

St John's CofE Foundation Middle School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| Unique reference number | 117001 |
| Local authority | Worcestershire |
| Inspection number | 379341 |
| Inspection dates | 14–15 March 2012 |
| Lead inspector | Michael Smith HMI |

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

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| Type of school | Middle deemed secondary |
| School category | Foundation |
| Age range of pupils | 9–13 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 560 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Rosemary Shorter |
| Headteacher | Wendy Taylor |
| Date of previous school inspection | 25 March 2009 |
| School address | Watt Close Bromsgrove B61 7DH |
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Introduction

Inspection team

Michael Smith

Her Majesty's Inspector

David Bowles

Additional inspector

Janet Bird

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors visited 29 lessons taught by 25 teachers. They heard pupils reading during a supported session. They held meetings with staff, pupils and members of the governing body. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at 324 parent and carer questionnaires, 37 staff questionnaires and 99 pupil questionnaires, assessment records, the minutes of the meetings of the governing body and the school's action plans and evaluations.

Information about the school

St Johns is a larger-than-average middle school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average as is the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds or those who are learning English as an additional language. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is average. Key Stage 2 results are above the government floor standards, the minimum expectations set for attainment and progress.

The school has recently been awarded the Eco Schools Bronze award and designated an effective school for supporting Initial Teacher Education.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

| | |
|---------------------------------------|----------|
| Overall effectiveness | 1 |
| Achievement of pupils | 1 |
| Quality of teaching | 1 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | 1 |
| Leadership and management | 1 |

Key findings

- This is an outstanding school. A major reason why it is outstanding is the drive and ambition of the headteacher and the senior leadership team, shared by all staff, demonstrating an excellent capacity to improve.
- The school has worked well with partner primary and first schools to ensure an accurate assessment when pupils start at the school. Achievement in mathematics has been excellent for a number of years. Achievement in reading and writing has improved significantly to outstanding so that now pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of their learning when they leave at the end of Year 8.
- All pupils say they feel safe. They have a very good understanding of different aspects of bullying, including cyber-bullying. Behaviour is very good around the school and in lessons, where pupils make an excellent contribution towards their own learning. Attendance is high.
- Teaching is outstanding because pupils achieve excellently. Lessons are highly motivating and engaging. The pace is rapid and teachers use questions very well to extend knowledge and develop understanding. The school makes very good use of excellent primary practice. Pupils frequently work collaboratively in groups and work is very well matched to their differing abilities. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are supported very well, although a very small number of parents and carers expressed individual concerns.
- Leaders and managers, along with members of the governing body, are not complacent, and while achievement is outstanding they recognise more needs to be done to ensure it continues to improve. Senior leaders and subject leaders discharge well their responsibilities for the performance management of their teams and improvement in the quality of teaching, although some staff do not yet fully understand what constitutes the best possible practice.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase further the proportion of outstanding teaching by ensuring all teachers have a clear understanding of what constitutes the very best practice.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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Main report

Pupils enter the school with broadly average attainment. Pupils make excellent progress to leave at the end of Year 8 with attainment that is well above average. The school analyses assessment information to enable quick identification of any pupil who is not making good progress. Attainment in reading and writing has risen sharply because of intervention work and because the school has made sure all pupils extend their writing across all subjects. Very effective additional support is given to improve reading, including using Year 8 pupils to support Year 5 pupils. The 'reading pod' has given far greater opportunities for pupils to read for pleasure, including some non-fiction books that particularly appeal to boys. Assessment information also shows the school has been successful in narrowing the gap between pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and pupils overall. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs achieve well in line with their peers.

During the inspection, the inspectors observed pupils making good and often outstanding progress in lessons. Responses from the parents and carers show nearly all say that their children make good progress at the school. Learning is excellent because pupils are highly motivated and engaged. They are often given opportunities to work independently or to investigate problems and make connections for themselves. In these lessons learning is very well established. For example, in mathematics pupils were able to extend their understanding by discovering ways of writing equivalent ratios and then identifying the related proportion. Teachers' questioning is a strength of the school and is used well to make sure that pupils give reasons for their answers. This also supports the school's drive to improve communication skills and to ensure pupils develop very good understanding of their work. In lessons, pupils demonstrate very good literacy skills and they are expected to use correct grammar when writing extended pieces of work in all subjects.

Quality of teaching

The overwhelming majority of parents, carers and pupils say teaching is good and inspectors judged the quality as consistently at least good and often outstanding. Lessons are highly motivating for pupils who consequently want to learn. Activities are well matched to their abilities so that they are stretched, while at the same time good support is given for those who need it. Sequences of lessons are well-planned and get off to a highly purposeful start. Teachers ensure pupils quickly become engaged in their work and they do not have to listen to overlong expositions. Well-focused questioning develops pupils' understanding and extends their learning. For example pupils are expected to give extended answers using connectives, linked to learning in English lessons.

Group work and practical activities are often used highly effectively. Pupils show they can work independently and develop very good social skills through the many opportunities to lead groups or working collaboratively. Marking informs pupils of the

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level at which they are working and what they need to do to improve. Pupils are increasingly responding to these comments and entering into a learning dialogue with teachers. Key aspects of literacy and numeracy are integrated across all lessons, for example in the recognition of key words within subjects and in ensuring that pupils can read and comprehend complex language. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are supported well in lessons by well targeted support including highly effective help from teaching assistants.

