



St John's Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 126039
LEA West Sussex
Inspection number 282047
Inspection dates 4 May 2006 to 5 May 2006
Reporting inspector David Collard AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Blackbridge Lane
School category	Voluntary aided		Horsham
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		West Sussex RH12 1RR
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01403 265447
Number on roll	205	Fax number	01403 252458
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Dominic Gorton
Date of previous inspection	15 January 2001	Headteacher	Mrs J Gribben

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St John's is a relatively small Catholic school on the outskirts of Horsham. The catchment area is rather wider than normally found in other schools locally. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is broadly in line with that nationally, as is the number from minority ethnic groups.

The previous headteacher retired in July 2005 and the deputy headteacher led the school until a new headteacher was appointed in January 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is an effective school that provides sound value for money. The pupils are delightful and their behaviour exemplary. Relationships across the whole-school community are very strong and there is a sense of calm, purposeful activity.

The last inspection was very positive about the school's provision but there have been significant changes since then, which is why the school is now satisfactory. After a period of very stable staffing, a number of new teachers have been appointed. In addition, the new headteacher, providing good leadership, has completely restructured the senior management team. This new team of staff has a good understanding of the school's strengths and a very realistic assessment about what needs to be done to improve. Consequently, the school's self-evaluation matches that of the inspection team and there is a good capacity for improvement.

The satisfactory provision and standards in the Foundation Stage provide the building blocks for pupils' future education and provide them with the start that enables them to achieve satisfactorily through all other years. Pupils' performance in national tests, while being average in 2005, was not as high as in the previous two years. The priorities for improvements have been linked well to improving this position. The school's data indicate that pupils now in Years 2 and 6 are achieving average standards. Plans are already underway to tackle the relatively lower achievement of the more able, particularly their writing skills, and to raise the progress being made in information and communication technology (ICT) throughout the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the overall achievement of higher-attaining pupils, particularly in their writing.
- Enable pupils to make better progress in acquiring ICT skills and help them to apply these skills to their learning in other subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The achievement of all pupils is at least satisfactory. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities achieve well and, consequently, often achieve average national standards, representing good progress from lower starting points.

Children start school with standards at least in line with those expected and make satisfactory progress through the Reception year. By the start of Year 1 they are well prepared to start work on the National Curriculum. Progress through Years 1 and 2 continues satisfactorily. It is not quite as rapid towards the end of this key stage because only some, but not all, of the work is sufficiently challenging for all levels of ability. Pupils' standards in Year 2 are at those expected for their age, a fact confirmed by national tests. The basic skills continue to develop through Years 3 to 6, enabling pupils to progress satisfactorily. By Year 6, standards are at average levels.

The school sets challenging but realistic targets that recognise the significant number of more-able pupils in each year group. While they make satisfactory progress they need even more challenge, particularly with their writing. Test results confirm the school's decision to concentrate on extending the work these pupils are given. For instance, individual targets are being shared with pupils so that they can see what they need to do to improve. Questioning techniques are being monitored to ensure they are consistently aimed at making pupils think for themselves. These initiatives are having a positive impact.

Pupils reach average standards in ICT. Until recently, the resources and teachers' expertise were not good enough and this has left a legacy of underachievement that is taking time to eradicate. At the centre of the school's impetus for improving standards and provision in ICT is the new computer suite, which prompted one pupil to write, 'We don't fight over the three computers in our classroom anymore.'

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Parents comment favourably on the confidence and self-esteem shown by their children, although the school is endeavouring to improve this still further by raising the profile of the school council. Pupils are polite, friendly and caring. These attitudes have been built upon the good foundations that are laid in the reception, Year 1 and Year 2 classes.

Pupils behave outstandingly well in response to the secure and warm relationships between the staff and pupils. Assemblies show that pupils have a good spiritual awareness. They are a very special time in the school day when the pupils learn the Catholic values implicit within the school's aims. Pupils show a good awareness of the diverse cultures within Britain. In addition, there is a long-standing supportive relationship with the village of Kimilili in Kenya, which has resulted in the school being given an international award.

Enjoyment of learning permeates the school and is one reason why attendance is good. Pupils feel that they are valued and, through the school council, feel their suggestions for improvement are acted upon. Pupils respond very well to the many community responsibilities they are given. One prefect wrote about her duty: 'Being a school prefect is something I have always wanted to do. I love this school and I want to do my best to help make it a better place.'

