

St John's CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111334
Local Authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	356894
Inspection dates	28–29 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Pat Kime HMI

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	119
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Adrian Lee
Headteacher	Mr Robert Whittle
Date of previous school inspection	17 June 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. The inspectors observed five lessons and made short visits to a further six lessons, observing all the teachers. The inspectors held meetings with staff, pupils, and representatives of the governing body and of the Diocese of Chester. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation provided by the school, including curricular planning, records of pupils' progress and the plans for school improvement. The inspectors took account of responses to the inspection questionnaires that were received from pupils and staff and from 54 parents and carers.

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

- How successful has the school been in building on the strengths seen at the previous inspection?
- How well are boys achieving?
- How effectively do teaching and the curriculum meet the challenge of mixed-age classes?

Information about the school

St John's Church of England Primary School is smaller than the average size primary school. It provides for pupils from a wide range of backgrounds and with a variety of needs. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than average. The number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average for this size school. Most pupils are of White British heritage, though there are small numbers of pupils from the local Traveller community and from other minority ethnic groups. A small number of pupils are in the care of the local authority. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in the Reception class. More pupils than average join or leave the school part way through the primary school years. In recent years, the number of pupils and staff at the school has reduced and, as a result, pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 are now taught in three classes, each of which caters for two year groups. Numbers have begun to rise again and plans are in hand to form another class in September. A substantive headteacher joined the school in September 2009. The school has Healthy School 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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

In the two years since the previous inspection, the school has built on the good foundations laid by the seconded headteacher and has continued to improve. The new substantive headteacher has gained the confidence of all groups of stakeholders.

St John's now provides a good standard of education. Pupils are achieving well and there is a good atmosphere for learning. Pupils make good progress in their personal development and there are strong signs that, in the main, academic standards are rising. Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage gives pupils an outstandingly good start to school life. In recent years, pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 has been broadly average overall, representing satisfactory progress in Key Stage 2. However, pupils coming up through the school are doing better, with good proportions working at a higher level than expected for their age.

The teaching is predominantly good, although in some lessons, a slower pace and less challenge mean it is simply satisfactory. The school's curriculum covers all that is required and has many good features. Much has been done, in the foundation subjects of the National Curriculum, to plan interesting work and secure progression in pupils' learning but the task is not yet completed nor are there clear lines of responsibility for promoting and developing work in these subjects. While provision for most aspects of pupils' personal development is good, that for their cultural development is satisfactory.

The school is well-led and managed by the senior team who know how well it is doing and where improvement is needed. At all levels, team work is strong and the staff are determined that pupils will do as well as possible. Along with the improvement in pupils' achievement and the higher attainment coming through, this indicates that the school has good capacity for further improvement.

Since the previous inspection, there have been several changes in the membership of the governing body. Members are well-informed about the life and work of the school but are not strongly involved in strategic planning or evaluation. The school's promotion of community cohesion beyond the school and local community is limited.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the quality of all the teaching is consistently good or better, so that all pupils are challenged and make good progress in every lesson.
- Further improve the curriculum for the subjects other than English and mathematics, building on what has been achieved since the previous inspection by:
 - developing coherent whole-school planning that assures year-on-year progression in pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills in all subjects

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- allocating staff to lead the school's work in these subjects.
- Strengthen the governing body's contribution to:
 - planning for the further development and improvement of the school
 - evaluating the school's effectiveness.
- Improve the provision for pupils to develop their appreciation of cultural diversity and for the school to promote community cohesion.

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

Pupils' academic achievement is good and attainment is rising. Pupils are now reaching standards that represent good progress from their starting points, which, taken over time, are broadly average overall.

In recent years, pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 has been broadly average overall, representing satisfactory progress in Key Stage 2 and reflecting a legacy of earlier underachievement. Boys did not do as well as girls but this is no longer the case. Pupils coming up through the school are doing better than in the past. The school's records show a good proportion working at a higher level than expected for their age. Lesson observations and examination of pupils' work confirmed this picture. Nonetheless, pupils' progress is not entirely even across subjects and year groups, primarily because of some variations in the effectiveness of teaching.

