

St John's Church of England Primary School

Cunningham Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN4 9EW

Inspection dates

8–9 November 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- This is a good school, which is continuing to improve. This is due to the determined leadership of the headteacher and the commitment of staff.
- Governors provide an appropriate balance of support and challenge for the school. This makes a good contribution to the school's effectiveness.
- Senior leaders recognise the need to provide further training for middle (subject) leaders so that they develop the skills needed to contribute fully to the school's improvement.
- Leaders make regular checks on individual pupils' learning and progress. However, leaders do not have an overview of the learning of groups of pupils with similar starting points. This hinders leaders' ability to check whether teaching is meeting the needs of all groups of pupils.
- The provisional results of the national assessments for 2017 show that the proportions of Year 6 pupils meeting the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics were higher than the national average.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress. Leaders are aware that the standards disadvantaged pupils reach remain lower than other pupils nationally.
- The effectiveness of teaching, learning and assessment in the school is good, resulting in pupils making good progress overall.
- Lessons are planned well, with activities which meet the needs of most pupils. However, at times, teachers do not challenge pupils well enough, especially the most able pupils.
- The teaching of writing encourages pupils to use rich and varied vocabulary. However, too little emphasis is placed on pupils' correct spelling and grammar, and this slows pupils' progress.
- Pupils' books show that pupils have too few opportunities to practise their writing skills in extended pieces of written work.
- Pupils behave well in school. Pupils feel safe because staff provide a high level of care for them.
- Adults promote a culture of respect where pupils of different faiths and cultures work and play well together.
- Children make a good start to their learning in the Reception year because teaching is good. Although the inside classroom provides activities which excite the children, the outside area is less engaging. As in the rest of the school, there are times when the most able children are not challenged sufficiently.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement still further by ensuring that teaching:
 - always appropriately challenges pupils, especially the most able pupils
 - enables pupils to quickly develop accurate spelling and grammar
 - provides sufficient opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills in extended pieces of work
 - enables disadvantaged pupils to reach the highest standards of which they are capable.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - checking the learning of groups of pupils with similar starting points, so that their achievement can be closely monitored by leaders and governors
 - continuing to develop the skills of middle leaders so that they contribute fully to school improvement.
- Improve the early years by developing the outside area so that it has high-quality learning opportunities to reflect the quality of provision found in the Reception classrooms.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher provides strong leadership. He is ably supported by his knowledgeable deputy headteacher. Together, they make a very effective team and have embedded an ambitious culture for pupils and staff.
- Senior leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths. They know what needs to be done to ensure that the school continues to improve. There is a strong commitment by all staff to make sure that pupils achieve as well as they can, within a culture of support and nurture.
- Staff morale is high. This is because leaders make sure that training and support are targeted on the specific needs of each teacher. Staff know they can ask for extra training if they need it, and that it will be provided. There is a real sense, in the school, that everyone is a learner.
- Leaders have a good understanding of the achievement of individual pupils, and how well they are learning. Leaders also check the achievement of some groups, for example disadvantaged pupils, boys and girls. However, they do not systematically check how well groups of pupils with similar starting points progress. This limits their ability to check whether, for example, the achievement of pupils with high prior attainment could be even better.
- Several middle leaders are new to their roles. Senior leaders recognise that there is more to be done to ensure that middle leaders have the skills needed to play a full part in the school's improvement.
- Staff are fully committed to ensuring that all pupils have an equal chance to succeed. Strong leadership of the provision for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities ensures that funding is targeted sharply on pupils who need additional support. As well as promoting the academic achievement of pupils, funding is used to help pupils' emotional and personal development. For example, less confident pupils enjoy sessions exploring outside in the newly established 'forest school'. Pupils who have worries or concerns can have 'talk time' during the lunch break. They can also meet with the school counsellor, who provides a 'listening ear'. Pupils develop self-confidence by reading to the visiting 'reading dog'. In these ways, the school provides effective support, both pastorally and academically, to vulnerable pupils.
- A revised curriculum has been introduced, designed to improve pupils' passion for learning. Visits and interesting activities make learning memorable and fun. For example, re-enacting the visit to a fish and chip shop, to inspire Year 1 pupils' writing, or writing about spinning wool following a visit to a farm, as part of the Year 3 Iron Age topic. The curriculum is underpinned by a broad range of extra-curricular clubs, which are well attended by pupils.
- Leaders are keen that pupils enjoy physical activities as part of a healthy lifestyle. The primary physical education and sport funding has been used well to provide additional training for staff, and the expertise of a sports coach. Pupils told inspectors about how much they enjoyed taking part in tournaments with other schools. For example, during

the inspection, pupils were excited about taking part in a cross-country event.

