

St John's CofE (C) Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124254
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	328088
Inspection dates	19–20 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Don Mason

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	200
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Joy Fuller
Headteacher	Jill Price
Date of previous school inspection	23 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Quarry Bank Road Keele Newcastle ST5 5AF
Telephone number	01782 296000
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Most pupils, in this smaller-than-average primary school, come from White British families. About a fifth come from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds and approximately half of these speak English as an additional language. A small number are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average, as is the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, the proportion of each can vary considerably from one year group to another. Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is in the Reception Year and in the Nursery which is managed by the governors. Governors also manage a before- and after-school care club which includes children of this age group.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. Pupils' personal development and well-being and the curriculum have improved since the last inspection and are outstanding. The school's overall success is due to the strong leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher, supported by effective senior teachers and an enthusiastic team of staff. Overall, leadership and management are good, as is the school's capacity to make further improvements. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school, making comments such as, 'My children have thrived in the vibrant, family atmosphere of the school. As a family we feel privileged to have such a good school on our doorstep.' The pupils' outstanding personal development is reflected in their high levels of self-confidence and self-esteem and the way the pupils from a wide range of social and ethnic backgrounds get on well together in class and in the playground. Pupils feel secure, because of the high levels of care, guidance and support that the school provides. Through the work of the school council, taking on responsibilities in school and involvement with church and community activities, pupils make an outstanding contribution to the community.

Children's skills on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage vary from year to year, but are generally above the levels found in children of this age. However, their writing skills are significantly lower than other aspects. The school's evidence shows that children make good progress in Nursery and in the Reception Year. They enter Year 1 with above average attainment in all areas, including writing, despite their varied starting points. Progress in Years 1 and 2 is good and standards at the end of Year 2 are well above average. This good progress is maintained in Years 3 to 6, and standards at the end of Year 6 are exceptionally high. This represents good achievement and is an improvement from the position two years ago when achievement in Years 3 to 6 was satisfactory.

The school is making greater use of its excellent systems for checking pupils' progress, especially to set more challenging targets and raise expectations of what pupils of all ability might achieve. Informal discussions about pupils' progress have recently been replaced by formal meetings in which senior staff talk to class teachers about the progress made by their pupils each term. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified early and make similar progress to their peers because of the good support they receive. Good teaching throughout the school ensures that pupils make good progress. Teachers are making more rigorous use of their assessment information to set work which matches pupils' learning needs. However, the school accepts that there is more to be done in this area, particularly in ensuring that the most able pupils are continually challenged. The curriculum is outstanding in its overall impact on pupils' learning, personal development, well-being and enjoyment. The care, guidance and support provided for the pupils are good. Whilst the pastoral care pupils receive is extremely good, their academic guidance is satisfactory. Although the marking of the half-termly writing tasks is of high quality, informing pupils clearly about their achievements and how to improve, the quality of marking overall is satisfactory.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Good induction procedures, close involvement with parents and carers and careful attention to the children's needs, ensure that children enjoy their time at school and make good progress in their personal development and learning. In Nursery and Reception, a good balance exists between activities that are led by adults and those that the children choose for themselves.

Experienced staff interact well with the children, asking appropriate questions to develop the children's understanding and promote their speaking and listening skills. Provision is better inside than out. Children use the large equipment outside, but their development across all six areas of learning is restricted because of limited resources. The children's progress is carefully checked and the information used in the planning of teaching and activities. Leadership is good and the welfare of children is given thorough attention. The extended school provision for the small number of children of this age group who attend is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use assessment information more effectively to ensure that pupils of all abilities are challenged appropriately in all lessons.
- Improve the quality of academic guidance provided, building on the good practice seen in pupils' extended writing books.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

