

St Mary and St John Junior and Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103442
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	363334
Inspection dates	16–17 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Ceri Morgan HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI) the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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	396
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Zofia Jackson
Headteacher	Veronica Fenlon
Date of previous school inspection	10 June 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. They observed 20 lessons and each of the 15 teachers. They observed the school's work, met with every teacher individually, the full senior leadership team and looked at a wide range of documentation. This included strategic plans, records of pupils' progress and monitoring, along with minutes and records of the meetings of the governing body. Some informal discussions were held with a small number of parents. Inspectors also met several times with the headteacher and groups of pupils. A scrutiny of a sample of pupils' workbooks was carried out. A telephone conversation was held with the Chair of the Governing Body. Although no formal questionnaire was issued to parents and carers on this visit, they had completed the Ofsted questionnaire in the previous term and the results are used in this report to indicate their views.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Whether attainment by the end of year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics is high enough and the progress made by pupils is rapid.
- If the quality of teaching ensures pupils' different learning needs are met.
- Whether the revised curriculum matches learners needs adequately.
- Whether the work of the newly established senior leadership team in monitoring brings about sufficiently rapid change.

Information about the school

The school is larger than most primary schools. It is on a split site, straddling a busy main road, with the junior site on one side and the infant on the other. It has been formally recognised as a school causing concern for over 3 years following a notice to improve in 2008 and entering special measures in June 2009. Throughout that period, there have been significant staffing changes although senior leadership has remained constant. Since September 2010, five new teachers have started work and a new deputy headteacher has been appointed. The governing body is now a smaller body of 10 members. The number of pupils on roll has recently increased slightly.

There is a very wide range of backgrounds amongst the pupils. Around 20% are White British, with a further 14 different ethnic backgrounds represented and around a quarter for which ethnicity is not known. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. Around a third of the pupils are learning English as an additional language.

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

2

Main findings

In accordance with section 13(4) of the education Act 2005 Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school no longer requires special measures.

St Mary and St Johns' school has come a long way in the last year. There is now strong leadership with clear vision at the most senior level. The quality of teaching is now satisfactory with some that is good. This enhanced provision is improving attainment rapidly, although it still remains low, especially in mathematics. However, attainment in reading and most aspects of literacy is satisfactory. The progress pupils make is now satisfactory, as is their achievement. Pupils enjoy school and their willingness to contribute and enthusiasm to do well is a credit to them. Behaviour is good, especially in the more exciting lessons, and there is a healthy respect for each other's different faiths, backgrounds and cultures. The school is a very caring community; pupils are safe and know how to stay healthy.

This is a difficult site straddling a main road making communication difficult for both adults and pupils. However, recent changes to leadership have moulded a strong team which is leading to better communication, more challenging targets and higher aspiration. The school knows its own strengths and weaknesses. It recognises that attainment in mathematics remains low and boys are significantly outperformed by girls. Most pupils now make satisfactory or better progress, including those with pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, partly due to good additional support. The youngest pupils make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The school is a cohesive community. A good range of clubs offers additional interest and excitement. There is a tangible spirituality in the school, led by the headteacher, but supported well by all adults. Parents are consulted regularly, as are pupils, through the newly established pupil conferencing sessions.

There are some remaining intractable challenges. Attendance levels, although satisfactory, vary between classes and punctuality for the youngest is poor. The newly established leadership team, although committed to improvement, does not always monitor classroom practice with enough rigour to ensure greater consistency. Governance is determined and increasingly strategic but has yet to secure rapid improvement in attainment overall. Key school documentation, including target setting, is increasingly ambitious as a result. The overall picture is one of significant improvement but with emerging variation. The capacity to sustain improvement is good.

Up to 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.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve attainment and pupil progress across Key Stage 2, especially in mathematics and for boys, by:
 - allocating more time to calculation and number work
 - providing more opportunities to apply basic skills in real life contexts
 - increasing opportunities for boys to write at length and for a range of purposes
 - providing pupils with greater access to information and communication technology (ICT) in their lessons.
- Improve the quality of wider leadership and the rigour with which leaders monitor the school's work by:
 - developing the skills of subject leaders in monitoring outcomes in their subjects by sharing good practice
 - reducing inconsistencies in teaching to increase the proportion of good teaching to over 60%
- Iron out inconsistencies between classes in levels of attendance through greater parental liaison so that all classes are securely in line with national averages.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Standards of attainment remain low but are improving strongly, especially in basic literacy skills. This improvement remains inconsistent, however, with better improvement in reading and writing than in mathematics, which remains a concern. In the 2010 national tests, 63% of Year 6 pupils reached the required level in English and 70% in mathematics. This is expected to improve in 2011. The number of pupils who reach the higher levels is low and more-able pupils do not always have their needs met.

