

St John's CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110818
Local Authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	337581
Inspection dates	27–28 April 2010
Reporting inspector	Alan Jarvis

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	177
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andy Mayes
Headteacher	Helen Curtis
Date of previous school inspection	5 February 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors

- observed six teachers in 12 classroom visits typically lasting around 30 minutes. Meetings were held with governors, the headteacher and a number of staff responsible for key areas of the school's work. Inspectors looked at planning, minutes of meetings, other documentation including that relating to safeguarding, pupils' work and progress records. Questionnaires returned by 66 parents and carers, 89 pupils and 29 members of staff were analysed.

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

- the impact of initiatives taken to improve attainment in English, mathematics and science
- the progress made by different groups of pupils, especially the higher attaining pupils and those with additional learning needs
- how well assessment is used to plan teaching and tailor learning
- the quality of the start made in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than average. While a large majority of pupils are White British in origin, the proportion from other ethnic backgrounds has risen and is now above average. Around one third speak English as an additional language and one in ten is at an early stage of learning to speak the language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above that found in most schools. Most of these have dyslexia, moderate learning difficulties or behavioural, emotional or social needs. The school offers a breakfast club and has recently achieved Healthy Schools status.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

St John's is a satisfactory and improving school. Both parents and pupils speak positively of the school. Pupils say, 'We feel very safe at school and want to learn.' The school cares for its pupils well. Effective links with outside partners helps pupils with a range of additional needs overcome their difficulties, behave well and make the same rate of progress as other pupils. Parents commend how families are supported if times are difficult. Parents are encouraged to develop their own learning to support their children at home and strong lines of communication are fostered via regular newsletters and easy contact with governors.

The main priority faced by the school was to address a significant decline in attainment which they identified as being caused by some inadequate teaching. This has been successfully remedied. Children make a sound start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Attainment is slightly below average in Year 6 but it has been steadily and securely improving. Pupils do relatively better in reading and writing than in mathematics and science because English is more strongly promoted. Even so, the reading is not tailored enough to pupils' individual needs and pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop their writing skills across the curriculum. In addition, problem-solving skills in mathematics and investigative work in science do not have the priority that they ought to have. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to devise their own investigations in science, form hypotheses and make their own choices about how to record their findings.

Teaching is satisfactory and improving. In turn, this is helping to quicken progress. Teaching is consistently effective in some year groups because teachers take every opportunity to tailor learning to the needs of all groups in their class. However, there are still times when questioning does not fully challenge the more-able pupils and activities set are not matched closely enough to the needs of all groups. In addition, learning slows for pupils who need additional support when teaching assistants are not used as well as they might be. It also slows when teachers spend too much time on whole-class sessions rather than pupils working independently.

The smiles on pupils' faces and good attendance at the breakfast club show that pupils enjoy school and all that it offers. Behaviour is good and helping to quicken pupils' academic progress. The school's strong emphasis on developing healthy lifestyles has paid off. It is recognised by the school achieving national recognition and pupils have a good understanding of how to stay fit and healthy. The school is a cohesive and harmonious community, although it has not done enough to extend pupils' awareness of other faiths and cultures within the United Kingdom.

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Successful steps have been taken to address past deficiencies in teaching and pupils' underachievement based on a clear and accurate diagnosis of the school's performance. This has put the school on a secure footing and provided a platform to further promote and quicken improvement. Sound improvement has been made since the last inspection. Leaders and managers at all levels, especially the headteacher and her deputy, are ambitious for the pace of improvement to quicken. Although more needs to be done, the upturn in pupil's attainment, achievement and enjoyment confirm the satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6 by July 2011 by
 - fully implementing a personalised reading programme and providing more opportunities for contextual and extended writing in a range of subjects
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to develop their mathematical problem-solving and reasoning skills
 - giving more opportunities for pupils to devise their own investigations, test out their hypotheses and find their own ways of recording their results in science.
- Within the next year, accelerate pupils' progress by ensuring that the large majority of teaching and learning is good by
 - sharpening questioning so that it consolidates and extends all pupils' learning, especially for the most able pupils
 - use the good information teachers have on pupils' progress to ensuring that work is consistently well matched to the needs of all pupils
 - ensuring that teaching assistants contribute effectively throughout the lesson
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to work independently and take responsibility for their own learning.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to develop first-hand knowledge and understanding of different faiths, customs and belief systems within the United Kingdom.
- Around 40% of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils begin Year 1 with attainment that is below that expected for their age. National Curriculum test results in Year 6 fell to a very low level after the last inspection but recovered to below average levels last year. Current attainment in Year 6 has improved further in reading and writing but attainment in mathematics and science remains similar to last year. All groups of pupils achieve satisfactorily. However, progress is

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uneven from year to year mainly because of inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and use of assessment. Nevertheless, work seen in lessons and in books shows that attainment and progress are improving.

Pupils enjoy learning and concentrate well, especially when lessons are well tailored to their needs. This was evident for example, in a Year 6 mathematics lesson where a good pace to learning was established by splitting activities into 'bite sized chunks', with pupils working on problems that had been selected to give good challenge to pupils of all abilities. However, in some lessons, pupils make satisfactory rather than good progress because the learning activities are too easy for some and too difficult for others. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are helped to enjoy their learning and make satisfactory progress because their needs are analysed and suitably addressed. Pupils at an early stage of learning English are appropriately supported and pick up speed once they start to become more proficient in speaking and writing English.