In recent years, the national test results in Year 6 have risen from well above average to exceptionally high. During the same period, the progress made by pupils in Years 3 to 6 has improved from broadly satisfactory in 2006 to good in 2008. This improvement has been brought about by particularly effective teaching in Years 5 and 6 and more rigorous use of assessment information in all classes to raise expectations and ensure that pupils of all abilities make as much progress as possible. There is clear evidence to indicate that the improvement is sustainable. Most groups of pupils achieve equally well because those in danger of not meeting their increasingly challenging targets are identified early and provided with appropriate support. In some lessons, more able pupils do not always make as much progress as they are capable of. Pupils who are an early stage of learning English make rapid progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Their striking self-confidence is due to the fact that they feel extremely safe and valued. Their behaviour is exemplary. Pupils work and play together particularly well and understand that bullying and racist remarks are unacceptable. Their cultural awareness is very good and they are proud of the work they do to help children in a school in Ghana. The school council is particularly influential. Its members enjoy seeking the views of pupils and organising competitions to bring about school improvements. For example, they have recently checked pupils' physical education (PE) clothing for names and classes to encourage labelling of belongings, and have promoted World Book Day by advertising and making announcements in assembly. Pupils have an excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles, which is promoted by such events as their recent visit to the 'Cooking Bus' where a variety of healthy foods were prepared. It is also reflected in their enthusiastic participation in a wide variety of sporting activities. Attendance is good and pupils thoroughly enjoy their time at school. Exceptionally high standards in the basic skills and outstanding personal development ensure the pupils are very well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Most teaching is at least good, ensuring that pupils make good progress throughout the school. Pupils say that they enjoy their lessons because the teachers make them interesting and fun. Teachers make good use of interactive whiteboards to enliven lessons and teaching assistants provide good support for less able pupils. Pupils particularly enjoy the practical activities in mathematics and science and feel that they make most progress when the work is challenging. In a particularly good Year 6 lesson, pupils carried out a demanding investigation related to Pythagoras' theorem. Less able pupils were fully involved because they were able to use paper shapes to test their ideas. In some lessons, however, pupils of different abilities are given the same task. This means that, on occasion, the more able pupils are not challenged sufficiently, because their interaction with the teacher is limited.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum makes a strong contribution to pupils' progress in the basic skills and information and communication technology. Its overall impact is outstanding. The school is making excellent progress in developing a topic-based curriculum in which activities make interesting links between several subjects. The school has successfully identified opportunities to promote pupils' writing and numeracy skills in these topics. Well-planned lessons in personal, social and health education enhance pupils' excellent understanding of how to keep themselves healthy and safe. Curriculum enrichment is outstanding. Parents from a range of backgrounds visit the school regularly to help promote understanding of the diverse cultures represented in the school. For example, pupils have seen Japanese writing in practice and learnt Indian dances and African songs. The exploitation of these opportunities helps to give the school its inclusive, harmonious ethos. Pupils benefit from specialist teaching in music and PE, and the many attractive displays around the school are testament to the high quality art work they produce. The teaching of modern foreign languages is well established in the school and by the end of Year 6, pupils reach high standards for their age in French and German. The wide range of after-school clubs are well attended. The large school orchestra plays to a very high standard, performing in school and in local events. More able pupils benefit from a number of extra-curricular opportunities, including links with the science department at Keele University. The pupils who attend the after-school club are well provided for. They are safe and happy and enjoy a good range of activities inside and out.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are cared for extremely well in this inclusive, welcoming environment, but the academic guidance they receive is satisfactory. Policies to promote equality are fully implemented in practice. The school's close links with parents are promoted through the informative newsletter and curriculum information sent out each term. The school seeks support and advice, as necessary, from a wide range of outside agencies to promote pupils' well-being. The arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements. Pupils undertake a key piece of writing each half-term which teachers assess in detail. The marking of this work gives pupils clear advice about their achievements and next steps in learning. Elsewhere, marking is

satisfactory. Pupils have targets in English and mathematics, but these are sometimes too general in nature and their use is not embedded fully. As a result, their impact in helping pupils to improve their work is limited.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

A consequence of the strong leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher is that subject leaders are provided with the time and resources necessary to carry out their role effectively. Senior leaders are fully involved in the school's activities to check its own performance. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and an effective plan of action is in place to bring about improvement. This improvement is being realised as senior staff make greater use of the school's excellent procedures for checking pupils' progress to set ambitious targets to raise their achievement even further. The school believes that pupils' achievement is outstanding, but recognises that this judgement is not supported by the school's test results and other evidence. It is also hampered by an absence of evidence to show that the oldest, most able pupils are consistently working at the highest levels. The school's contribution to community cohesion is good. It is very strong at the local level and the link with a school in Ghana is improving its satisfactory contribution at the national and global level. Governors are proud of the school. They provide strong support and a good level of challenge in their efforts to help the school to move forward.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

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

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

21 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St John's CofE (C) Primary School, Keele, ST5 5AF

My colleague and I really enjoyed our visit to inspect your school. Thank you for being so friendly and helpful. We particularly enjoyed visiting your classrooms, seeing the work that you were doing and talking to you about your school. We found that your school provides you with a good education and that it does some things really well.

Things we found out about your school

- The good teaching ensures you make good progress in your work, and standards at the end of Year 6 are exceptionally high.
- You behave extremely well in school. You get on very well with your teachers.
- You particularly enjoy the practical and problem-solving activities in mathematics and science.
- The teachers provide you with lots of interesting things to do in all subjects. All the extra things they offer make the curriculum outstanding.
- The adults in school take very good care of you so that you feel secure.
- The teachers are looking very carefully at your achievements so that they can set work that will help you to make even better progress.
- The adults in school are working hard to provide you with an even better standard of education.

What we have asked your school to do now to improve even further

- Help you to make even better progress by using the information they have about your work to set even more challenging targets for you to achieve.
- Make sure that the advice you are given about how to improve your work is as good in other subjects as it is in writing.

You can help your teachers by continuing to work hard and looking after each other as well as you do.

Yours faithfully

Don Mason

Lead inspector