



# St John's Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School, Wimborne

Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 113771  
**LEA** Dorset  
**Inspection number** 279243  
**Inspection dates** 7 June 2006 to 8 June 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Susan Kara HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to inspect any school in England. The inspection is to be treated as a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

|                                    |                    |                           |                    |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Type of school</b>              | First              | <b>School address</b>     | St John's Hill     |
| <b>School category</b>             | Voluntary aided    |                           | Wimborne           |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>         | 4 to 9             |                           | Dorset BH21 1BX    |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>            | Mixed              | <b>Telephone number</b>   | 01202 883675       |
| <b>Number on roll</b>              | 133                | <b>Fax number</b>         | 01202 883675       |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>       | The governing body | <b>Chair of governors</b> |                    |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b> | 22 November 1999   | <b>Headteacher</b>        | Mrs Caroline Mahon |

| Age group | Inspection dates             | Inspection number |
|-----------|------------------------------|-------------------|
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## **Introduction**

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The inspector met with a range of staff and pupils and observed all of the classes at work. Paired observations of two lessons were carried out with the headteacher. Conversations were held with the local authority Principal Adviser and the headteacher of the middle school where most of the pupils transfer. Discussions with the chair and vice-chair of the governing body and the receipt of 66 questionnaires from parents further assisted with the writing of this report.

## **Description of the school**

St John's is a smaller-than-average school in the centre of Wimborne. Pupils are taught in five single-aged classes from Reception to Year 4. Pupils come from a wide range of social backgrounds, with two out of five from outside the school's catchment area. A very small number of the pupils are learning to speak English as a new language. One in five of the pupils is identified as having learning difficulties and disabilities, which is above average, and two pupils have a statement of special educational need.

## **Key for inspection grades**

|         |              |
|---------|--------------|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding  |
| Grade 2 | Good         |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate   |

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

“My son is learning and growing intellectually, personally and spiritually. I would not change his school for a million pounds.” “My child has developed beyond my expectations, she is proud to be part of the school community having developed from being an insecure child to one that has been encouraged to flourish.” St John’s is a gem of a school. So many of the parents echoed the views quoted above. It is an outstanding school which provides excellent value for money. The joy of learning is at its heart, enabling pupils to reach high standards as they thrive in the nurturing environment. Since the last inspection the school has thoroughly addressed the weaknesses identified. The use of information and communication technology is fully integrated into the teaching and learning; the school exceeds the national guidelines on the number of computers available to pupils. The level of challenge for pupils of all abilities is well planned across the curriculum. All the pupils, whatever their ability, gender or background, do well at St John’s. Attainment on entry varies widely but it is broadly below average. Pupils experience a sound start in the Reception class and by the time they leave it, most have made good progress. The headteacher is sensibly working closely with the staff in Reception to ensure that the pupils have even more support with their literacy skills. By the end of Year 2, pupils have made outstanding progress and achieve high standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Robust internal assessment data indicates continuing very good progress to the end of Year 4. Standards in information and communication technology are well above those expected. The pupils’ personal development is exemplary. They really enjoy coming to school and are keen to learn; attendance is above the national average. The pupils are confident and welcoming to adults. They look out for anyone on their own in the playground, and the older pupils are especially mindful of any younger ones who want someone to play with or talk to. They are very proud of their school. One pupil described it ‘as the best school in the world,’ only to be challenged by another who said, ‘I think it’s the best one in the universe!’ The pupils relish responsibility and members of the school council can only stay for one term as so many want to serve on it. They rightly see it as important and were particularly proud of their contribution to the improvements to the outside play areas. The very high quality of teaching and learning is another of the exemplary features of the school. The teachers’ enthusiasm for learning and their commitment to the pupils’ academic success and personal development produces a heady combination of high expectations and great fun in lessons. A parent wrote that, ‘Our daughter, in Reception, is already developing a love of learning based on the new skills she is acquiring at school.’ The teachers’ careful use of praise and encouragement combined with their excellent questioning skills create an atmosphere where pupils are challenged to reach the next level in a ‘have-a-go’ atmosphere. The teaching assistants are highly experienced and not only play a significant role in the pupils’ learning but are widely recognised by teachers and parents as central to the success of the whole school. The curriculum is very good; it is broad and balanced and has a number of imaginative features, such as the hugely enjoyed enrichment afternoon for Years 1 and 2. The school is right to extend this into Year 3 and 4 next year. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities and