- The school actively promotes British values. These are woven well through the school's Christian values of honesty, respect, empathy, courage and inclusivity. Adults are good role models and pupils learn to respect each other, regardless of differences in ethnicity, faith or background. Pupils told inspectors that everyone in the school is kind. Typical comments included, 'We are taught to respect everyone,' and, 'We are taught to respect everyone's beliefs.' Pupils new to the country, with little English, are quickly made to feel welcome and part of the school's community. One pupil summed this welcome up by saying, 'We help people if they cannot speak English.'
- During the inspection, pupils reflected on the importance of remembering all those who suffer in war. Pupils were reminded about all of the different nationalities that had fought together in the First World War. Pupils elect their school councillors and contribute ideas towards the system of rewards. Pupils who are 'leading lights' help during assembly time. Activities such as these contribute effectively to pupils' personal development.
- Links with parents are mostly positive. The large majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, agree that the school is well led and managed. However, a small minority of parents disagree. Inspection findings support the view that leaders are effective. They ensure that the school continues to provide a good quality of education, which prepares pupils well for their next steps in education, and for life in modern Britain.

Governance of the school

- Governors share the headteacher's commitment to, and the vision for, the school. Governors receive good-quality information from leaders. Governors make frequent visits to find out about everyday life in school. They talk to pupils and staff and ask searching questions of school leaders. In these ways, governors make sure that they know the school's strengths and the priorities for further improvement.
- This year, governors have increased their focus on making sure that disadvantaged pupils achieve well. Governors keep a close eye on how effectively the pupil premium funding is used, and the impact it has on pupils' progress. Governors recognise that although the progress of disadvantaged pupils is improving, there is still more to be done.
- Governors are, rightly, proud of the school. They are particularly proud of the way in which staff work together as a team. As one governor commented, 'There is now a buzz of learning in school, thanks to the headteacher.'

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff and a very large majority of parents agree that pupils are safe in school. Staff know pupils well. They are quick to report any concerns they have about a pupil. These concerns are acted on in a timely way, and appropriate referrals to other agencies are made when needed.

- Staff receive regular and relevant training. Appropriate checks are made on new staff and visitors. Senior leaders place a high priority on keeping pupils safe.
- Relationships across the school are supportive. Staff work well together to promote a strong culture of safety. As a result, pupils feel safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The effective programme of support for teachers has resulted in teaching becoming increasingly effective.
- Classrooms are well organised, with displays and prompts to support pupils' learning. Displays around the school showcase the rich curriculum and pupils' good-quality work.
- The teaching of phonics in the early years and key stage 1 is strong. This gives pupils a head start in learning to read. Reading is promoted as being important and enjoyable. Pupils revel in choosing books from the inviting and well-stocked library. Older pupils are able to describe in detail why they enjoy a particular author, making comparisons between one book and another. Pupils often choose a book as a result of a recommendation from a friend.
- The teaching of mathematics is good. Pupils develop secure calculation skills and can say why one method is more effective than another. For example, a group of Year 6 pupils gave detailed, accurate explanations about two ways of calculating 7839 divided by 36, and how to calculate the remainder as a decimal.
- Teachers have embraced the recently introduced strategy to improve the teaching of writing. This approach helps pupils to enjoy writing and encourages them to use an increasingly wide range of vocabulary. For example, Year 4 pupils worked cooperatively to gather interesting facts about the jaguar when writing a report about the rainforest. However, pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise the technical skills of writing or to develop their ideas in extended pieces of writing. At times, opportunities to address pupils' misconceptions in spelling and grammar are lost. As a result, pupils' progress in writing sometimes slows.
- Teachers usually set tasks which meet the needs of pupils. However, at times, teachers do not pitch work at the right level, especially for the most able pupils. This means that sometimes pupils spend too long on an activity when they are ready to move on to a more difficult task. As a result, some pupils do not progress as rapidly as they should.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They have positive attitudes to learning and present their work neatly. Pupils are proud of their achievements. They learn to be self-confident because of the nurturing culture within the school.
- Relationships across the school are strong. Pupils know there is always an adult to whom they can turn if they have a worry or a concern.

- Pupils understand about the different types of bullying, including online bullying and racism. A typical comment from a pupil summed up the importance of being kind, 'Bullying is being rude to another person, about their gender or skin colour or anything.' The school's records show that bullying incidents are rare but that they are dealt with appropriately when they do occur.
- The breakfast club provides a safe place for pupils before school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are polite. Pupils help each other in lessons and play well together outside during breaktimes and lunchtimes. Occasionally, in some lessons, pupils drift off task when the work is not appropriately challenging.
- Staff reinforce the school's high expectations of behaviour to pupils. Behaviour is well managed and staff feel supported by leaders, as indicated in the staff survey.
- Pupils enjoy school, as evidenced by their high attendance rates. Pupil premium funding is used to subsidise breakfast club for disadvantaged pupils, and this helps to support their good attendance. An effective range of strategies to promote good attendance have helped to ensure that attendance rates have remained higher than the national average over time.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils' outcomes at the end of key stage 2 improved markedly in 2017. Provisional results indicate that Year 6 pupils made much better progress than their predecessors. Progress in reading was particularly strong and above the national average. The proportion of pupils working at the expected standard in the combined measure of reading, writing and mathematics was higher than the national average. This prepared pupils well for secondary school.
- The 2017 provisional results also indicate that the proportions of pupils working at the higher standards in reading and mathematics were higher than the national average. The proportion of pupils working at the higher standard in writing lagged behind that of reading and mathematics, although was still similar to the national figure.
- Most parents who responded to Parent View feel that their children are making good progress. Work in pupils' books and the school's checks on pupils' learning show that, typically, pupils currently in school are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils' progress is also good in a range of other subjects. For example, the curriculum has been cleverly designed in Year 1 so that the topic of 'Out of the Blue' makes links between English, history and science. During the inspection, groups of pupils acted out a drama about the gunpowder plot, wrote letters of thanks following their class visit to a local fish and chip shop and wrote sentences about a taste test. These are typical of the types of activities which promote pupils' learning effectively in the broader curriculum.