There is a strong faith element in the school and pupils are often highly reflective on spiritual matters, for example in an English lesson where pupils considered the feeling of loneliness. Pupils gain an insight into different cultures, for example looking at music from a variety of different countries. They consider moral aspects, for example when pupils considered the ethics of advertising. Social understanding is developed when pupils work together in groups and take responsibility, for example making sure the chickens are fed and looked after. The excellent work in preparing the show garden for the Malvern Flower Show allowed pupils to demonstrate very high levels of cooperation and engagement as well as being aware of how to show the work of the school to a much larger audience.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

All pupils say they feel safe and this is confirmed by responses from the very great majority of parents and carers. Pupils enjoy personal, social and health education and they say it gives them a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, for example learning about the dangers of substance abuse. Pupils are very aware of different types of bullying. They say they have received good support to overcome any instances of cyber-bullying. On the very rare occasions a bullying incident occurs staff give effective support. This is supported by responses from the very great majority of parents and carers.

Behaviour around school is very good with pupils being polite and courteous. Responses from the very large majority of parents, carers and pupils say behaviour in lessons is of a very high standard. Pupils make a very good contribution to behaviour by engaging and taking responsibility for their own learning in many lessons.

Attendance is high and demonstrates how well pupils enjoy life at schools and how they value the many excellent lessons they receive. As one pupil said, reflecting the views of others, 'I enjoy school because lessons are fun and exciting'.

Leadership and management

The highly effective leadership of the headteacher, very ably supported by her senior leaders and all staff, has brought about sustained improvements. Staff have very high regard and respect for the way in which the school is run. This is demonstrated by responses from all staff who answered the questionnaire saying they strongly agree that they are proud to be a member of staff and that the school is well led.

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The ambition and commitment to constantly improve upon previous good practice is shared by all staff so that now all aspects of the school's work are judged outstanding.

The school's self-evaluation accurately identifies the strengths and areas for further development, although the school was modest in its overall judgments. This self-evaluation is supported by well-organised departmental audits that dovetail with the school's ambitious improvement plan in identifying the key areas for further improvement.

Performance management is used highly effectively to ensure the quality of teaching is constantly improving. Professional development opportunities are linked to improving teaching and raising achievement. Middle leaders take responsibility for ensuring the quality of teaching is improving and they are held to account by senior leaders. Many lessons are of a very high quality but some staff do not understand what needs to be done to raise their teaching from good to outstanding. The school has very good links with other local schools including improving cooperation with the local independent school.

The outstanding curriculum incorporates the best practice from both the primary and secondary phases. There is no artificial distinction between the two key stages taught in the school so pupils see a clear progression in how and what they learn. There is a wide variety of extra-curricular activities and education visits which pupils enjoy. For example, pupils were preparing enthusiastically for an outdoor activity residential experience. The work of the eco-club is influential within school and pupils are looking forward to showing their garden at the forthcoming Malvern Show. The school council takes an active part in school life. The curriculum supports pupils well to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding in individual subjects.

School leaders have worked well to narrow the gap between the achievement of pupils overall and those who are known to be eligible for free school meals. The gap has also been narrowed for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. The school promotes equality and tackles discrimination very well. Governance is highly effective and holds the school to account. The governing body, along with all staff, ensure all aspects of safeguarding meet current requirements and that the school is as safe as possible.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

| Grade | Judgement | Description |
|---------|--------------|--|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding | These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. |
| Grade 2 | Good | These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory | These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate | These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. |

Overall effectiveness of schools

| Type of school | Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools) | | | |
|----------------------|---|------|--------------|------------|
| | Outstanding | Good | Satisfactory | Inadequate |
| Nursery schools | 46 | 46 | 8 | 0 |
| Primary schools | 8 | 47 | 40 | 5 |
| Secondary schools | 14 | 38 | 40 | 8 |
| Special schools | 28 | 48 | 20 | 4 |
| Pupil referral units | 15 | 50 | 29 | 5 |
| All schools | 11 | 46 | 38 | 6 |

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

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| Achievement: | the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment. |
| Attainment: | the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons. |
| Attendance | the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance. |
| Behaviour | how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school. |
| Capacity to improve: | the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement. |
| Leadership and management: | the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school. |
| Learning: | how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners. |
| Overall effectiveness: | inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. |
| Progress: | the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started. |
| Safety | how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning. |

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



16 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St John's CofE Foundation Middle School, Bromsgrove, B61 7DH

When I visited your school recently with my colleagues we met some of you at lunchtime and talked to others during lessons and at break. We were impressed with your excellent behaviour and manners and your very good contribution to the life of the school and the local community including those who are looking after the chickens. You told us that you really enjoy school and this is one reason why we judge your school to be outstanding.

Your hard work and excellent engagement in lessons has helped achievement to be judged outstanding. You make excellent progress both in lessons and over time. We saw some very interesting lessons and judged that teaching is outstanding. You told us that lessons are nearly always as good as this. You have very good relationships with staff and lessons are challenging. The excellent curriculum enables all of you to achieve well. We were very impressed with the work some of you are doing in designing your garden for the Malvern Show. The fences that had been made when we were visiting were very good. We wish you well and hope all the plants are ready at the right time.

Staff support and care for you very well. You all said you felt safe and you enjoyed the many opportunities the school provides.

Your very effective headteacher, members of the governing body and staff have made a very concerted effort to ensure all of you get the best possible education. We have asked them to continue to focus on how to make lessons outstanding. We wish you well at this outstanding school of which you are justifiably proud.

Yours sincerely

Michael Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector

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