

# St John's Catholic Primary School

## Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|------------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 123551           |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Shropshire       |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 314635           |
| <b>Inspection date</b>         | 8 July 2008      |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | David Carrington |

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

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|---|--|
| <b>Type of school</b>                     | Primary                                  |
| <b>School category</b>                    | Voluntary aided                          |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                | 4–11                                     |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                   | Mixed                                    |
| <b>Number on roll</b>                     | 190                                      |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>              | The governing body                       |
| <b>Chair of governors</b>                 | Philip Cookson                           |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                        | Helen Murray                             |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b> | 4 May 2004                               |
| <b>School address</b>                     | Innage Gardens<br>Bridgnorth<br>WV16 4HW |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                   | 01746 762061                             |
| <b>Fax number</b>                         | 01746 768298                             |

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|--------------------------|-------------|
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the reasons for pupils gaining high standards
- the current level of attainment
- provision for gifted and talented pupils.

Evidence was gathered from:

- published assessment data
- the school's own records
- parents' questionnaires
- observations in all classes
- interviews with staff, governors and pupils.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

St John's is a small Catholic primary school that serves the parish of Bridgnorth and a large area around it. This includes some areas of rural deprivation and also some more affluent areas. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and all pupils speak English as their first language. About a quarter of the pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, which is above average. The school is heavily oversubscribed. Just under half the pupils are from Catholic families.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

**Grade: 1**

St John's Catholic Primary School provides an outstanding education for its pupils. Standards are high and have risen swiftly over the last few years. Pupils make outstanding progress from their levels of skills and knowledge when they start Reception. The excellent quality of provision in Reception is maintained through the school, with first-rate teaching and an exciting and stimulating curriculum. A particular strength is the warm, friendly and welcoming Catholic ethos that is the result of high quality care, guidance and support for the pupils. They develop into very pleasant and friendly children who thoroughly enjoy school, attend whenever they can, behave impeccably and are very well prepared for the next stage in their education. The highly effective headteacher and deputy headteacher provide exceptionally good leadership and management, enabling the school to achieve its excellent standards.

In 2007, standards in Year 6 were significantly above average and placed St John's in the top performing primary schools in the country. There were some differences in outcomes between the core subjects, with mathematics results fractionally below those in English. The school has worked very successfully this school year to ensure standards and achievement are more consistent. Standards in Year 2 are above average and great strides have been made in extending pupils' writing skills, which tended to lag behind other aspects of their work. The school has been particularly successful in providing work to expand the skills of more able writers. Pupils' progress is markedly strong from their first day in school to their last because of the consistent high quality of teaching and learning. The school has managed the transition to mixed-age classes most successfully, which should reassure the few parents who raised concerns with the inspector about the loss of staff, increase in class sizes and range of age and ability in each class this year.

Although pupils' excellent academic achievement is a factor in the school's reputation, its work to develop pupils' personal qualities is also celebrated locally. The pupils' education is steeped in the best traditions of its Catholic heritage and all develop as mature, sensible and eloquent learners, regardless of their own religious or secular background. Pupils have a very clear understanding of health and safety matters. They particularly enjoyed the recent Crucial Crew experience that challenged them to make independent, safe responses to a series of simulated predicaments. It is clear that the safeguarding of pupils is in very caring and capable hands. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is particularly well fostered. The school has highly developed links with a school in Tanzania. The pupils talked fondly of their friends in Mwaya during the school assembly observed during the inspection. Such links and the pupils' involvement in events closer to home ensure that their awareness of and involvement in the community is excellent. Pupils have a strong influence on how the school is improved and they are fully supportive of children in their own school community.

Many lessons have a buzz of hard work and enthusiasm. Teachers are skilful in the use of the interactive whiteboards to promote discussion and questioning. Pupils talk sensibly to each other about their learning and there are some good opportunities to review their own achievement. The school has well founded plans to extend such opportunities by giving more chances for pupils to respond in writing to the very

informative comments teachers provide when marking their work. The use of time is maximised in lessons and often, much is packed into a short period.

