

St John's Primary School

Teindland Close, Benwell, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear

Inspection dates 26–27 February 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- From low starting points, pupils achieve well so that by the time they leave they are close to reaching national average standards in mathematics and writing.
- Reading and writing are now improving strongly across the school and pupils are making good progress.
- Children in the Nursery get four full days each to give them a rich experience in school.
- Teaching is good because lessons are well planned and the work is matched to pupils' abilities.
- Good behaviour is the norm in school and pupils are encouraged to be responsible for what they do.
- The curriculum is of very high quality and pupils enjoy learning through the 'mantle of the expert' approach to learning, through enquiry and investigations.
- The headteacher is successful in improving the school's performance. The staff support her unanimously in making improvements to their teaching and to pupils' achievement.
- The governing body understands the strengths of the school and is fully aware of areas where it needs further development.
- Parental links and the work of their partnership worker are excellent.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Marking in mathematics, in particular, does not always give pupils enough guidance about how their work might be improved nor the opportunity to follow up on the advice.
- Reading is an area where pupils' standards over time have been lower than national averages and pupils do not make as much progress compared to other subjects.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 16 lessons or parts of lessons taught by nine different teachers. Two were observed jointly with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher. The headteacher also assisted in the scrutiny of pupils' work.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and talked to them about how much reading they do as well as looking at their work in class.
- Discussions took place with members of the governing body, staff, groups of pupils, and a representative of the local authority.
- Documents were examined, including those relating to safeguarding, the school's improvement plan, records of the school's checks on teaching and learning, as well as its own assessment data.
- The views of 18 parents, who were spoken to by the inspection team, were taken into account, as well as the responses to the school's own questionnaires, which surveyed 46 parents. There were too few responses on the online questionnaire (Parent View) to be taken into account.
- Fourteen members of staff completed questionnaires about their view of the school.

Inspection team

Frank Cain, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jane Becket

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St John's is an average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is considerably above average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children that are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is above average but the proportion at school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above average, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- There is a breakfast club organised and run by the school.
- There is a privately run pre-school located on the site, but this is not managed by the governing body and is subject to a separate inspection.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching further in order to help pupils to do even better by:
 - ensuring that when teachers mark pupils' work, especially in mathematics, they guide pupils in how to improve their work and give pupils the opportunity to learn from their mistakes
 - fostering a greater enjoyment of reading across the school to further improve pupils' reading skills.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- When children enter the school they have skills which are substantially below those normally expected for their age. By the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage they have made good progress. Although the standards that pupils reach by the end of Key Stage 1 are still low, compared to where they started, they have made good progress. By the time they leave at the end of Key Stage 2, they reach standards that are close to the national average in mathematics. Their standards in writing are improving strongly. In reading they do less well, although current school information does suggest this is now much better across the school than has been the case in the past.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 1, pupils learn the sounds that letters make (phonics) well because it is taught extremely well with skilful questioning to check on children's progress. A good example of this typically impressive progress can be seen in one child, who on joining the school in September, was only making marks to represent letters but after only one and a half terms can now form all the letters of the alphabet and spell out words such as 'now' and 'feel'.
- The 'learning journals' used in the Early Years Foundation Stage, using photographs to record children's work and their developing skills, along with staff comments, confirm children's rapid progress.
- There is a strong focus on language development in the Nursery and children are encouraged to express how they feel in full sentences. For example, some children sitting in a circle eating a mid-afternoon snack were sharing their news with other children.
- Nationally published information on pupils' attainment and progress does not always give an accurate picture about how well the pupils are doing, because the school's population changes significantly from year to year. For example, by Year 2, in 2013, seven pupils had left the class and nine had joined. A large proportion of the new entrants spoke English as an additional language; however, most of these made more progress than expected from their starting points by Year 3.
- An increasing proportion of pupils come from minority ethnic groups and because of the good support given to them and their families they make good progress from the time they enter the school.
- Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals do better than other pupils in the school, especially in reading and mathematics where they are about a term ahead of other pupils.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make the same good progress as other pupils in the school. By the time they leave, the standards that these pupils reach are above the national average for similar pupils in mathematics and writing, but below in reading.
- The school has worked hard to make sure that all pupils, including those eligible for free school meals, those with a disability or special educational needs, and pupils who learn English as an additional language, are treated equally and make good progress.
- Standards in reading throughout the school have been low for several years but current information shows better progress from pupils' different starting points. In Year 6, pupils are very enthusiastic about their new e-book readers, which they can take home and are ready installed with 'books' monitored by their class teacher. Boys, in particular, say they really like this 'gadget'.
- Good written work, including handwriting, is encouraged right from the start of Nursery and celebrated across the school. It is given a high profile; for example, in Year 6, pupils have laminated examples of their own best handwriting on their desks and prizes are awarded for the best written work across a year group.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers plan work extremely well so that children of different abilities are given work that makes them think hard. The most able pupils are given work to challenge them and, as a result, they do well and make good progress. Some of these pupils are working at a standard that puts them more than six months ahead of others in the same class.
- Teachers skilfully use questions to make sure that all pupils understand their work and give them sufficient time to practise their new skill, such as in breaking down words into individual sounds.
- In a Year 4 English lesson, for example, pupils were asked to write a newspaper report taking care that they constructed good sentences. They learnt how to change a simple statement into a question to ask someone and sharp questioning by the teacher made them think of alternative ways of phrasing sentences.
- Pupils are keen to answer questions in class and have the confidence to ask if they are unsure of something, which shows a good attitude to learning.
- The work of teaching assistants is key to improving the achievement of the pupils. They work hard in lessons making sure that pupils understand the work. They make sure that they do not do the work for them, but give pupils the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge for themselves.
- A strength of teaching is in the personal guidance given to pupils. Each half term the pupils and their parents meet their teacher to discuss their progress and to decide on the targets that they are to aim for. It also helps teachers to plan lessons effectively and give pupils homework to address any problem areas that pupils are having with their work. These meetings are seen by parents as very informative and the pupils also find them useful to set appropriate targets.
- An overwhelming number of parents feel that teaching is good and that pupils make good progress in lessons.
- The quality of teachers' marking of pupils' work is better in English than in mathematics, but it is not always clear to pupils how to improve their work. In addition, pupils do not always learn from their mistakes because they are not given the opportunity to respond to points made by their teachers.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils feel safe in school. The big fence, which surrounds the site, and the key coded door locks along with their teachers' diligence gives them a feeling of security.
- Pupils learn and understand how to stay safe. For example, in a science lesson they were seeing how hard different rocks were, taking turns in sharing safety goggles to do their experiments.
- They understand what to do in case of fire and know where to line up in such an event.
- Older pupils are very aware of the dangers associated with using computers and how to have secure passwords, but younger ones are not so mindful of possible risks.
- Pupils enjoy school. The breakfast club attracts about 30% of all pupils each day and many pupils spend time practising their reading on computers before the school day starts.
- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are well behaved and attentive and even when bursting with enthusiasm, for example, in a Year 3 science lesson when the teacher asked them to listen closely, they respond very quickly to instructions.
- Pupils say there is no bullying in school and behaviour is good. Occasionally, friends have their 'ups and down' said one pupil, but they quickly make it up.
- Some said that behaviour is not as good outside on the playground as it is inside. This is partly to do with the present small school site, which restricts big team activities.
- Pupils are well aware of the consequences of poor behaviour and school records show that incidents of unacceptable behaviour have reduced significantly over time.
- Pupils in Year 2 are given responsibilities in class to give out books. In Year 6, the oldest children

