

St John's CofE Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105712
Local Authority	Oldham
Inspection number	308929
Inspection dates	5–6 December 2007
Reporting inspector	John Ashton

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	151
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr D Shenton
Headteacher	Mr Gerard Kehoe
Date of previous school inspection	6 May 2003
School address	James Street Failsworth Manchester M35 9PY
Telephone number	0161 6815713
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St John's is a smaller than average voluntary aided Church of England junior school. The school serves a mixed area of council and private housing. The school community is 95% White British. Below average proportions of pupils are eligible for free school meals or have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has National Healthy School status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St John's Church of England Junior School provides a satisfactory level of education.

Pupils make satisfactory progress as they move through the school and standards are broadly average when pupils leave at the end of Year 6. Standards in English have been the best and science the weakest of the three core subjects (English, mathematics and science) in recent years. This was mainly because of the shortage of teaching time science received. Steps have been taken to put this right. The main reason why progress overall is satisfactory rather than good is because the quality of teaching and learning is inconsistent through the school. Lessons are conscientiously prepared and managed well, but tasks set are not always matched closely enough to pupils' different abilities. This is particularly the case in Years 3 and 5. The result is that some middle and higher attainers are not always challenged appropriately because too much teaching is aimed at the whole class, as if the pupils were all at the same level.

Parents have mixed feelings about the school. They like it because they feel that their children are happy and feel safe. Many are pleased with the new leadership's welcoming and friendly approach. However, they are less pleased with the large class sizes and with the behaviour of a very few pupils.

Pupils say that they enjoy being at school. Typical comments are that, 'Some lessons are quite fun and teachers help us when we get stuck'. This is not always the case, however. Analysis of pupils' books shows that they are not given clear information about what they are already doing well and what they need to do next so that they can make faster progress. Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. They are appropriately prepared for the next stage of their education. They have positive attitudes to their work and say that they feel safe at school. Pupils' understanding of how to keep fit and healthy has improved recently. Older pupils play a satisfactory role in helping the school community. In the main, pupils behave satisfactorily but some get restless when lessons are less interesting or when they are insufficiently supported.

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The school's senior leadership and governors have a clear understanding of the 'big picture' in terms of the school's effectiveness and its current state of development. This means that the school's self-evaluation is satisfactory. The headteacher's welcoming and inclusive approach is involving middle leadership much more in the running of the school. However, plans to develop the school further do not concentrate sufficiently on raising standards and the quality of learning. Some of the school's most valuable resources, the non-teaching staff, are not consistently used to best effect. Governors are very supportive, but agree that they do not sufficiently challenge senior managers about the school's performance.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure teachers plan activities which better match the abilities of all pupils, to accelerate their rate of progress.
- Provide pupils with clear guidance about what they are doing well and what they need to do next to improve.
- Sharpen school development plans so that they rigorously focus on raising standards and improving the quality of pupils' learning.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils make satisfactory progress overall as they move through the school. They make better progress in Years 5 and 6 than they do in Years 3 and 4. By the time pupils leave the school, standards overall are broadly average. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress owing to the extra support many receive. In some classes, however, there are several other pupils who do not progress as well as they should because their work is not matched closely enough to their needs. Results in science have been the weakest of the three core subjects in recent years, but standards have recently begun to improve now that science is given more teaching time. However, pupils' exercise books show that their experience of predicting and carrying out fair tests is very limited.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

