

St Mary and St John Junior and Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103442
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	331592
Inspection dates	10–11 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Usha Devi HMI

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	410
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	Jayne O'Brien
Headteacher	Veronica Fenlon
Date of previous school inspection	26 April 2004
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Beaufort Road Erdington Birmingham B23 7NB
Telephone number	01213 823522

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	10–11 June 2009
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

St Mary and St John Junior and Infant School is situated in a residential area in Erdington in North Birmingham. It is a much larger than average primary school. Thirty per cent of pupils are White British and the remaining are from minority ethnic backgrounds including Black or Black British Caribbean, Pakistani, and Mixed White and Black Caribbean. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is above the national average, as is the percentage of pupils who are believed to speak English as an additional language. The school has Early Years Foundation Stage provision for children in the Nursery and Reception classes. There is a privately run after-school club on the school site. The school has been awarded the Healthy School Standard.

The school was inspected in May 2008 and was given a notice to improve because it was performing less well than could reasonably be expected. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors monitored the school's progress in January 2009. The school was judged to be making inadequate progress overall. During the last few years, the school has experienced high levels of staff absence and instability at senior leadership level. To support the headteacher, the governors have appointed an acting assistant headteacher from within the school and there have been two further additions to the senior leadership team. Since the previous inspection, five members of the teaching staff have left. At the time of the inspection, six of the 15 classes were being taught by temporary teachers.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing and governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

Following the previous inspection, the school received a wide range of support as part of an Intensifying Support Programme. The headteacher, in liaison with the local authority, also reviewed the school's leadership and management structure and introduced a whole-school approach to tracking the performance of pupils. Although these actions have been appropriate, the school has not been able to eliminate underachievement and improve provision. As a result, the collective leadership and management of the school is inadequate. Disruptions to staffing combined with a lack of clarity amongst some staff about their responsibility for school improvement have hampered progress. Senior leaders regularly monitor the quality of teaching and learning and report their findings to governors. However, the monitoring and evaluation of the school's work lacks sufficient rigour. One of the main reasons for this is that senior leaders do not place enough emphasis on the progress of pupils when providing staff with feedback or when evaluating the quality of provision. Consequently, the school's view of its performance is sometimes too generous.

Children enter the Nursery with performance levels that are below those expected for their age. They make satisfactory progress in most areas of learning, including communication, language and literacy and mathematical development. They begin Year 1 with below average levels of attainment overall. Following this sound start, too many pupils make inadequate progress, particularly in Years 1, 3, 4 and 5. Inspection evidence shows there are significant variations in rates of progress between subjects, classes and groups of pupils. Progress in Years 2 and 6 is better than in the other year groups. This is because additional intensive targeted support for individuals and groups enables most pupils in these year groups to make satisfactory and often good progress. Although pupils reach broadly average standards by the time they leave the school, standards in Years 1 to 5 range from broadly average to significantly below the national average.

The quality of teaching and the curriculum are inadequate. In too many lessons, teachers set activities that do not provide pupils of different abilities with an appropriate level of challenge. Teachers' expectations of pupils, especially the more able and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are too low. The curriculum is not well matched to the needs of different pupils and activities often fail to inspire and motivate pupils. Inspectors found examples of pupils in different year groups and those of different abilities within classes completing very similar tasks.

The quality of care, guidance and support that pupils receive is satisfactory, as is the pupils' personal development. Most pupils, for instance, have a reasonable understanding of how to adopt a healthy lifestyle. A large number of parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire expressed concerns about the behaviour of pupils. Inspectors found that, while the majority of pupils are well behaved, there is a small minority of pupils who do not behave appropriately. The school is working with a range of external agencies to develop strategies to better manage incidents of disruptive behaviour. These include increasing supervision levels in the playground and devising a whole-school approach to managing behaviour.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children start the Nursery with skills which are below those normally expected for their age. Teaching is satisfactory and children make sound progress in developing their literacy and mathematical skills. There is a secure balance between activities which children choose for themselves and those directed by adults, both indoors and outdoors. However, sometimes children spend too much time in large groups listening to adults rather than sharing ideas or noting these on paper to practise early skills in writing. There is an increasing emphasis on developing children's knowledge and understanding of the world. As a consequence, their awareness of this area is improving. Children are encouraged to behave well, share fairly and take turns. They also take part in a good range of activities that develop their coordination, for example by using bikes. As a result, they make good progress in personal, social, emotional and physical development. Leadership and management are satisfactory. With effective support from the local authority, improvements have been made in provision and particularly in how assessments are carried out. These changes have yet to be embedded throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage. Links with parents are satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and increase the rate of pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics across the school.
- Improve the quality of teaching throughout the school so that it is consistently good or better by ensuring pupils' differing learning needs are met.
- Ensure the school curriculum promotes enjoyment and achievement and better matches the learning needs and interests of all pupils.
- Make sure that leaders and managers, including governors, rigorously monitor and evaluate the work of the school in order to bring about rapid improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Pupils' achievement is inadequate because too many pupils underachieve, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, the more able and those who speak English as an additional language. For example, since September 2008, the majority of pupils in Year 4 have made inadequate progress in reading, writing and mathematics. In Year 5, girls have made satisfactory progress in writing but boys have made inadequate progress. Progress accelerates in Year 2 and Year 6 due to the additional targeted support that pupils receive. Although standards are broadly average by the time pupils leave the school, the end of Year 6 results mask the considerable variations in pupils' performance. Standards in Years 1 to 5 are too variable, with pupils in some classes performing significantly below the levels expected for their age, particularly in writing.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Most pupils have a clear understanding of how to stay safe and the difference between right and wrong. The majority of pupils work together well. A small minority are less considerate and disrupt a few lessons and some break times. While pupils acknowledge that bullying does sometimes occur, they say

any problems are resolved by staff. The school recognises that the number of fixed-term exclusions is too high and it is in the process of developing whole-school strategies for rewarding and promoting positive behaviour. Although pupils say they enjoy school, high levels of enjoyment are not always apparent in lessons because of weaknesses in teaching and the curriculum. Through regular fundraising activities and the work of the school council, pupils make a reasonable contribution to the school and wider community. Attendance is satisfactory. The uneven progress that pupils make in their basic skills does not prepare them adequately for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

