



St John's CofE Foundation Middle School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117001
LEA Worcestershire
Inspection number 279973
Inspection dates 3 May 2006 to 4 May 2006
Reporting inspector Ruth Westbrook AI

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary	School address	Watt Close
School category	Foundation		Bromsgrove
Age range of pupils	9 to 13		Worcestershire B61 7DH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01527 832376
Number on roll	594	Fax number	01527 570258
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Rev. Nigel Marns
Date of previous inspection	2 October 2000	Headteacher	Mr David Macey

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St. John's School is a relatively large middle school. It serves a socially mixed catchment area but most pupils come from backgrounds which are relatively advantaged. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below the national level. Pupils enter the school at the start of Year 5 and leave at the end of Year 8. Very few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and all pupils are fluent English speakers. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is lower than the national average. When they enter the school at age nine, the pupils' attainment is average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St. John's Middle School provides a good quality of education within a caring Christian community. The school's leadership, inspired by the clarity of the headteacher, has secured good improvement since the last inspection, and there is good capacity for further improvement. The school's staff is hardworking and conscientious and morale is high. The monitoring of the school's work is generally strong, but the use of data to confirm evaluations about strengths and weaknesses is not yet sufficiently focused. This has led to the school making over-generous evaluations of some areas of its work. However, the school's view of its overall effectiveness as good matches the views of the inspection.

Overall, standards are above average by the end of Year 8. They are above average in mathematics and science, but only average in English. Throughout the school pupils make generally good progress, although progress in English is only satisfactory. The school has a well-established track record in achieving high standards in science. The quality of teaching is good, but as the school recognises, not all aspects of good practice are as yet evident in all lessons. A system for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning is being established, and is already improving the quality of lessons. The school's curriculum is good in meeting the needs of all pupils. It is enhanced by the many opportunities pupils have to develop skills in science and information communication technology (ICT), and well-established courses in French.

Pupils behave well and are courteous. Pupils enjoy their school very much, as shown by their excellent attendance and punctuality. Pupils are cared for well by all staff, and relationships within the school between all members of the school community are outstanding. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those most at risk are well supported. Although pupils know their learning targets, not all teachers use them to give feedback to pupils on how much progress they are making in meeting them. The school works well in partnership with the church to establish a caring, Christian ethos. Relationships are particularly good with feeder schools and the high schools to which the pupils transfer. Most parents are very positive about the work of the school, but a significant minority feel, with some justification, that their views are not taken into account by the school. Pupils' and parents' views are not used in the process of self-evaluation. The school gives good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards and achievement in English to the level of that in mathematics and science by improving the content of the course and quality of teaching.
- Ensure that pupils receive feedback about the progress they are making towards their targets consistently across all their subjects.
- Sharpen the focus of self-evaluation procedures by using the analysis of relevant data and by taking into account the views of pupils and parents.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well and attain high standards. Pupils enter school with broadly average standards and they make good progress, so that by the time they leave, standards are above average.

In Year 6, standards in mathematics and science are above average. Current standards in English are average. They have fallen over the last three years because of relative weaknesses in boys' writing. The school has identified this as a focus for whole-school improvement. Standards and achievement are particularly high in mathematics and science. For example, in 2005, all Year 8 pupils took Key Stage 3 national tests in mathematics, a year early, and reached above-average standards. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress as a result of the effective support that they receive.

Generally good assessment systems track the progress pupils are making towards meeting their challenging targets. However, there is inconsistency in how this is applied by subject teachers. Whilst most targets are sufficiently challenging, the whole-school English targets set for the next two years are significantly less challenging than those set for mathematics. Year 6 pupils achieve well in French lessons. Throughout the school, pupils make good progress in ICT across a range of subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils behave well both in lessons and around the school. Their attendance and punctuality are outstanding. They have very positive attitudes to learning and talk to visitors and other adults confidently. Most pupils are extremely happy at the school and feel that their views are taken into account and acted upon. The school council is well established and an integral part of the school's decision-making process. Pupils report that any rare instances of bullying are dealt with quickly and effectively.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good. A strong Christian ethos is evident and this gives strong support to the pupils' personal development. Pupils find out about world cultures and religions in several subjects, but opportunities to explore and celebrate the cultural diversity of the society in which pupils live are limited. Pupils support the wider community through charity fund raising. They develop appropriate skills to support their future working life, learning to work cooperatively and acquiring appropriate numeracy and literacy skills. There has been good development of the pupils' understanding of safe practices and of healthy lifestyles, and the school has gained a healthy eating award.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good teaching and learning are key elements in pupils' good levels of progress and achievement. Teachers are conscientious and enthusiastic. Relationships are outstanding and pupils are eager to learn. Although the majority of lessons observed during the inspection were good, a substantial minority were satisfactory.