are encouraged, with their distinctive uniform, to be role models that others can turn to if they have a problem.

- Pupils look after their school and there is very little litter around. They take pride in their uniform. Although one mother said that when her child in Nursery comes home covered in paint and glue it is a sign that 'she is having fun'.
- Pupils' attendance is slightly below average but improving. Unfortunately a chicken pox outbreak hit younger children and affected the overall annual figures last year. The number of pupils who are absent for prolonged periods has reduced and during the inspection the attendance in classes was excellent.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is extremely accurate in her judgements about how well pupils are doing and on the quality of teaching. She has appointed leaders to key roles who are diligent in monitoring teaching and all staff have specific responsibilities to monitor pupils' progress.
- Teaching is well managed and the development of teachers is encouraged with 'plans of support' where needed. However, the quality of teachers' marking varies and at times is not as good as it could be. This has not yet been fully addressed by leaders and managers.
- Leaders of key areas, such as literacy and numeracy, effectively monitor their subjects by observing lesson and scrutinising the quality of pupils' work to make sure it is of good quality.
- Home-school links are exceptionally strong. The parent support advisor has developed very good relationships with many parents who attend cake-making clubs and sign-language classes. A large number of parents have received accreditation for courses in personal and social development. During the inspection a group of parents heartily sang nursery rhymes with their younger children, along with the partnership worker, which showed how happy they are with the school.
- There are a whole range of clubs and activities for the pupils at lunch time and after school. In their 'golden time' on Fridays, pupils can choose a preferred activity, which might be artistic or related to physical activity, amongst other choices.
- Some aspects of the curriculum are very good. For example, it builds in key questions which involve the pupils in making judgements as to whether they agree or disagree with a point of view. In a study of the Tudors in Newcastle, Year 4 pupils had to investigate and judge whether or not a famous old house in the city was haunted. They set up borrowed equipment to see if they could detect anything and came up with different theories to explain events.
- The local authority has given the school good support through the assistance of another experienced headteacher to help monitor its achievement.
- The extra funds provided to support school sports has been used wisely to provide new coaching staff and to increase the skills of existing staff. Pupils, including those not usually interested in sports, are now taking more exercise.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governors have an accurate view of how well pupils are doing. They challenge the headteacher on how well teachers are performing. They understand how well teachers are performing and have made absolutely sure that teachers' pay has been linked closely with classroom performance. They understand how the pupil premium funding is helping those who are entitled to it to do well. Governors are aware of the new sports funding and are able to explain that it has brought about an increase in the number of clubs on offer, including the new dance club, and in the number of pupils who now participate in physical activities.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	108476
Local authority	Newcastle Upon Tyne
Inspection number	440790

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	233
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mary Nicholls
Headteacher	Tracey Caffrey
Date of previous school inspection	2 November 2011
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