- In 2017, the provisional results of the national assessments at the end of Year 2 show that the proportions of pupils working at the expected standard were above the national average in reading and mathematics, and in line with the national average in writing. This prepared pupils well for key stage 2.
- There is an effective system for the early identification of pupils who may need extra support. This additional help is often delivered by skilled teaching assistants. As a result, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress.
- Pupils who join the school with little or no English make good, and often rapid, progress. Effective academic and pastoral support means pupils quickly feel part of the 'St John's' family, and make a prompt start to their learning.
- The provisional results for the 2017 national tests indicate that disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 made significantly stronger progress than their predecessors. Work in pupils' books shows that disadvantaged pupils currently in school are making increasingly strong progress. However, leaders recognise that although their progress is good, the standard at which disadvantaged pupils are working often remains below the standard expected. This is why improving the achievement of disadvantaged pupils still further is a priority in the school's development plan.
- The achievement of the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, is mostly good, especially when teaching provides appropriate challenge. However, at times, teaching does not require this group of pupils to think deeply about their work. This means that the most able pupils do not make the rapid progress of which they are capable.

Early years provision

Good

- The proportion of children reaching a good level of development at the end of Reception has been consistently higher than the national average over time. In 2017, the proportion fell to being broadly similar to the national average. However, last year's cohort of children joined the school with lower levels of skills, knowledge and understanding, and made good progress to reach levels in line with the national average.
- Teaching in the early years is good. Children engage eagerly in the exciting activities on offer. For example, during the inspection, children explained how they made a pie for the 'gruffalo', using leaves, tree bark and shaving foam. Children were keen to show adults their 'monster porridge' and their wheelbarrows made from 'junk' materials. These activities are planned well and interest children for sustained periods of time. However, at times, activities are not sufficiently challenging to make sure that the most able children progress as swiftly as they should.
- High-quality interactions between adults and children lead to the good development of children's language. This helps all children, especially those who are new to learning English, who are disadvantaged or who have SEN and/or disabilities. These children benefit particularly well from the highly effective teaching of phonics. This, together with timely, effective support, means that the gaps between their achievement and that of other children diminish during their time in Reception.
- Relationships between adults and children are strong. Routines are quickly established

and children behave well. They learn to take turns and play happily together. Children develop their self-confidence in this nurturing, safe environment.

- The early years leader has an abundance of expertise, which she uses well to make sure that the early years continues to improve. She understands the aspects which work well and recognises that the outside environment does not provide the high-quality learning experiences that the inside classrooms do. The high expectations of the early years leader have created a purposeful, calm environment in which children can enjoy learning and thrive.

School details

Unique reference number	118611
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10037815

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	630
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mark Bowring
Headteacher	Dan Turvey
Telephone number	01892 678 980
Website	www.st-johns-school.org.uk
Email address	headteacher@st-johns.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	27–28 February 2013

Information about this school

- St John's is larger than the average primary school. Children in the early years are taught in three full-time Reception classes.
- There has been a change in headteacher since the previous inspection.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is much lower than the national average, as is the proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- Most pupils are White British, with a range of other ethnic groups represented in the school. The proportion of pupils with English as an additional language is slightly higher than the national average.
- The school runs a breakfast club.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors evaluated learning across the school. Many lessons were visited jointly with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher or special educational needs coordinator.
- Inspectors looked closely at pupils' work to inform their judgements about pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Inspectors talked to several groups of pupils about their experiences of school life and their learning to find out what it is like to be a pupil at St John's. Inspectors observed assembly, lunchtime and playtime.
- Discussions were held with senior and middle leaders, a representative from the local authority and a group of governors.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents gathered from the 193 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View. The 63 free-text responses and an email received from a parent during the inspection were also considered. Inspectors also had conversations with parents at the start of the school day. Inspectors took account of the 42 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including those related to safeguarding, behaviour, attendance, the school's evaluation of its own performance and the school's development plans.

Inspection team

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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