

St John's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126039
Local Authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	328447
Inspection dates	1–2 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Gavin Jones

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 aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	199
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	Dominic Gorton
Headteacher	Sarah Cox
Date of previous school inspection	4 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Blackbridge Lane Horsham RH12 1RR
Telephone number	01403 265447
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St John's draws its pupils from within Horsham and from outlying areas. More recently, its intake of pupils has changed, reflecting changes within the local area. There are now more pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The proportion of pupils with English as an additional language has increased. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) in the Reception class.

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 is a good school. The high quality pastoral care results in pupils showing outstanding personal development. Their excellent behaviour helps them make good progress in lessons because they are well focused and motivated. The school's contribution to community cohesion is good, and such that pupils have regular opportunities to participate in events in the local community and the wider parish. Good teaching ensures that pupils achieve well and reach above average standards by the time that they leave. Pupils have good relationships with, and feel fully encouraged, by their teachers. As one pupil said, 'We mustn't be afraid to make mistakes, that's how we learn.' However, teachers do not always make full use of information about pupils' progress to inform lesson planning. As a result, activities are occasionally not matched precisely enough to the needs of pupils of different abilities.

Provision in the EYFS is satisfactory. The children make satisfactory progress and reach the standards expected for children of this age by the time they move into Year 1. Outdoor facilities are good, although the school does not make best use of these resources to promote fully all areas of learning. Close attention to children's welfare means that they settle quickly into school life.

The newly devised curriculum has breathed excitement and interest into lessons. Pupils' learning is enriched further by a good range of activities beyond those they meet in lessons. Staff provide good support and guidance to help pupils progress with their work. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress and the school works well with outside agencies to support this. Teachers have good systems to set targets for pupils, although occasionally these targets are not sufficiently well informed by the information about pupils' progress.

The school is well led and managed by the headteacher and senior leaders. They have established a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and put clear plans in place to guide the way ahead. Some subject leaders make a significant impact on improving standards and educational provision. However, not all subject leaders are sufficiently involved in monitoring teaching and provision to give them a clear view of where improvement is needed. The school's successful level of improvement since its last inspection, particularly to standards, shows good capacity for future improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Having entered the school with broadly average attainment, children make satisfactory progress. Close attention to their welfare and personal development is a strength of this provision. The school's good induction procedures for this age group ensure that children settle in rapidly and enjoy coming to school. Parents appreciate this well organised start. Recently introduced home visits are providing valuable links between parents and carers and school. The leadership of the EYFS is satisfactory. Outdoor facilities are good and children enjoy the work they do in this environment. However, occasionally, these outdoor activities do not focus on promoting each area of learning precisely enough.

Teaching is satisfactory, leading to satisfactory achievement overall. Planned activities provide an appropriate balance between those where children can work independently and others that are led by an adult. Teaching is strongest in problem solving, reasoning and numeracy, and in personal, social and emotional development. However, the promotion of children's