While there is satisfactory and good teaching in some lessons, teaching is inadequate overall because too many pupils underachieve. Too often, the work set for pupils does not meet their different learning needs. In some lessons, pupils of widely different abilities do the same work. Teachers sometimes spend too long introducing lessons which limits the time pupils have to work independently and develop their own ideas. When this happens, pupils become restless. In more successful lessons, teachers clearly explain and demonstrate the strategies pupils will need to use to complete their work and pupils are encouraged to discuss and share their ideas. Teaching assistants are not always well deployed during lessons and this restricts the contribution they make to pupils' learning. Teachers' ongoing assessments do not accurately reflect the attainment levels consistently demonstrated by pupils. In some classes, teachers accept poor standards of presentation from the pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 4

The curriculum is inadequate because it does not meet the needs of all the ability groups. Consequently, too many pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable. In the weakest lessons, pupils lose interest and some misbehave because teachers do not set activities which inspire them. There is no whole-school approach to planning the curriculum. Individual teachers allocate different amounts of time to subjects such as art and music. Consequently, some pupils do not receive a broad and balanced experience. In some subjects, the work that pupils do from year to year does not always build successfully on previous learning. Pupils have too few opportunities to develop their writing skills because they are often required to record words and simple phrases on worksheets. Although there is satisfactory provision for information and communication technology (ICT), pupils told inspectors that they do not have regular access to ICT equipment in lessons. While there is a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities and visitors to the school, educational visits for the pupils are limited.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils say they feel generally well supported by staff and can share their concerns with them. The school is currently trialling the use of a 'comment box' where pupils can leave staff notes about any worries they have. There are appropriate procedures in place to ensure pupils are safe, with regular checks made of the premises and equipment. Satisfactory links with a range of external agencies enable the school to adequately promote pupils' well-being and secure

appropriate additional pastoral support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language. Through workshops and training sessions, the school is gradually increasing the opportunities parents have to become involved in the work of the school. Academic guidance has recently improved and is now satisfactory. Although teachers' marking is still inconsistent, at its best it provides pupils with the detailed guidance they need to improve. In some classes, pupils are given the opportunity to respond to teachers' comments and correct errors in their work. Pupils know their learning targets. However, these are not sufficiently challenging.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

- The headteacher has worked effectively with the local authority to coordinate support and training for staff. The roles and responsibilities of staff have been clarified and a whole-school approach to tracking the progress of pupils has been implemented. Despite these much needed changes, significant weaknesses remain. The school's capacity to make the required changes has been hampered by staffing difficulties and weaknesses in monitoring and evaluation. A large majority of parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire expressed concerns about the school. For instance, the majority of parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire raised concerns about the progress made by their child and the behaviour of a few children, and stated that the school does not always keep them well informed, or seek their views. Although the school improvement plan identifies some of the school priorities, the criteria against which success can be measured are not always realistic. The plan does not state how actions will be monitored. Senior leaders regularly analyse test results and discuss the progress of individual pupils with staff. However, they do not check the accuracy of teachers' ongoing assessments. As a result, the school's assessment information does not always accurately reflect the extent of underachievement in some classes. The newly appointed members of the senior leadership team are inexperienced and are still developing the skills required to monitor provision and evaluate its impact on pupils. Governors are supportive and have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, many of the governors are new to their roles. As a consequence, the governing body is not in a position where it can rigorously hold the school to account.

The school's contribution to community cohesion is satisfactory. The school has sound links with the local community and is beginning to promote links with the wider community so that pupils can further increase their understanding of life in a multicultural society.

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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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4

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?	3
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	4

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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	4
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	4
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	4
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

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

12 June 2009

Dear pupils

Inspection of St Mary and St John Junior and Infant School, Erdington, B23 7NB

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking with you, looking at your work and visiting your lessons. We would also like to thank those of you who came to talk to us, including the members of the school council.

We are pleased to hear that many of you enjoy school. You told us that you like to help others by raising money for different charities. Most of you are friendly, behave well and know how to keep yourself safe. We agree with you and your parents that the behaviour of a small number of children could be better. Miss Fenlon is planning to introduce a whole-school reward system. You can help by always behaving well in lessons and in the playground. The youngest children in the Nursery and Reception classes make satisfactory progress. We could see how much the children in the Nursery were enjoying looking after the plants in the school's garden centre and designing their own gardens.

Some things about your school are satisfactory but there are also aspects of it that need to improve. We have asked Miss Fenlon, the staff and governors to help you make faster progress in reading, writing and mathematics. We have also asked the teachers to set you work that is not too difficult or too easy, and to give you activities that are exciting and imaginative. Finally, we have asked all the teachers with responsibilities for subjects, and governors, to help Miss Fenlon improve the school as quickly as possible by keeping a close check on how well you are doing and to make sure everything is always as good as it can be.

We have decided that the school needs some extra help to improve. Other inspectors will regularly come back to your school to check its progress. You can help by working as hard as you can in all lessons.

Thank you once again for making us feel welcome. We wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours faithfully

Usha Devi

Her Majesty's Inspector