Pupils show a sound grasp of sentence construction, basic punctuation and grammar. Attainment in these aspects is satisfactory, as it is in reading in Years 2 and 6. The quantity of work produced by pupils and its presentation is satisfactory. However, amongst the older pupils, standards of spelling are weak. Of greater concern is attainment in mathematics. This remains stubbornly low. Pupils have only a tentative grasp of basic number work and struggle to complete even simple calculations with any fluency despite improving their skills in investigation and problem solving in mathematics. Nevertheless, results attained in 2010 represent the best in the last four years.

Progress made by pupils is now close to that expected nationally in many classes but with significant variation in the performances of groups of pupils. Groups that now make satisfactory progress include those pupils in the early stages of learning English as an additional language and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress. There is a significant difference in both progress and attainment of girls compared to boys with the performance of boys, especially in literacy, being lower. Although their numbers are few, pupils in the care of the local authority make slow progress compared to their peers. As a consequence of the improved progress made by many, achievement is now satisfactory.

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Pupils now enjoy school and are keen to learn. They respond well to practical, challenging and interesting lessons and have good attitudes to work. Behaviour is good, with no exclusions. Pupils show consideration and respect towards each other, especially when discussing sensitive topics. For example, pupils in Year 4 were thoughtful and tolerant of each other's' perspectives when discussing the history of apartheid during a literacy session based on stories from Johannesburg. Similarly, pupils report that the new play equipment outside helps them 'look after the equipment and each other more'. There are no acts of racist behaviour and bullying is minimal. Pupils say they feel safe and try to follow the healthy lifestyles encouraged by a good range of sports clubs and additional sessions on the risks of activities such as smoking. Both pupils and adults recognise the fabric of the premises requires significant refurbishment but all treat what they have with respect.

Attendance is satisfactory at around 94%. However patterns of attendance vary considerably from class to class. The school runs a weekly analysis, is diligent in following up low attendance, offers regular rewards for good attendance and involves families and parents frequently. This includes home visits. There are a small but significant number of persistent absentees. The punctuality of the younger pupils is often poor. Pupils take an active part in the life of the local community via charitable collections and performances. The school engages well with a good range of partners to secure better pupil outcomes but the impact on attainment remains limited.

There is a strong sense of spirituality around school, supported by strong leadership. This adds to good cultural and social development. Pupils respect the rules of the school and have a strong sense of morality. For example, there was a genuine sense of excitement evident as pupils queued for their St Patrick's Day leprechaun jelly with humour, gentle banter and politeness evident throughout. Groups of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds mix happily together.

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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	4
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	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
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	2

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

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is satisfactory but with examples of teaching that is good. However, there remains inconsistency between classes. Teaching is good for the oldest pupils but attainment remains low here due to the legacy of previous underachievement. Particular strengths in teaching now include detailed planning, good relationships between adults and pupils, an attention to meeting pupils' particular needs and greater levels of challenge. The use of ICT to enhance lessons is commonplace, although teachers use it rather more than the pupils. Marking is up to date and developmental, with good use of pupil targets. The use of assessment is satisfactory and teachers have implemented well a previous requirement to improve the quality of their questioning to better assess pupils' understanding. This is less the case in mathematics, however, where misconceptions often go unchallenged as questioning is often based on simply getting the correct answers rather than developing pupils' understanding. This caps pupils' abilities to apply their basic skills to problem-solving activities.

The curriculum was significantly improved in September, including more appropriate timetabling. It now has stimulating topics, such as the dramatic discovery of 'dinosaur bones' on site to study in science and visits. These also include community themes such as 'Black History Week'. These themes have not improved the literacy of boys as much as they have for girls. The contribution made by teaching assistants continues to be a strength. They support pupils thoughtfully, helping them to make better progress. This

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includes specialist language support and help with writing. It is less effective with pupils who show behavioural needs that are challenging. There remains a tendency for some teachers to spend too long discussing what pupils will do rather than simply allowing them to get on and do it. This limits the amount of time available for learning and, in writing for example, caps progress in that skill.