Pupils are keen to take responsibility around the school, for example in helping in assembly and serving on the school council. The vast majority of pupils behave well at all times. Home circumstances occasionally mean that individuals come to school very upset and their anger is managed very well. Pupils have a good sense of what is right and wrong and pupils from all ethnic backgrounds get on well with each other. Pupils' regular attendance and sound basic skills are ensuring the vast majority are satisfactorily prepared for their next stage of education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Although much teaching is well tailored to pupils' needs and abilities, some is more generally matched to the class as a whole. When this is the case, it is usually the most-able pupils who are not challenged enough by teachers' questioning or with activities which stretch their abilities. Teaching assistants are often well deployed to assist those who need extra help when they work individually or in small groups, but there are times, in whole-class sessions, when this is not the case. Pupils are being encouraged to assess their own learning and this is increasingly helping them to gain a sound understanding of how well they are doing. Marking in English gives more pointers for improvement than in other subjects. Older pupils know their targets well.

Linking literacy to other areas of the curriculum has helped to accelerate progress in writing but similar links are not as strongly developed with mathematics. Pupils enjoy topic work but there are not enough opportunities for them to learn about the faiths and beliefs other people hold. Nevertheless, visits to places such as Grafham Water and Kettles Yard in Cambridge help pupils broaden their horizons.

Staff take good care of the pupils, drawing well on partnerships with outside agencies to bolster the support provided. Typical of the school's good care is its provision of a breakfast club which is greatly appreciated by the pupils. 'We get to school on time and you get to eat toast with different kinds of toppings which help us to be healthy' typify the many positive comments made by pupils. The school also has good arrangements to support pupils and parents when they transfer to secondary school, particularly if they have special educational needs and/or disabilities that need to be taken into consideration.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has been particularly successful in addressing the decline in

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attainment, providing good care for all groups of pupils and establishing a climate in which all staff share her vision. Leaders who oversee English, mathematics and science have clear plans for improvement and are bringing more rigour to monitoring pupils' progress and evaluating the success of initiatives to raise attainment. Improved target setting and better tracking of pupils' progress has ensured that any pupils who fall behind are given the support they need to catch up. As a result, very few pupils underachieve. As well as observing lessons, the headteacher undertakes regular 'learning walks', visiting all or most classes to see the progress that pupils are making. These are giving teachers clear pointers for improvement. The governing body fulfils all statutory requirements and the budget is managed particularly well. Steps are being taken to train all governors to ensure that they fulfil their roles more effectively.

All pupils have equal access to opportunities around the school, such as joining clubs and taking part in sport, and there is no discrimination. Leaders are careful to analyse and take action to eliminate differences in pupils' progress. The school draws well on the support of outside agencies and collaboration with other schools to meet the needs of vulnerable pupils. Safeguarding procedures and practices meet legal requirements. While the school ensures child protection procedures are rigorously applied, especially those for its many vulnerable pupils, some routine information is not recorded systematically. Links have been established with local schools which have helped ensure pupils gain a good sense of their local community. A sound plan to further develop community cohesion is focusing on extending faith and cultural links beyond the immediate area.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

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Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make satisfactory progress from mostly below the typically expected level of skills when they start school, particularly in communication, language and literacy and knowledge and understanding of the world. Children are looked after well. Good induction arrangements help them to settle in quickly and form good relationships. Requirements for their safety, health and welfare are met, although some health and safety risk assessments are not robust enough. A broad range of indoor activities encourage children to explore and enjoy their learning. However, assessment information is not used well enough to consistently provide challenging activities to all groups of pupils, especially in whole-class sessions. The outdoor area does not provide a natural extension of the indoor learning environment as some opportunities for children to experience all areas of learning are missing. The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are satisfactory and the plan of action developed with the local authority is steadily being implemented.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Almost all parents who made their views known to inspectors are pleased with all aspects of the school's work. One parent wrote in to say, 'The headteacher really helped my children and family through a tough time and my children are now thriving at school and at home.' This is only one of a number of examples of the good care which the inspectors found.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St John's CofE Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 66 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 177 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	41	62	23	35	2	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	44	67	21	32	0	0	1	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	44	67	21	32	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	35	53	29	44	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	45	68	20	30	0	0	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	42	64	22	33	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	40	61	23	35	1	2	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	31	47	31	47	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	39	59	25	38	0	0	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	30	45	30	45	3	5	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	27	41	34	52	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	39	59	26	39	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	45	68	19	29	1	2	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



29 April 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St John's CofE Primary School, Huntingdon, PE29 7LA

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school. I am writing to tell you what we found out. You go to a satisfactory and improving school and some things are good.

Inspectors like these things about your school

Although your overall attainment is below average, it is improving. You do relatively better in reading and writing than in mathematics and science.

Your behaviour is good. Well done! You should be very pleased about this. This is making a real difference to your progress in school.

Staff care for you well, particularly those of you who need extra help or support. This helps to make you feel safe and attend regularly.

You have a good understanding of how to keep fit and eat healthily.

The school has good links with your parents and helps them in many ways.

The school must do three things to improve further

Further improve your attainment in English, mathematics and science so that all of you achieve well during your time in school.

Make sure you have more good teaching. We want all your teachers to question you effectively, ensure work is always well tailored to your abilities, enable you to spend the right amount of time working in groups and make the best use of the teaching assistants throughout all the lesson.

Give you more opportunities to learn about people in the United Kingdom who have faiths and beliefs which are different from your own.

Remember, you can help by working harder on your mathematics and science listening carefully to what your teachers tell you to do and being inquisitive about how other people live their lives. I wish you success in getting better and better.

Yours sincerely

Alan Jarvis

Lead inspector

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