The pupils like their school. They are enthusiastic, most work hard and cooperate well with each other and with the adults who look after them. Their spiritual, moral, and social development is good, but their cultural awareness is not as well developed. Pupils understand how to keep healthy. Their keen awareness of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle was a contributory factor in the school's recent receipt of the Healthy School Award and they keenly support extra-curricular sporting activities. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and know who to turn to if they need help. Most behave well. However, a few tend to be rather boisterous, particularly at playtimes. Behaviour is improving because of the help and support those few pupils, who sometimes find behaving sensibly more difficult, receive. Pupils say they hope that membership of the school council will strengthen their voice in the school. Attendance is above average. Pupils enjoy taking part in mini-enterprise projects and although this is at an early stage they are beginning to develop a sound awareness of how business works. Their satisfactory literacy and numeracy skills equip them adequately for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall but ranges between good and inadequate. Where teaching is good, lessons are conscientiously prepared, with lots of useful detail. Teachers manage learning well, which results in pupils working consistently hard. Learning objectives are explained at the beginning of lessons and pupils have the opportunity to reflect on whether they have met them. In these lessons, pupils have very positive attitudes to their learning. They respond well to teachers' questions and confidently ask for help when they are unclear about what to do. Where teaching has weaknesses, teachers talk for too long and too often to the whole class as if the pupils were all at the same level of understanding. Some pupils who could cope with more challenging work can become restless and as a result they sometimes misbehave. Classrooms are not always organised in such a way that it is easy for pupils to work together, to share and discuss ideas or for the best use to be made of teaching assistants. The

quality of teachers' marking varies. Where good, pupils are left in no doubt about what they have done well and how to improve. However, not all teachers follow this good practice.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Since September 2007, the organisation of the curriculum has significantly improved. Pupils' learning is enriched by the teaching of Spanish and a satisfactory range of other out-of-class activities. These include visits to interesting locations in the local area and visitors, such as musicians and sports coaches, come into the school. The school is careful to ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to become involved in the good range of extra-curricular activities on offer. As part of the personal social and health education programme, pupils appropriately follow courses on safety, relationships and drugs awareness. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is satisfactory. Most are adequately supported, with appropriate individual education plans containing achievable targets. Provision, however, for middle- and higher-attaining pupils is not always as good as it could be. This is because curricular plans do not take sufficient account of the range of abilities in each class. The school is rightly investigating ways of improving pupil's play areas, which at present are rather nondescript and uninspiring.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Safeguarding procedures comply with the latest guidelines. In September 2007, an efficient system to track pupils' progress was put in place. Although this is a useful tool, its full impact is yet to be seen. Pupils are beginning to be aware of targets for academic improvement, but not all have a precise knowledge of what they are aiming for. This is because many opportunities for teachers to give advice through their marking are missed. Effective strategies are in place for the early identification of pupils who may be in need of additional support. The school works effectively to support those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those with emotional and behavioural difficulties. It has an effective system to ensure good attendance.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are in a period of transition. The new headteacher has made a satisfactory start in the diagnosis of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the school's curriculum and organisation. His open and friendly approach makes everyone feel welcome to and comfortable in the school. Other senior leaders and curriculum coordinators feel valued and are becoming more involved in checking the quality of pupils' learning in their subjects. Some important steps have already been taken, for example in the reorganisation and improvement of aspects of the curriculum. The school's self-evaluation, which is accurate in many respects, is, however, too generous in other areas. For example, it judges the school's capacity to bring about much needed improvements as good, but this has yet to be securely demonstrated. School development plans are not yet focused sufficiently on raising standards and improving the quality of pupils' learning across the school. The school's finances are healthy and in good order. Governors are very supportive but are not yet challenging the school sufficiently about weaker aspects of the school's performance.

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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?	3
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?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is 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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	2
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	3

The quality of provision

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

¹ Grade 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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

As one of the two inspectors who visited your school recently I really enjoyed meeting and working alongside some of you in the classrooms. A very special thank you must go to those children who gave up part of their lunch break to talk to us.

You told us many good things about your school, including how good it is to meet your friends there, how helpful all the staff are and how much you enjoy those lessons which are fun and have interesting activities to help you to learn.

I agree with you that the staff are all helpful and look after you and there is a good range of sports and clubs for you to take part in after school.

Your school is giving you a satisfactory education, but we have asked your headteacher and teachers to make your school even better by:

- giving each of you activities that really challenge you to learn well in lessons and speed up your progress
- giving you more guidance about what you are doing really well, why it is good and what you need to do to improve your work even more
- making sure that the school's plans to help it keep improving are focused sharply on doing those things that will improve your learning the most.

You can play your part in this by always working as hard as most of you do and by some of you behaving more sensibly in the playground and in assemblies.

Best wishes to you all for the future.