Pupils know how to live healthily and safely. Pupils are forming a growing awareness of economic matters through their participation in events to raise money for charity and for the school, although technology is not yet used enough to enhance these life skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory overall. The strongest teaching is characterised by the clear and challenging tasks given to pupils as well as a friendly but demanding approach to learning. The school is working hard to address some shortcomings with individual teachers. For instance, some marking is less stringent, particularly for the significant number of more-able pupils. In one class, the majority of pupils had used the same worksheet regardless of their ability and it was too easy for a significant number of them.

Planning gives a good basis for the day's work and is linked well to an overall longer-term plan, ensuring each subject can be taught progressively. It also helps ensure support staff are clear about what is expected of them. The school's recent focus on developing pupils' individual learning styles is having a positive effect. Teachers are beginning to understand how they need to provide the correct level of work that will enable pupils to understand what they have learnt in different situations. The portfolios for ICT show how this has been particularly developed during this year.

Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are taught well because their individual needs are fully identified and they are given work that builds on their skills.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The range of curricular opportunities, including those for personal, social and health development, is satisfactory. The long-term planning for subjects is based around national guidelines. This is ensuring that all the necessary work is covered year on year but it is restricting the teachers in planning a more lively and invigorating curriculum that would 'let children fly.'

The range of extra-curricular activities is good. The number of clubs is being extended in light of the recommendations from the school council and parents. Other activities provide good opportunities for pupils to extend their experiences and pupils participate enthusiastically. A good example is the residential visit and the mini-marathon that took place during the inspection. The developments planned for the future are now rightly aimed at widening the whole curriculum to make it relevant to individual need and to develop the pupils' abilities as able and responsible citizens.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Parents appreciate the good care and support given by all staff to pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities. It is effective because teachers and other adults have a good understanding of their pupils' pastoral needs and respond positively to any concerns. Child protection procedures are thorough. The school works

well with a broad range of outside agencies to improve pupils achievement. Parents are involved at an early stage if any problems arise. Health and safety procedures are good, and risk assessments are carried out where appropriate. Pupils feel safe and secure in this environment. Although pupils say there is no bullying at the school, they express their confidence that if it did occur, it would be dealt with effectively.

Assessment information is used well by the school to set targets for improvement and it allows the school to identify pupils in need of support. However, marking in pupils' work books does not always tell the pupils clearly enough about how well they are doing and exactly what they should do to improve the work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school has been through a period of change. Until last year, stability had been one of the key factors in the school's steady development. Since January, when the new headteacher took over, changes have taken time to become embedded in school practice. The headteacher has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and has correctly identified the need to raise standards and improve assessment across the school. She has a clear vision and is tenacious in seeking school improvement. As a result of her leadership there is a common sense of purpose throughout the school. She is well supported by all the staff, in particular the deputy headteacher.

Monitoring and evaluation are good and the school's judgements of its performance are very accurate. Parents' and other stakeholders' views are sought and acted upon. For instance, new after-school clubs run for younger pupils were set up in response to a parent questionnaire. However, the ongoing issue of the large class organisation in the early years has not been communicated clearly enough to satisfy some parental misconceptions, concerns and worries.

Governors make a good contribution to the school's work and are developing their role with considerable commitment and enthusiasm. They have clear roles and are well informed because of the good communication systems. They visit the school regularly to monitor and support its work. Finances are carefully managed and financial expertise ensures effective scrutiny. The school has worked well for improvement since the last inspection and has a strong capacity to carry this on into the future. Parents' views of the school are almost all positive. They have recognised the recent improvements and clearly have very high hopes of the new headteacher, governing body and of their school.

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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?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	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?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	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	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	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	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	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?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	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

Thank you for looking after us so well and sharing your thoughts and views with us. We hope you have all recovered from the mini-marathon we saw and that you are well on the way to raising the money to help refit your new hut. No doubt you would like to know what we have reported to the school, so I have enclosed a few of the main points below.

- You told us that you are proud of your school. Judging by the excellent behaviour that we saw, it is very clear that this is the case. Everybody is really working together to make your school the best it possibly can be.
- You are all making progress, especially those of you who find the work more difficult. This is because your teachers are trying to make the lessons suitable for all of you. We have asked your teachers to think about how they can give even harder work to those of you who said they find some of the work easy.
- Your teachers are supported well by all the other adults who help you and are trying to make sure you all do your best.
- The new computer suite has started to be used well. You know that there is still some way to go though before it is used as well as it can be and we have asked that this be given a high priority.
- Your new headteacher, supported well by your deputy headteacher, senior staff and the governors, is working hard to make sure that all of you do your very best, both in your lessons as well as in all the many activities you are involved in.
- We are sure that the school is able to carry on improving and becoming even better.

Finally, can we take this opportunity to wish you all the best for the rest of your time at St John's and hope you make the most of your future education.