

# St John's Church of England Primary School, Sevenoaks

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	118606
<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	379646
<b>Inspection dates</b>	12–13 March 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Mike Capper

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 controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	128
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Edward Oatley
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sally Quirk
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	10 December 2008
<b>School address</b>	Bayham Road Sevenoaks Kent TH13 3XD
<b>Telephone number</b>	01732 453944
<b>Fax number</b>	01732 740552
<b>Email address</b>	secretary@st-johns-sevenoaks.kent.sch.uk

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## Introduction

Inspection team

Mike Capper

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed 11 lessons taught by nine teachers. All of these were joint observations with the headteacher. Meetings were held with parents and carers at the start and end of the school day, and with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. The inspector took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work and looked at school documentation, including teachers' planning, assessment information, safeguarding policies and samples of pupils' work. The inspector analysed 64 questionnaires from parents and carers, 17 from staff and 40 from pupils in Key Stage 2.

## Information about the school

Most pupils come to this smaller than average-sized primary school from the local community. The number of pupils on roll has been increasing for the last four years. Most pupils are White British, but a few have minority ethnic heritage and speak English as an additional language. The most common home language for these pupils is Polish. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is high. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is also high. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a Reception class. The school provides breakfast and after school clubs, managed by the governing body.

The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

## Inspection judgements

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Key findings

- This is a good school. Pupils flourish both socially and academically. The school has improved rapidly under the strong leadership of the headteacher and other senior staff. Together with other staff, they ensure that pupils achieve well and develop a love of learning. The school is not outstanding because, while most teaching is good or better, there are still pockets of satisfactory teaching, leading to some minor variations in progress across the school. Middle leaders and managers are not monitoring and evaluating provision enough to speed improvement.
- Pupils' achievement is good and their attainment is broadly average by the end of Year 6. Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, especially in developing early reading skills. This good start is built on well in Key Stages 1 and 2, with pupils quickly improving their literacy and numeracy skills.
- Teachers plan exciting lessons that engage and motivate pupils well. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are helpfully supported in and out of lessons. While differing needs are met well most of the time, there are a few occasions when work is not pitched at the right level for some pupils, slowing progress.
- Pupils' positive attitudes contribute greatly to their good learning in lessons. They keenly take responsibility and thoroughly enjoy school. They feel safe and develop a keen awareness of the dangers they may face in later life.
- Senior leaders manage performance and lead teaching well. They set high expectations for staff and their relentless and successful drive for improvement is based on accurate self-evaluation. Members of staff work together well, although many middle leaders and managers are relatively new to their roles and their involvement in supporting teachers is still in the early stages of development.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By December 2012, remove remaining inconsistencies in pupils' progress by ensuring that teaching is always pitched at the right level for all pupils in every lesson.
- By April 2013, strengthen the involvement of middle leaders and managers in monitoring all aspects of provision, especially that of teaching, so that they are playing a full part in guiding improvement.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

The inspector agrees with parents and carers that their children achieve well and that all pupils make good progress. Parents and carers typically make comments such as, 'I believe my son is making good progress because of the diligence of his teachers.' While attainment by the end of Year 6, including in reading, is currently broadly average, this reflects good progress from pupils' starting points. Attainment is rising as improved standards lower down the school feed through to older year groups. For example, attainment by the end of the Reception Year has improved over the last two years and is now broadly average.

When children join the school, many are working below the levels expected for their age. From all starting points, pupils make good, and sometimes outstanding, progress in most lessons. In a writing session, children in the Reception Year quickly improved their skills. The work was interesting because it was linked to a topic on rainforests. The teacher encouraged children to write their own sentences and they responded well, producing well-presented 'jamboree' invitations.

In a Key Stage 2 numeracy lesson, there was good challenge for the more able as they looked at prime numbers. Pupils learnt quickly because they were expected to think like mathematicians. In a Key Stage 2, literacy lesson, pupils gained a good understanding of how to present an argument, working together sensibly to share ideas. Although progress in lessons is typically good, senior leaders know that there are a few occasions when it is only satisfactory. For example, in a numeracy lesson, work on doubling numbers was too hard for a small group of pupils, slowing their progress.

Across the school, reading skills are taught well. Activities such as the 'reading raffles' encourage pupils to read at home and ensure that they become enthusiastic about books. In phonics lessons where pupils learn letter sounds, their progress is good. They confidently build words by sounding them out, using technical terms such as 'grapheme' to describe what they are doing. Consequently, attainment in reading is rising and it is now broadly average in Year 2. In Key Stage 2, pupils read regularly to adults and, in reading sessions where a group shares a text with an adult, progress is often especially fast. Pupils who lack confidence in reading are given extra support outside lessons and this is helping to close the gap so that they catch up with their peers and are performing well by the time they leave the school.

There are no significant variations between the progress of boys or girls or other

groups. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are supported well and make rapid progress in learning the language so they can follow the full curriculum. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress. Work is well matched to need in most lessons, and additional support at other times from teachers and skilled teaching assistants is well planned and focuses accurately on the most important areas for improvement in literacy and mathematics.

### **Quality of teaching**

Parents and carers think that their children are taught well at the school and that teachers 'always go the extra mile' for them. This view is endorsed by inspection findings.