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	3

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leadership has been through yet more change since September but this is exceptionally well managed by the headteacher who offers continued clarity of vision, energy and drive. She has managed to secure a strong focus on improving standards. Recent appointments have increased leadership capacity and all contribute to a coherent group which shares the same ambition. Meetings and records of decisions are now systematic and organised. In response to previous suggestions, the leadership team have revised strategic school targets upwards and are now close to achieving them. Targets for improving the quality of teaching, for example, have been met, demonstrating a satisfactory capacity to improve. As a consequence of change, many leaders are still relatively new to their role, however. This has delayed decision-making for too long on occasions. Subject leaders monitor standards in their subjects well. However, staffing changes and 'newness' of some to their role, with further changes yet to come, mean that inconsistency between classes is too great. There is some evidence that the school can iron this out. For example, all staff now apply the school's behaviour code well, leading to better behaviour. Although the school tackles discrimination rigorously, the difference in relative performances between groups means equality of opportunity is satisfactory rather than better.

The Chair of the Governing Body continues to be a strong ambassador for change. The governing body has been restructured and is a smaller, tighter group. It conducts regular work scrutiny and holds the school to account well. The governing body has ensured safeguarding procedures are good but has yet to secure rapid improvement in attainment. The school makes a good contribution to promoting community cohesion through its work in the local community and beyond. Self-evaluation is accurate and is leading to increasingly detailed school planning. Although their contribution is rightly diminishing, the school is appreciative of the good support it has received from the National Leaders in Education and the local authority.

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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	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
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

Children join the Nursery with skills that are often well below those expected for children of a similar age. Well-organised induction procedures help children to settle quickly into school routines and make good progress. The Early Years Foundation Stage team have created a welcoming and purposeful learning environment with imaginative and lively sessions. Consequently, by the time children start Year 1, attainment is now much closer to national expectations.

There are effective systems for monitoring children's achievements. Detailed information also means that children who are experiencing difficulties are soon identified and provided with extra support. The outdoor area, soon to be extended and developed, provides opportunities for children to investigate, explore and engage in role play. There is a good balance between child-initiated and adult-led activities but, while this helps children to make choices and develop independence, boys over dominate the more physical activities.

Adults work well together as a team and give children plenty of calm encouragement and praise. As a result, relationships are good and children are happy, enjoy their learning and feel safe and secure.

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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

Parents and carers had the opportunity to complete the Ofsted questionnaire in the previous term rather than on this visit. Although the level of response was low, parents and carers were positive about the leadership and the way the school has improved pupil progress and behaviour. Inspectors concur with these views. The only concerns were more to do with the difficulty of the site and parking. These concerns are also valid. Many singled out the headteacher for particular praise and were appreciative of her efforts as the school emerges from special measures. Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire Parental questionnaires are not normally distributed for monitoring inspections conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

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Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



18 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary and St John Junior and Infant School, Birmingham, B23 7NB

Thank you to those of you who have taken the time to speak with me on this inspection and on my previous visits about how well you think your school is doing. I am writing to let you know of our findings. It is clear that you are proud of your school and recognise the recent improvements. You will recall that the school used to be in special measures. Our most significant finding is that it has improved enough to no longer require this and is now satisfactory. Congratulations to you all for this.

There are several strengths now. You all get on well, irrespective of your backgrounds. Lessons are more interesting and some of the teaching is good. You are learning more and in greater depth. Much has improved, including the equipment you use, the care shown towards each other and the way teachers use what they know about you to plan better lessons. This is as a result of the strong leadership, led by your successful headteacher. Behaviour is now good.

There are some aspects which still require improving, however. Attendance, although satisfactory overall, varies between classes. Standards in mathematics, also improving, are doing so only slowly and boys do not do as well as girls. I have asked the teachers to allow you to use the computers more. I would ask that you all attend well and on time and continue to do your best. I am confident you will do so.

I wish you all well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Ceri Morgan

Her Majesty's Inspector

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