As a result of very good progress in Reception, pupils start Year 1 doing better than expected at their age. The last three years saw a steady upward trend in the standards reached at the end of Key Stage 1 to well above average in 2010. This means that pupils are set up well for continuing good achievement in Key Stage 2.

The school is quick to spot pupils whose progress may be slipping and to give them extra help. Good support is also provided for pupils who might be potentially vulnerable to underachievement, such as the children of Traveller families, pupils learning English as an additional language, and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Consequently, in relation to their starting points and capabilities, these pupils make similar progress to their classmates.

Pupils also make good progress in their personal development. Their spiritual, moral and social development is good and their cultural development satisfactory. They show good levels of cooperation and mutual respect and they make a good contribution to the life of the school as a community. These strengths reflect the school's Christian ethos and the example set by staff. Pupils' responses to the inspection questionnaire show that they feel safe in school. They have a good knowledge about what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and good understanding of the positive effects of exercise and eating a healthy diet on the body.

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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	2
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

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?

Teaching is good overall and never less than satisfactory. Much good teaching was seen in lessons but also some that slipped to satisfactory. Typically staff have very positive relationships with pupils, often sharing moments of humour. Teachers manage their classes very well so lessons are orderly and purposeful and they provide good opportunities for pupils to learn by working together in small groups. Teachers brief teaching assistants well so they contribute effectively to pupils' learning. They generally plan different activities for pupils of different ages and abilities. However, the effectiveness of this matching of work to learning need varies; occasionally, for some pupils, it does not result in sufficient challenge. The quality of marking of pupils work varies but some serves as a very strong model.

In the most effective lessons, teachers enthuse pupils about the work and motivate them to try very hard. Appropriately high expectations for different groups of pupils are made clear to them. As a result, they know what they have to achieve and they focus their efforts well. Where teaching was satisfactory, rather than good, two shortcomings were evident. First, although pupils enjoyed the activities, there was less adjustment to meet the range of learning needs. Second, the pace was slower so, for example, too long was spent on introductory activities before getting down to more demanding work.

The school's curriculum meets requirements fully and has many good features. Work in English and mathematics is planned well. Work in other subjects is centred on topics that

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appeal to the pupils, not least because they have had a say in selecting them. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of extra activities; clubs, visitors and educational visits. There is a good range of additional support for pupils who need extra help. Planning of work for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is particularly good. The planning for work in subjects other than English and mathematics is under development. It is currently satisfactory and the school is well on the way to producing and implementing whole-school planning for mixed-age classes to assure progression in pupils' learning from year to year.

Pastoral care is especially good. Staff are well-attuned to the needs of pupils who face difficulties in their lives or their learning and support them well by working in good partnership with their families and external agencies. The school has built a good relationship with the local Traveller community. The very effective arrangements to ease the process of starting school help the children to settle in quickly and their families to have confidence in the school. The provision to smooth transition to secondary school is good. The school has raised the profile of attendance and punctuality and, as a result, the attendance rate has improved to above average and persistent absenteeism is greatly reduced.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has secured the support of parents, carers, staff, and pupils. He has led continued improvement in the school, through a period of changes in staffing and the governing body. He sets high expectations for all aspects of the school's work and these are embraced by the staff who say that they know what the school is trying to achieve and feel very much part of the drive for further improvement. There is a strong sense of teamwork. The headteacher and the deputy headteacher have a well-founded view of how well pupils are doing across the school and the quality and effectiveness of teaching. They know the priorities for further improvement. The school's planning for improvement is sound but the members of the governing body are not yet fully involved in it or in checking the impact of developments on the outcomes for pupils.

The changes the school is making to the curriculum beyond English and mathematics include changes to the leadership and management of these subjects. However, new responsibilities have not yet been allocated so the arrangements for ensuring good provision and outcomes are not secure.