communication, language and literacy skills, whilst satisfactory overall, is not as good as it is in other areas. The school is rightly focusing on upgrading the support for the increasing proportion of children starting school with English as an additional language to ensure they get the best possible start.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all teachers make full use of information about pupils' progress to inform their lesson planning and ensure that activities always match the needs of different ability groups.
- Develop the role of all subject leaders by involving them more in the monitoring of lessons and the quality of provision.
- Ensure that all outdoor activities for children in the EYFS fully promote all areas of learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are above average by the end of Year 6 and pupils make good progress during their time in the school. Pupils' overall achievements are not higher because assessment information is not always used sharply enough to maximise learning. Most children make satisfactory progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and by the time they move into Year 1, the vast majority have reached the expected levels, although their problem solving, reasoning and numeracy skills are stronger than their communication skills. By the end of Year 6, because of the school's strong emphasis on extending pupils' literacy skills, pupils do especially well in English, with half of the pupils achieving well above average standards. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress, with several reaching average levels last year. The improved curriculum is having a positive effect on pupils' enjoyment and their achievements.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. Pupils say they really enjoy coming to school and their good attendance reflects this enjoyment. Their behaviour is exemplary. A written comment from one parent is typical of many others: 'Behaviour is excellent and pupils respect each other and the staff.' Pupils willingly discuss the merits of healthy lifestyles and clearly understand what they should eat and why they should exercise. Many take advantage of the good range of after school clubs to take part in organised healthy activities. Pupils speak proudly about the well established school council. They mention improvements it has brought about in such areas as the library. Pupils feel safe in school and are clear about what they have to do if they have problems. Most feel confident that their problems will be dealt with effectively. Older pupils take on a wide range of responsibilities at break and lunchtime and help with technical problems experienced by younger pupils while using the computers. They have a very good sense of community, taking part in many school, parish and local events. Pupils have strong connections with schools in Kenya and in Spain, supporting their understanding of the wider world. Their good academic results mean that pupils are well prepared to continue successfully in the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers use questioning well to engage pupils. Their relationships with pupils are strong and this supports the good progress pupils make. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well by teachers. As a result, pupils are motivated and interested by the work presented to them. The new curriculum provision has been taken on well by teachers and provides a valuable boost to pupils' learning. Teachers manage their classes well so that all individuals, including those with learning difficulties, together with those with English as an additional language, try hard with all activities. Occasionally, the work provided does not challenge pupils sufficiently or cater for the needs of all ability groups precisely enough.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum, enriched by a wide variety of activities that boost learning and support pupils' personal development well. For example, nearly all pupils are taught Spanish. The emphasis on the development of literacy and numeracy skills has been enhanced by a well considered development of the curriculum in terms of increased creativity, cross-curricular links and the development of basic skills. Some recently completed topics in Year 2 and Year 6 clearly show that pupils are inspired by the new approach and make good progress in a range of linked subjects. Comments received from parents indicate that they are pleased about the new developments in the curriculum. Nevertheless, in some lessons, the curriculum planning does not always ensure that lesson activities fully meet the needs of pupils of different ability groups.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school is vigilant about ensuring pupils' safety with all relevant policies and procedures being fully in place. Pastoral care is excellent. Staff know all individuals very well and cater sensitively for their needs. This strong provision underpins pupils' excellent behaviour and helps them achieve well. Those with learning difficulties are identified early and there are good support systems in place to ensure their needs are met.

Pupils know their targets and find them helpful. However, the targets are not always precise enough because the school does not make full use of the information about pupils' progress. Effective links have been established with parents and they greatly appreciate the strong partnership they have with the school. 'There is a real sense of community in the school,' wrote one parent, reflecting the view of many.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Good leadership by the headteacher ensures that there is an accurate overview of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school development plan focuses closely on the most important areas of improvement needed. She is well supported by her deputy headteacher and governors

and together they form an effective team. As a result, the school has made good progress since the last inspection. New staff are making positive contributions to the school's development. Some of the school's subject leaders have done much to improve progress and create innovation in their subjects. However, this is not fully embedded. The school recognises that a few subject leaders are not sufficiently involved in monitoring lessons and the quality of educational provision in order to strengthen further pupils' progress through making improvements in their subject areas.

Governors work well with staff and have a good knowledge of what is working well and what needs improving. They rightly recognise the need to ensure that vacant governing positions are filled as soon as possible.

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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?	2
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?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
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?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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	2

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?	2
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	3
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**

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St John's Primary School, Horsham RH12 1RR

Thank you all for making us welcome and helping us when we visited your school. I was pleased to see how happy you are and how very well you behave and really enjoy school. St John's is a good school and I am sure that is why your attendance figures are so good. Keep it up!

Your school is helping you reach standards that are above average by the end of Year 6 and you make good progress because you are well taught and have a lively and interesting curriculum.

Your teachers and their assistants all look after you very well and your parents appreciate this. They help you develop well as young citizens and help you realize how fortunate you are when compared with some parts of the world.

The school tracks your progress through collecting results of tests. We have asked the school to help teachers make better use of this information to make lessons even more challenging and interesting for you. We know that you enjoy the new curriculum that you have. You say that your lessons are interesting and we have seen some very good topics that have been completed in Years 6 and 2. In order to keep things improving, we have asked that all teachers who look after different subjects play a full part in looking at lessons and the work that goes on across the school so that they can get lots of good ideas about how to keep things improving. We have asked them to make sure that they make better use of the outside area to help the younger children learn even more.

You can all help by continuing your good attendance, behaving well and continuing to work hard in lessons. Thank you again for two interesting days at your school.

With best wishes

Gavin Jones Lead Inspector