

St John the Baptist RC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113461
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	338178
Inspection dates	19–20 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Hazel Callaghan

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	88
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Margaret Bridges
Headteacher	Mrs Liz Hamilton
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The proportion of time spent looking at learning was approximately a third; the number of lessons observed, seven and the number of teachers seen, four. Inspectors also held meetings with governors, staff and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's monitoring records of pupils' attainment and progress, policies and various other documents linked to safeguarding as well as reports about the school, pupils' books, questionnaires from pupils and staff and 68 questionnaires from parents and carers.

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

- how well all pupils make progress, especially those in Key Stage 1, and the effectiveness of learning in writing for all pupils, particularly boys
- how effective teaching is in ensuring all pupils make good progress, especially the more able
- how leadership and management is effectively devolved in such a small school and how well all aspects of the school's work are monitored and evaluated by staff and governors.

Information about the school

St John's is a very small school. Most of its pupils come from families of White British backgrounds and a small number of pupils are from minority ethnic groups who speak English as an additional language. The school has a high proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities, of which a higher than average proportion has a statement of special educational needs. The numbers of pupils in each age group fluctuates from year to year and in some classes the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is particularly high. A very high proportion of pupils join the school in all age groups each year. The school has successfully gained the Artsmark Gold Award.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Pupils receive a good education and achieve well. The school's work is underpinned by its strong Catholic ethos which is led by the headteacher and espoused by all the staff. The care of each child is of paramount importance and consequently the provision for pupils' care, guidance and support is outstanding. Each child's personal strengths and needs are well known and responded to very effectively. Pupils consequently feel well cared for and secure and in return show care and support to one another. They take a great interest in looking for ways to improve the life of the school and eagerly take on opportunities to help others not only in the local community, such as working to save the local post office, but also communities further afield. Parents and carers recognise that the caring ethos is a strength of the school and many commented on the staff's sensitive approach and pupils' real enjoyment of school.

It is this sense of enjoyment and pupils' positive attitudes to their work, along with good teaching and stimulating activities that enable pupils to achieve well. From starting points below expected levels when they join in Reception, pupils' attainment is broadly average by the time they leave from Year 6. Good progress starts in the Reception class where the outstanding provision and the sensitive support of the staff help children to settle and develop as confident learners. Pupils make good progress in almost all aspects of their learning. However, their progress in developing writing skills has been identified accurately by the staff as a weakness, particularly for the boys. A variety of strategies are engaging boys' greater interest in writing and all pupils are beginning to make better progress but standards are yet to rise consistently. Many opportunities are made to link writing activities with other forms of learning to make it more interesting, to research aspects of history or geography for example. Staff are developing these meaningful links across subjects well and a more creative curriculum is emerging but as yet without a formal review to ensure that the new curriculum has a correct breadth and balance of knowledge and skills.

Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are extremely well supported by the staff and by the school's good partnership with outside agencies. In consequence they achieve well. Pupils with statements of special needs often make outstanding progress in their academic and personal development. Those who join the school at other times than in the Reception class settle well. They are met with friendship from the other pupils and considerable support from the staff and consequently make good progress. Those with English as an additional language often reach standards expected for their age.

The school has successfully maintained, and in some cases further improved, many aspects of its work since its last inspection. The provision for children in the Early Years

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Foundation Stage is considerably stronger. The quality of teaching is more secure in all classes because teachers' expertise is used effectively across the school to promote good learning in their specialist subjects. Assessment procedures and the analysis of data about pupils' progress is used well to inform lesson planning so that activities match pupils' abilities well and pupils of all abilities, especially the more able, are challenged. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and the most important areas for improvement are identified effectively, showing that the school has a good capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the rates of progress of all pupils in writing, especially the boys, by developing the use of current strategies more strongly.
- Carry out a review of the school's current subject planning so that a good balance of skills and knowledge is maintained as the curriculum is developed to provide a wide range of exciting and meaningful activities.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Good progress was clearly evident in the lessons observed. Pupils were well engaged, showing good levels of involvement in their tasks. A group of pupils in the oldest class, for example, were studying a range of toys from the Victorian era and considering what kinds of evidence the artefacts presented which would help them understand more about how people lived in the past. The member of staff leading the group used well-chosen questions to help them focus on relevant details and pupils' good use of observational skills and deduction helped them successfully understand how the toys were used, by whom and how they worked.

Similarly, pupils in a lower attaining group in the Year 2 and 3 class showed good skills of concentration and perseverance when trying to recall the different stages of a story. They worked together effectively as a group, using simple signs and actions to help them recall the different phases of the story. The group contained pupils in the early stages of learning English as well as those with special educational needs and because the activity was well matched to their abilities, they found good levels of success.

