actions and monitor the progress made. Leaders have recently taken concerted action to raise standards, accelerate pupils' achievement, and improve the curriculum and the quality of teaching and learning. However, the impact of all these actions is still at an embryonic stage and there remains much more to be done. In particular, monitoring of work in mathematics has not been rigorous enough and, for science, the process has yet to begin. Parents complain that communication has not been good enough in the past and many say they would like more information about how well their children are doing. The school is making a reasonable contribution to community cohesion, particularly by broadening pupils' awareness of other cultures and beliefs in the locality, nationally and around the world.



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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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	3
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?	4
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	4

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<sup>1</sup>Grade 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

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	4
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?	3

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	2
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	4
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?	Yes

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

02 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St John's CofE Aided Primary School, Caterham, CR3 6RN

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school.

St John's is already beginning to change for the better but it is not yet doing enough to make sure that you all do as well as you should in lessons, and especially in mathematics and science. We are asking the staff and governors to make some more improvements and we are recommending that the school gets some extra help over the next year. This is called a Notice to Improve.

We were pleased to see what a good start the children get off to in the Reception Year. In some of the older classes, however, you are sometimes doing work that is too easy for some of you and too hard for others. We have asked your teachers to match the work that you do more closely to what you need to learn so that you can build better on what you have learnt before. We have also asked them to make sure that the learning objectives that they give you at the start of each lesson make it clear to you what you are expected to learn rather than what activities you are going to be doing. This will make it easier for you to see how much progress you are making in lessons.

Many of you are filling in quite a lot of worksheets in lessons. This is another thing that we have asked the school to look at because we believe that you could make faster progress if you were choosing how to record your work yourselves. We could see that you all have individual targets but you are not making enough use of these to guide your work. The targets for those of you who have extra help with your learning are not always sharp enough and need to be updated more frequently. We would also like to see marking give you clearer guidance on how to move your work on. You can help too by following your teachers' advice and by referring to your targets whenever you are writing or using your numeracy skills.

Although many of your parents told us that they thought improvements were needed at St John's, almost all of them told us how impressed they were with the changes that have already been introduced by your new headteacher. We agree that the school is certainly now on the right track. It was good, for example, to learn from some of you how much behaviour has improved over the last few months.

Best wishes for the future.

Yours faithfully

Selwyn Ward

Lead Inspector