Since the previous inspection, the systems for keeping track of pupils' attainment and progress have been refined. There is now a wealth of useful information about pupils'

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achievement. It is used well to influence decisions about additional support for pupils and to analyse the effectiveness of the school's provision for different groups of pupils. This contributes to the school's good promotion of equal opportunities.

The arrangements for safeguarding, including child protection and risk assessments, are good. Policies and procedures follow local and national guidelines and are kept under review. Lines of responsibility are clear and the school has good links with external agencies. Pupils confirm that they feel safe in school and are confident to turn to staff if ever they need help or support.

The school is a cohesive, mixed community in which pupils learn to play their part and contribute to local events. However, the national and global aspects of the promotion of community cohesion receive less attention and pupils' understanding and awareness of diversity are simply satisfactory. For these reasons, the school's promotion of community cohesion is judged satisfactory overall.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	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
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Life in the Reception class prepares children extremely well to continue as confident learners in Key Stage 1. The arrangements to smooth transition into school, from home visits to buddies from the top class, are very good. Children make very good progress in their learning in the Reception Year, particularly so in personal, social and emotional development, learning to use sounds for reading and writing, and in early mathematical skills. They make great strides in developing confidence and independence, learning to work and play together very well and to sustain concentration. They learn from a wide range of very well-thought out activities, indoors and out, which appeal equally to boys and girls. The highly skilled teaching is sensitive to children's developing needs. As a result, the children learn from activities that capture their interest and present just the

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right amount of challenge. For instance, during the inspection, learning through stories, creative activities, mathematical activities and role play was based around a seaside topic. Children's responses to the provision are monitored closely and perceptively both to check on their progress and to influence what staff provide for them. The provision is continually developing as evidenced in the well-advanced plans to enhance the outdoor learning area.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

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

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers have a very positive view of the school. They are almost all entirely happy with what it provides and they have confidence in the leadership and management. The inspection judgements on the school also give a positive picture.

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 54 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 119 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	39	72	13	24	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	41	76	11	20	2	4	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	30	56	23	43	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	36	67	16	30	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	37	69	17	31	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	31	57	22	41	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	30	56	23	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)	36	67	15	28	2	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	34	63	18	33	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	27	50	25	46	0	0	2	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	29	54	23	43	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	42	78	12	22	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	39	72	14	26	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 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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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.



1 July 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St John's CofE Primary School, Sandbach, CW11 2LE

You may remember that Mrs McArthur and I inspected the school recently and Mr Barnes came with us to learn more about how primary schools are inspected. I am writing to tell you what we found out during the inspection. Thank you for making us welcome and talking to us in classes, around the school and in meetings. These conversations with you helped us to reach our judgements.

St John's has continued to improve since its last full inspection two years ago. The school now provides you with a good education and you are making good progress in your learning. We could see that higher standards are pushing up through the school now and quite a number of you are doing better than expected for your age. Your personal development is good; you are growing up well. We were pleased to see how well behaved you are. It was good to hear about your contribution to school life, for instance, how pupils in the top class help new pupils to settle in. Children in the Reception class get an outstandingly good start to school life. They do very well in all areas of their learning.

Most of your lessons are taught well but in a few we thought that the pace of learning could have been quicker. So we have asked the school to make sure that teaching is never less than good. You enjoy studying some interesting topics but the planning for this work could be strengthened.

Mr Whittle and I talked about what needs to be done next to make St John's an even better school. As well as the points already mentioned, we agreed on the following things:

- involving the governing body more in planning the development of your school and judging how well it is doing
- promoting community cohesion more strongly; the teachers will be able to tell you exactly what that means and help you to learn more about it.

I know that you will have good ideas to help the school improve. Do propose them through the school council. You all have my very best wishes for a successful future at St John's.

Yours sincerely,

Pat Kime

Her Majesty's Inspector

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