

St John's CofE (A) Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124309
Local Authority	Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number	340538
Inspection dates	8–9 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Kevin Johnson

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	269
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Anthony Osborne
Headteacher	Mrs Pauline Bloor
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors spent approximately 50% of the inspection time looking at pupils' learning, visiting 15 lessons and seeing 12 teachers. Meetings were held with governors, staff and groups of pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at national assessment data and the school's own assessments, policies and minutes, evidence of the school's monitoring and self-evaluation, safeguarding documentation and 93 parental questionnaires.

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

- the standards reached by pupils and the progress they make
- the quality and consistency of teaching
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers in bringing about improvements.

Information about the school

This is an average-sized school. Most of the pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for a free school meal is well above average. A higher-than-average proportion has special educational needs and/or disabilities. Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage comprises Nursery and Reception classes. A breakfast club is provided.

The school has achieved the Health Promoting Schools award, the ECO Schools Silver Award, and the Activemark for its success in encouraging pupils to be involved in physical activities.

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

This is a satisfactory school. In establishing St John's at the heart of its community, leaders have won the confidence of parents and have set the school on a firm path to improvement. Standards are rising and pupils achieve satisfactorily.

Children in the Early Years Foundation stage make good progress from starting points which are well below those typical for their age. This is an improved picture since the last inspection because of the strength of leadership now seen in Nursery and Reception classes. Progress in Years 1 and 2 has been slow, partly because children leaving previous Reception classes have not always made enough progress and partly because the quality of teaching in Key Stage 1 has not been consistently strong enough to ensure that pupils make up all the ground they needed to. As a result, attainment at the end of Year 2, in reading, writing and mathematics, has not reached expected levels.

Robust monitoring and the effective management of teaching have established a stronger picture in Key Stage 2, where progress is gathering pace and pupils achieve average standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. Improvement in the use of assessment information to check on pupils' progress and to set appropriate targets has had a positive impact. The school recognises that effective practice needs to be built upon further to ensure that individual assessments and marking in all classes consistently guide pupils through the next steps of their learning.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Most are well behaved in school. They develop positive relationships with others, have caring attitudes and have a strong sense of what is expected of them. A small minority have not yet gained the self-discipline they need, nor sufficient awareness, of how their actions affect others. Consequently, their behaviour limits their own and others' capacity to learn and to enjoy school. Through lessons and enriching visits to different places of worship, pupils gain good insights into the practices and beliefs of others. Much work has been done to broaden pupils' understanding about everyday cultural issues, both locally and in other countries. This is a stronger feature of pupils' personal development.

Leaders have a strong commitment to the school's future development and are clear about where the priorities lie. Those with senior management responsibilities fulfil crucial roles in monitoring pupils' academic progress and contributing to leaders' broadly accurate view of the school's performance. Monitoring of teaching is extensive but requires stronger focus on the impact of what teachers do and how that contributes to improved standards, particularly in Key Stage 1. The school exceeded its Year 6 targets in 2009 and has raised the bar further for the current year. This is a strong reflection of the school's drive for improvement. The school demonstrates satisfactory capacity to improve.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning, particularly in Key Stage 1, by:
 - increasing the proportion of good and outstanding lessons
 - making sure that that work is always matched closely to pupils' learning needs and abilities.
- Embed effective assessment practices throughout Key Stages 1 and 2, so that all pupils know precisely what they need to do next in order to improve their work.
- Ensure that monitoring and evaluation focuses sharply on learning outcomes for pupils and leads to continuous improvement in their attainment and progress.
- About 40% of the 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

Most pupils are keen to learn and are attentive in lessons. When suitably challenged pupils work enthusiastically, but expectations occasionally fall short of their actual capabilities. Pupils respond especially well in music and physical education lessons because they appreciate the particular expertise that those teachers bring to their learning. A growing excitement is evident about the forthcoming performance of 'Joseph'. Pupils say they like school and all the extra activities provided for them. They appreciate the help they get from their teachers. However, although they know that they have targets, not all pupils know precisely what they are. The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is satisfactory. Additional help for this group of pupils is well planned and skilled teaching assistants make a valuable contribution when working with individuals and small groups, resulting in some making good progress from their starting points. In whole-class lessons, however, resources are not always adapted to give the best support and when that happens, pupils struggle to make their best progress.

In Key Stage 2, standards have improved significantly over the past two years. The school's assessments and pupils' current work show that standards in this key stage are likely to be maintained in line with national averages. A legacy of slow progress lower down the school is beginning to be addressed as a result of effective teaching and good provision in Nursery and Reception classes. However, leaders agree that action is needed to ensure that pupils' good early learning and development is effectively built upon and the good rate of progress is not interrupted by inconsistencies in teaching quality.

Pupils say that they feel safe and well cared for. They have a good understanding about the importance of a sensible diet and appreciate the healthy meal choices they are able to make. Sports, dance and other activities are popular and the enjoyment and energy pupils display fully justify the Activemark award. Those who have particular responsibilities take them very seriously and contribute well to the day-to-day running of

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the school. Their links with schools and other community groups, combined with average attendance, contribute satisfactorily to their preparation for the future.

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	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
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?

Teaching is satisfactory. Although some good teaching was seen during the inspection, which brought about good progress in those lessons, the quality throughout the school is inconsistent. Where teaching is most effective there is a good understanding between teacher and pupils about what is expected of them. Pupils are challenged and their ideas are valued. As a result, they are eager to be part of the lesson and to work hard. In better lessons, work is carefully matched to pupils' varying abilities so that they work independently and with confidence. In less effective lessons, the pace of learning is too slow because teachers do not use assessment to build quickly enough on what pupils already know. An example was seen in mathematics, when pupils were working with quarters, but the teacher's questions revealed that they were capable of understanding and working at a higher level with smaller fractions. At times, the teachers' introductions are too long and pupils become restless and lose interest because of the length of time

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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they are sitting on the carpet. Lesson planning usually makes clear what pupils will learn and teachers routinely use electronic whiteboards to demonstrate and hold pupils' attention.