In the good lessons pupils are encouraged to take a lead, develop and express opinions and interact purposefully. In contrast, in the satisfactory lessons, teachers over-use questions and rely too much on uninspiring text books. A few lessons lacked the challenge and excitement noted in the best work. Outstanding teaching was seen in French and in personal, social and health education, and excellent teaching outcomes are evident in science and Key Stage 2 mathematics. In English lessons, there is not enough varied and interesting work. There is too little encouragement to read and discuss, and make good use of the library.

In all subjects, regular setting and marking of work contribute to pupils' success. The best marking gives clear indications of the strengths and weaknesses in the work and targets for improvement, but this is not happening consistently for all pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum in both key stages. National Curriculum requirements are met and key recommendations made in the last inspection report have been implemented, with improvements in the resourcing and teaching of ICT. Most classrooms are equipped with interactive whiteboards, which are being well used by teachers across all subjects. Science is taught in specialist accommodation from Year 5. As a result, pupils achieve well and enjoy the many opportunities to engage in practical activities. French is very well established in Year 6 despite its not being a requirement. Pupils enjoy music in lessons which are well equipped and taught by specialist teachers. Citizenship contributes well to personal development, taught as part of the personal and social programme in Years 5, 6, and 8, and given a separate lesson allocation in Year 7. Provision for pupils with learning disabilities is good and the support provided ensures that they have full access to the curriculum. A good range of extra-curricular activities is offered, with some popular excursions and visits, including residential visits abroad. There is scope to extend this provision, particularly in the areas of drama, discussion and reading clubs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school cares for its pupils well, and successfully promotes good behaviour in class and around the school. Very good pastoral guidance is provided for all pupils, including

those most at risk, because teachers and pupils develop very effective relationships. Pupils say how well supported they feel. Child protection procedures are good. All health and safety checks are in place and are regularly reviewed, so pupils work and play in a safe and secure environment. Links with first schools and the high schools are good. They include opportunities to visit and regular exchanges of information about pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are being supported in lessons particularly well. Targets are set in consultation with pupils and parents, and parents receive three reports annually to keep them informed of their child's progress. The monitoring of individual pupils' progress towards their targets is not consistently applied by all tutors to help them to improve their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good because the headteacher and senior team provide clear leadership and direction to the school. The senior leaders have successfully maintained above-average standards since the last inspection and have continued to improve the quality of provision, maintaining a caring community in which all members thrive. The headteacher and other senior leaders work well as a team, and have made good improvements since the last inspection. They have the commitment and capacity to lead further improvement. The governing body has good oversight of the school's work, holding the school to account through its committee structure and programme of visits to the school.

Key staff and key governors have been involved in establishing a process to evaluate the school's work. Until recently, the school monitored and evaluated its work informally. A more effective system has been established for senior and subject leaders to monitor and evaluate on a regular basis, through, for example, the observation of lessons and the scrutiny of pupils' work. This process is leading to improvements in the quality of teaching and learning through the sharing of good practice. The school's use of data to inform its evaluations about the school's strengths and weaknesses has not been sharply focused.

The school has begun to canvass the views of parents and pupils. For example, this year parents have been surveyed for their views on the format of reports. Pupils from all years have been interviewed about their achievements in a range of lessons. As yet, their views are not fully reflected in the self-evaluation process, but there are plans in place to address this. Parents are generally very positive about the leadership and work of the school. However, a small minority believe, with some justification, that the school should improve its communication and be more mindful of parental views.

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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>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	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

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	1	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ 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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
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
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
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
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
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
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
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

We would like to thank you for being so helpful and polite during our recent visit to your school. We enjoyed talking to you and visiting your lessons. Here is what we found out about your school. We feel that St. John's is a good school. You achieve good results and make good progress, particularly in mathematics and science. This is because the school cares for you very well and helps you to make good progress during your time in the school. Most lessons are very well planned by your teachers. They use a good variety of approaches to keep you interested and show you how to improve your work. We were very impressed by how much most of you enjoy the school, and feel that your positive attitude to learning is helping you to succeed. This is shown by your high levels of attendance and your punctuality to lessons. The behaviour we saw in class and around the school was usually very good and almost all of you acted sensibly and maturely. The school is led well by your headteacher and senior members of staff. The inspectors feel that some things will help your school to improve even further. Results in English need to be as good as those in mathematics and science. You need regular feedback from all your subjects on how well you are doing and what you need to do to improve. Senior staff need to continue to check the quality of your lessons to make sure that they are good, and to use information to help them judge whether you are learning well. I hope you will play a full part in making sure that these things happen. Thank you for the way in which you represented your school and yourselves during our time with you. We wish you well.