Pupils say that they thoroughly enjoy lessons because, as one commented, 'They are fun.' Teachers manage pupils' behaviour highly effectively so that the pace of learning is nearly always brisk. Teachers encourage pupils to think for themselves, and in the Reception class, in particular, there are very good opportunities for children to choose where they are going to work so that it reflects their interests. Throughout the school, there is a good focus on introducing new vocabulary to pupils who speak English as an additional language, with a good balance between opportunities for speaking in their home languages and for learning English. Particularly good practice was seen in the way that these pupils sometimes write in their own language so that their limited English vocabulary does not hold them back. Teachers have good expectations of the more able and challenge them well. They regularly assess learning and use this information to ensure that work is pitched at the right level for most pupils, although sometimes, some work is not matched well enough to every individual need. This is the main reason why there are still some minor inconsistencies in progress across the school.

Curriculum planning successfully supports the development of basic skills. The school has improved the curriculum since the previous inspection and it takes good account of pupils' interests and aptitudes. Subjects are linked together well and pupils have good opportunities to use their skills in different subjects. For example, they enjoyed writing to famous people and then reading their replies.

Parents and carers are right to identify strengths in the ways that teaching successfully promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and encourages an understanding of values such as respect, kindness and trust. Music is used especially well in assemblies and lessons to help pupils to learn about their own and other cultures. Pupils are especially proud of their recent singing performance in London.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Pupils are sociable and articulate and develop good confidence and self-esteem. They are enthusiastic learners and their positive attitudes ensure that time is rarely wasted in lessons. The school has successfully encouraged pupils to work without fear of failure. As one pupil commented, 'Sometimes you learn from your mistakes.'

Parents and carers rightly consider that pupils typically behave well and are kept

safe. Pupils agree that behaviour is now good 'nearly all of the time'. Inspection findings fully endorse these views. Pupils are polite and courteous, and they support each other well. They are sensitive to the needs of others, for example applauding a pupil in assembly who had helped another at the weekend. Pupils who arrive during the school year with limited spoken English like the way that they are given 'buddies' and say that this helps them to settle quickly.

The school has effective systems for promoting good behaviour and these are well understood by pupils and staff. Pupils with identified behavioural difficulties are supported sensitively and improve their social skills, although, just occasionally, they can still display challenging behaviour in lessons. Pupils say that bullying is very rare and is tackled quickly because 'adults listen to us'. Pupils know that bullying takes many forms. For example, when writing about cyber-bullying, one explained that, 'It is unkind because there is no escape from it.'

Attendance is broadly average and continues to rise because it is monitored rigorously. Teachers continue to work diligently to support the very few families where attendance is still irregular.

## **Leadership and management**

This is a school that it is not resting on its laurels. The headteacher and other senior leaders are passionate about getting the best for their pupils and they embrace with enthusiasm new initiatives, such as a recent successful project to teach reading through card games, and checking them constantly to ensure they are having the desired effect. The positive impact of their efforts demonstrates that there is a good capacity for further improvement. Teaching has improved over the four years since the previous inspection and, consequently, pupils achieve more and their attainment is much higher. Rates of attendance are also greatly improved and well-managed breakfast- and after-school clubs have successfully extended provision.

Improvements are based on accurate self-evaluation and leaders know where there are weaknesses, even if they are relatively minor. Opportunities for professional development focus well on the school's main priorities. For example, there has been recent helpful training for support staff in the teaching of phonics. Middle leaders and managers are beginning to play a bigger role in improving provision, especially in numeracy, but they have limited opportunity to help senior leaders to remove remaining inconsistencies in the quality of teaching so that pupils' progress is always good or better. The governing body provides good challenge and support to the school and play a good part in planning for the future.

Leaders ensure that there is no discrimination. They focus strongly on promoting equality of opportunity, making meticulous use of performance data to check the progress of different groups. Where they see any potential dips, they respond quickly. For example, the recent focus on reading emerged from a concern that progress was not always fast enough.

Pupils enjoy school because there is a broad and balanced curriculum that is enriched well by visits and clubs, as well as good links with other local schools. The curriculum is successful in promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural

development. For example, pupils develop good social skills and keenly take responsibility through activities such as the school council.

The school engages well with parents and carers. They are very positive about changes, with a comment from one, reflecting the views of many: 'The school is obviously growing in stature and we are delighted that our child is here.'

The school focuses strongly on keeping pupils safe. The governing body ensures that safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.

## 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](http://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

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.**

13 March 2012

Dear Pupils



**Inspection of St John's Church of England Primary School, Sevenoaks TH13 3XD**

Thank you for being so welcoming and helpful when I visited your school. I enjoyed talking to you about your work and hearing some of you read. I found that your school is providing a good education and is helping you to do well.

These are the best things about your school.

- When I spoke to you, and in the questionnaires, you said that you enjoy school and this was confirmed by the many happy faces that I saw in lessons.
- You are taught well and this helps you to make good progress, in most, but not all, lessons.
- You rightly feel that behaviour is good and I could see that you keenly take responsibility. It is great that you feel that adults listen to you and take good account of your ideas.
- You feel you are kept safe and I think you do well to look after new pupils.
- Your school provides lots of interesting activities, including clubs and visits, for you to take part in.
- All adults in school are caring and they give you suitable help when you have problems with your work.
- The school's leaders are doing the right things to move the school forward. They are clear about the few things that still need improving.

These are the things I have asked your school to do next to help it improve even further.

- Make sure that teachers always provide you with work that is not too hard or too easy for you.
- Give teachers who are in charge of subjects more time to visit lessons so that they can play a part in making teaching even better.

All of you can help your teachers by continuing to work hard all the time. I hope your visit to the science lecture in London was enjoyable.

Yours sincerely

Mike Capper  
Lead inspector

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