The curriculum has a richness and relevance that is extended by the opportunities to develop pupils' creativity. Artwork is of high quality and participation in drama productions, such as the current presentation of *'Hagbane's Doom'* is relished by the pupils. Provision for music is a strength. Some pupils are exceptionally talented musicians. The school has a particularly well planned programme to help gifted and talented pupils show their merits. Sport is another area in which many pupils excel. The collection of sports trophies for individual and team events is impressive. Despite the worries of a few parents, the school makes sure that all pupils, regardless of academic or other capabilities, are given a chance to show their ability. This is why standards are so high. At present, there are some limitations to the range of work and play that can be undertaken outside. Whilst this is not unduly detrimental to pupils' education, improvements to the outside facilities are in the early planning stage.

School leadership is firmly focused on improvement and is rooted in high expectations and great challenge in the targets set for achievement. Governors are full partners in school leadership and they make sure that decisions are in the best interests of the pupils. They test the impact of initiatives by charting the results in pupils' improved academic and personal achievement. Financial management is prudent. Senior leaders have an astute knowledge of school performance and a successful involvement in strategic planning. Subject leadership is in capable hands, which ensures achievement in subjects such as information and communication technology is as high as in the three core subjects. The very strong teamwork among leaders at all levels is the prime reason why the school's capacity for continuing advance is outstanding.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

**Grade: 1**

The Reception classroom is a happy place of work. The children have developed very good skills and knowledge in all six areas of their learning and they talk confidently to each other about their work. All children have achieved their targets for the year and many have surpassed them, which provides a very secure platform for work in Year 1. Thus, standards are above average at the point when they leave Reception. As in the rest of the school, teaching and learning and the curriculum are of high quality. Outdoor provision meets requirements, although school leaders are planning improvements designed to enhance children's learning. They benefit greatly from the Forest School work. The tracking of children's progress is thorough, accurate and used to set challenging targets. Again, this is similar to the rest of the school. The children are particularly well cared for and their personal, social and emotional development is fostered very successfully. The Foundation Stage is led most capably.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Enhance the outdoor areas to maximise the opportunities for exciting learning and enjoyable play.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

|   |                       |
|---|-----------------------|
| <b>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate.</b> | <b>School Overall</b> |
|---|-----------------------|

### Overall effectiveness

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| <b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b> | <b>1</b>   |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection   | <b>Yes</b> |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?  | <b>1</b>   |
| The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage  | <b>1</b>   |
| The effectiveness of boarding provision  |            |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements  | <b>1</b>   |

### Achievement and standards

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <b>How well do learners achieve?</b>   | <b>1</b> |
| The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners   | <b>1</b> |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | <b>1</b> |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress                              | <b>1</b> |

### Personal development and well-being

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

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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.

## Leadership and management

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| <b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>                                       | <b>1</b>   |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | <b>1</b>   |
| How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards  | <b>1</b>   |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation  | <b>1</b>   |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can                     | <b>1</b>   |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money  | <b>1</b>   |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities  | <b>1</b>   |
| Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?  | <b>Yes</b> |
| Does this school require special measures?   | <b>No</b>  |
| Does this school require a notice to improve?  | <b>No</b>  |



## Annex B

9 July 2008



Dear Pupils

**Inspection of St John's Primary School, Bridgnorth, WV16 4HW**

Many thanks for the thoroughly enjoyable day I spent with you recently. I will remember your school for a long time because of the outstanding education it gives you. I enjoyed talking with you and have a long list of what you like about your school because of what you told me. I have put some of this in my report and I hope that many of you will read it. The main things I have written about include the following:

- You make excellent progress and reach high standards.
- Children in Reception have above average skills and knowledge.
- You are sensible, very well behaved and friendly children.
- Your lessons are most enjoyable and you learn a lot of new things because your teaching is first class.
- Your curriculum is exciting and includes many special things. I would have liked to have seen more of '*Hagbane's Doom*' and visited your art display in St Leonard's church.
- Mrs Murray, all the staff and the governors work very successfully to make sure you all do well in school.
- Most of your parents and carers share my thoughts about the school. The few that do not can be assured that the school is doing really well.

Because your school is so successful, there are not a lot of things it needs to do to improve. However, I think there is one area where improvements will make your time in school even better:

- Make the outside spaces more interesting and exciting places for your work and play.

I know you will share your ideas with your teachers about how this can be done. You could start by drawing a picture or plan of how you think the outside can be improved.

Good luck in your education. I know you will do well.

Yours sincerely

David Carrington  
Lead inspector