the school takes part in many musical and artistic activities in the area. The curriculum reflects the school's commitment to prepare the pupils to play a full part in Britain's culturally diverse society. The 'home learning' initiative is an innovative development. At the start of many topics the pupils discuss with each other what they want to find out about the topic. One pupil described it excitedly as 'we choose the questions and we find the answers!' These are compiled into a list which the pupils tackle when and how they want to for 'home learning.' The extensive use of learning partners has been fundamental in helping to raise standards as the pupils have cast themselves in the role of teacher to their peers. The recent work on ensuring every pupil is able to see him or herself as a successful learner is driving further exciting changes to the styles of teaching and to the curriculum. The recent extensive building project has sensitively enlarged and adapted the Victorian building to create accommodation well matched to the needs of the new century. The staff and pupils have created display work of the highest quality. Displays celebrate pupils' achievements, pose interesting questions and showcase some of the wonderful art work the pupils are creating. The floor-to-ceiling banners in the hall, one created each half-term to reflect the school's assembly themes, are stunning. Many parents described the 'marvellous caring atmosphere' at St John's. 'It is wonderful to know that my daughter is enjoying her learning experience in such a safe, stimulating and caring environment. ' Relationships between adults and pupils and between the pupils themselves are extremely positive. The staff track the pupils' individual progress very carefully and whole-school tracking and analysis of data is excellent. This means that the staff very successfully build on prior learning. They set challenging targets that ensure all of the pupils make very good progress overall by the time they leave St John's. The headteacher is outstanding; she is an inspirational leader. She is held in deep respect by the parents and the wider community; the pupils want to make her proud of them. One parent wrote, 'I cannot imagine meeting a headteacher more dedicated to working with me to achieve the best outcome for my child.' The headteacher and deputy form an impressive team which knows precisely the strengths and areas for further development in the school. Leadership and management at all levels are very good throughout the school. Subject leaders are very knowledgeable and enthusiastic; they are encouraged to lead staff development in their areas and systematically monitor and evaluate their subject's progress. The staff are encouraged to pursue appropriate professional development opportunities and value the support they are given as life-long learners. Everything the school undertakes is carefully thought through and evaluated so that reflection, in order to improve, is a way of life for the wholeschool community. The links with the church are strong and the pupils worship there regularly. The governors are well led, highly efficient in carrying out their responsibilities and very dedicated to the continuing success of the school.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

This grade is explained above.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

This grade is explained above.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 1**

This grade is explained above.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

This grade is explained above.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 1**

This grade is explained above.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

This grade is explained above.

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## Inspection judgements

|  |                       |              |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|
| <i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i> | <b>School Overall</b> | <b>16-19</b> |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|

### Overall effectiveness

|  |     |    |
|--|-----|----|
| <b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b> | 1   | NA |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?  | 1   | NA |
| The quality and standards in foundation stage  | 2   | NA |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation  | 1   | NA |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements  | Yes | NA |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection   | Yes | NA |

### Achievement and standards

|  |   |    |
|--|---|----|
| <b>How well do learners achieve?</b>   | 1 | NA |
| The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners   | 1 | NA |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 1 | NA |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress                              | 1 | NA |

### Personal development and well-being

|   |   |    |
|---|---|----|
| <b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>                           | 1 | NA |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development                                     | 1 | NA |
| The behaviour of learners   | 1 | NA |
| The attendance of learners  | 1 | NA |
| How well learners enjoy their education   | 1 | NA |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices   | 1 | NA |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles   | 1 | NA |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community                                    | 1 | NA |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 1 | NA |

### The quality of provision

|   |   |    |
|---|---|----|
| <b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>          | 1 | NA |
| <b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b> | 1 | NA |
| <b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>   | 1 | NA |

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

|  |     |    |
|--|-----|----|
| <b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>                                       | 1   | NA |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 1   | NA |
| How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review      | 1   | NA |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can                     | 1   | NA |
| How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money  | 1   | NA |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities  | 1   | NA |
| The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected  | Yes | NA |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| <b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>  |     |
| Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily  | Yes |
| Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise  | Yes |
| Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse   | Yes |
| Learners are educated about sexual health   | Yes |
| <b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>   |     |
| Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements                                   | Yes |
| Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place  | Yes |
| Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism                                | Yes |
| Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them   | Yes |
| <b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>  |     |
| Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships   | Yes |
| Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them                   | Yes |
| Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community | Yes |
| <b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>                           |     |
| There is provision to promote learners' basic skills  | Yes |
| Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams                                  | Yes |
| Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form          | NA  |
| Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy               | NA  |

### **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Dear Pupils, What a wonderful school! Thank you so much for talking to me about your work and how much you enjoy being at St John's. You are right to be so proud of it. These are some of the things I liked about your school:

- The love of learning that you and your teachers share
- Your excellent behaviour and thoughtfulness towards each other
- The way that everyone is valued and made to feel important
- How you help each other learn through being a learning partner
- The lovely display work around the school, especially the banners in the hall
- The way the school council has helped to improve the environment, especially the outside area
- The fun you have whilst working hard.

You have a wonderful group of teachers and support staff who work really well with the governors to make St John's such a great school. Mrs Mahon is an outstanding headteacher and I know that she has plans to make the school even better by developing how you learn, and making sure that when pupils start at the school they have a lot of help to improve their literacy skills. With very best wishes for the future, Susan Kara  
HMI