The curriculum enables pupils to achieve satisfactorily in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). There is increasing emphasis on developing writing skills across a wide range of subjects, but less evidence of a similar approach to applying numeracy and ICT skills. Pupils achieve well in music and sports and there is growing interest in French, where learning is boosted by a residential visit. A good range of visits and visitors add enrichment to pupils' learning and enjoyment of school. Pupils' personal, health and social education prepares them adequately to make informed choices about their well-being outside school and the importance of safe relationships.

Almost all parents agree that the school takes good care of their children, though a few raised concerns about the behaviour of some pupils. The most vulnerable pupils, and at times families, are supported well by staff members who are very sensitive to their particular needs. Parents are generally happy with the access to school and the information they receive about their children's progress. The school provides a good range of opportunities through Family Learning and parent support groups to enable them to help their children at home. Arrangements for children starting in Nursery are very good and there are satisfactory procedures for pupils to transfer at the end of Year 6.

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?

Leaders have successfully steered the school through difficult times in its development. They have worked hard to build a cohesive school community, which is bound by strong moral values and a collective will to improve. Although there is still work to be done, there have been notable improvements in provision, namely in the Early Years Foundation Stage, some areas of teaching, and in the school's use of assessment and target setting, which have resulted in pupils' better progress and improved standards. Monitoring and evaluation helps to provide a generally accurate picture of the school. Governors are wholly committed to school improvement. All statutory responsibilities are fulfilled, including measures to ensure that pupils are properly safeguarded. Governors provide good support through their involvement in the school's work, but do not share

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as well as they might in evaluating the school's quality. They acknowledge that with the focus on in other important priorities, standards have not been sufficiently monitored in the past.

Discrimination is challenged strongly. All pupils, and their parents, are valued because of the contribution they can make. Pupils from minority groups integrate well and work harmoniously with others. The school strives to provide all pupils with the support and opportunities they need to achieve, but inconsistency in the quality of teaching is a limiting factor, particularly for some more able pupils. Community cohesion is promoted well. The school has thought out its particular role and the resulting action plan is helping pupils to gain a clearer view of the way communities can work together. There are good links with local schools, which differ in character to St John's, and strengthening links with schools in France, Spain and Uganda.

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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Good leadership and provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage results in their good learning and development. Children's skills and abilities are well below the expectations for their age when they enter the Nursery, particularly in communication, language and literacy skills, and in aspects of their personal, social and emotional development. Pupils currently in Reception are working within the early learning goals, having made good progress in most areas of learning. A strong focus on developing children's social skills at an early stage, effectively helps them to become active, independent learners. They quickly gain the confidence to work and play alongside

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others. Their independence is boosted by the good opportunities they have to choose their own activities. They have exciting experiences, such as preparing and eating a stir-fry to celebrate the Chinese New Year, or playing with penguins and polar bears in a very large tray of ice cubes. Good use is made of the outdoor area where children's physical development thrives as they practise the skills they have learned in the classroom. Activities led by teachers are well planned and purposeful because they are based on regular assessment of children's learning. Adults join in the activities to stimulate children's imaginations and to boost their language skills. Provision for children's welfare is good; requirements are met and reviewed regularly by staff to ensure children's safety and well-being. Good relationships with parents and the sharing of targets mean that they become valued partners in their children's learning.

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	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The large majority of parents express positive views about the school and are happy with the care provided and the progress their children make. Inspectors agree with the view of the few parents who feel that a small minority of pupils display, at times, behaviour which can be detrimental to their own and others' learning.

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 (A) 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 93 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 269 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	64	69	28	30	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	61	66	29	31	3	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	45	48	44	47	3	3	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	53	57	38	41	2	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	52	56	39	42	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	45	48	43	46	4	4	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	52	56	40	43	0	0	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)	41	44	46	49	2	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	48	52	41	44	3	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	42	45	43	46	5	5	3	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	35	38	55	59	1	1	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	50	54	41	44	1	1	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	62	67	29	31	2	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 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.



10 February 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St John's CofE (A) Primary School, Stoke-on-Trent, ST4 6SB

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we came to inspect your school recently. It was a pleasure to talk to you and we were delighted to find out how much you enjoy school. We saw how enthusiastic you are about music and sport and how much you are looking forward performing 'Joseph' for your parents. I also saw how delicious your school dinners are. No wonder you all look so fit and healthy!

St John's is a satisfactory school and it is improving, because most of you make steady progress and you are beginning to reach higher standards in your work.

Your teachers work hard and help you to enjoy your lessons. The grown-ups in school take good care of you and you are usually well mannered and polite and attend school regularly.

Now, all of those things are important but, as you know, there is always some room for improvement. That is why your parents, headteacher and teachers, school governors (and I'm sure you fit into that list as well) all want St John's to be a better school for everyone. To help that to come about I have asked your school leaders to do three things.

The first is to make sure all of your lessons are as good as the very best we saw.

Secondly, that teachers make sure that all of you know exactly what you must do, at all times, to improve your work. Finally, that all teachers check that their plans really do help you to learn well and to reach higher standards.

Of course you have an important part to play in continuing to attend school every day and always working as hard as you can.

Best wishes and good luck to all of you

Yours sincerely,

Mr Kevin Johnson

Lead Inspector

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