Several parents and carers commented on how their children are developing as 'well-rounded and caring young people' and felt that they are well prepared for their next school because 'they have the confidence to meet new challenges'. Pupils of different backgrounds in the school get on well and they show interest and respect for those of a different cultural heritage. Behaviour throughout the school is good and pupils have no concerns over bullying. Pupils' spiritual and moral development is well nurtured and they show concern and empathy for others less well off than themselves. Several have already asked if they could raise money for the homeless people in Haiti, for example. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy, and the school council in particular is very active in promoting both aspects of school life.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
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	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The school provides an exciting and interesting education for its pupils. They talked with enthusiasm about their fun activities and about the teachers who are always quick to help them understand when they are stuck. Each child has its own important place in the school and staff are effective in recognising not only what will support pupils' learning but also what will help their personal and social development. All adults have high expectations for pupils' good effort and behaviour. Assessment of pupils' work is effective in identifying where additional support is required and the next steps needed for pupils to make effective progress. Pupils' learning is also promoted successfully by staff who use their own special interests and expertise in lessons. The quality of artwork through the school, recognised by the Artsmark Gold Award, is of an excellent standard due to the skilled support of two talented teaching assistants. Opportunities to work with pupils from other local schools, with visitors to the school and at the local college all enhance pupils' learning and social skills well.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

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The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

There is a clear vision for, and commitment to, raising standards. The senior leadership team has an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. A variety of strategies to improve teaching and learning have proved successful and the use of staff expertise has done much not only to broaden the curriculum but also to improve teaching and learning across the school.

Procedures for ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all pupils meet requirements and, at the time of the inspection, procedures were carried out rigorously. The school succeeds in tackling discrimination and ensuring that every child is valued and pupils with a range of disabilities are welcomed into the school.

Governors are well informed and very supportive of the school's work but tend to leave much of the strategic planning to the headteacher and staff. The school has evaluated its contribution to community cohesion and correctly judges this to be satisfactory. While it succeeds in promoting a harmonious school community and helping pupils to grow up as confident, valuable members of their local community, pupils' awareness of the diversity of cultures in the United Kingdom and further afield is not so well developed.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
	2
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	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3

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The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money

2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children start in the Reception class with a narrower range of skills and knowledge than is usual for children of this age. They make good progress and many children achieve extremely well from low starting points. This is because of the outstanding provision. Good teaching and an exciting range of activities enable children to develop well. There is a good balance of tasks led by an adult and opportunities for children to choose and develop their own activities. They choose their resources with confidence and work and play very happily with each other, sharing resources sensibly. The outside area has been developed well since the last inspection and now provides an exciting, safe area in which children can experiment and explore, playing in the Wolf's cottage or building a large tiger as part of their work on Chinese New Year, for example.

Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and children are very well cared for. Good links with parents and carers and the local pre-school groups are fostered. Children's progress is monitored carefully and a very thorough system of recording this is used to develop a clear plan for each child's important next steps. The teacher and teaching assistant work together extremely well. Areas for further improvement are identified correctly and then evaluated, but because the methods by which developments are to be reviewed are not always sufficiently planned the process lacks rigour.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

A very large majority of parents and carers are very supportive of the school. Even those who expressed a concern included praise for many elements of the school's provision, especially about the school's happy atmosphere. A general concern is that there has been no recent opportunity for parents or carers to meet with teachers and to share information about pupils' progress. This is recognised by the school and there are plans for consultation meetings to be arranged in the near future. There were some concerns about inappropriate behaviour. The pupils have very high standards and when some pupils new to the school do not behave as most of the other children do, it is

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quickly noticed. These incidents are reducing and are effectively managed.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St John the Baptist 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 68 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 88 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	32	47	30	44	5	7	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	39	57	29	43	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	15	22	36	53	17	25	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	19	28	40	59	8	12	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	29	43	32	47	5	7	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	30	44	33	49	5	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	26	38	40	59	2	3	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)	6	9	11	16	2	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	24	35	37	54	5	7	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	25	37	32	47	10	15	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	24	35	36	53	7	10	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	17	25	43	63	8	12	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	30	44	32	47	5	7	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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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.



22 January 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St John the Baptist RC Primary School, Dartmouth TQ6 9HW

Thank you for making us so welcome and answering our questions when we visited you recently. You are rightly proud of your school and what it does for you. You and your parents or carers are correct in thinking that you go to a good school.

Here are some of the things we found out.

- You get a good start to your schooling in the Reception classes.
- You make good progress to reach standards that are similar to those of most pupils of your age.
- You want to do well and you enjoy the fun activities you are given.
- You are polite, friendly and helpful to everyone. You enjoy taking responsibility and have done lots of things to help the school be a better place and to help people around the world. You show respect for each other's feelings.
- You are taught well and all your teachers work hard to make sure that your lessons are interesting and you have a good understanding of how you can do better in your work.
- Everyone in the school works together as a strong team and there is a good partnership with your parents and carers and others who can help you to learn.
- The staff look after you extremely well so you feel safe and happy.

Even though St John's is a good school, there are two things we have asked your headteacher and staff to do to make it even better.

- Help you make better progress in your writing.
- Have a close look at all your activities so that when they develop new plans to link activities together, so your lessons are more interesting, they ensure that all the skills and knowledge you need continue to be included.

Thank you again for making our visit so enjoyable and remember you can do your bit by continuing to work hard and helping each other.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Hazel Callaghan

Lead inspector

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