

# St John's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School Danbury

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	115112
<b>Local authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	379005
<b>Inspection dates</b>	14–15 June 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Martin Beale

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>	228
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Lynne Rand
<b>Headteacher</b>	Claire Robinson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	22 May 2008
<b>School address</b>	Little Baddow Road Danbury Chelmsford CM3 4NS
<b>Telephone number</b>	01245 222173
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<b>Email address</b>	headteacher@st-johns-danbury.essex.sch.uk

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	14–15 June 2012
<b>Inspection number</b>	379005



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## Introduction

Inspection team

Martin Beale

Additional Inspector

Mahrukh Mistry

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Over seven hours were spent observing teaching and learning in parts of 21 lessons taught by seven members of staff. Inspectors held discussions with pupils about their learning and heard pupils read. They met with staff and the Chair of the Governing Body. They observed the school's work, and looked at pupils' books, assessment data and case studies of specific pupils. The inspection team also scrutinised evidence of the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning. Questionnaires returned by 166 parents and carers were analysed.

## Information about the school

Most pupils are of a White British heritage in this average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. More pupils than in other primary schools join or leave other than at the usual times. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, is broadly average. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a Reception class. The school meets the current floor standards, which set the government's minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

The headteacher was appointed in September 2011 following a period when leadership was covered by interim arrangements during the long-term absence of the previous headteacher.

The school shares its site with a privately run pre-school which also provides a breakfast and after-school club. This provision is not managed by the governing body and as such is inspected separately.

**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

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>3</b>

## Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. It is not yet good because not all teaching is of a consistently good quality, boys do not achieve as well as girls, particularly in writing, and the development of key skills across subjects is not systematic. It is improving under the focused leadership of the new headteacher. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- The fall in the pupils' achievement in the recent past has been halted. Pupils now make satisfactory and accelerating progress from their starting points as teaching improves. Attainment is average and beginning to rise in English and mathematics.
- An increasing proportion of lessons are well taught. Teachers have high expectations and improved assessment enables them to pitch lessons closely at individual needs in calm and well-managed classrooms. However, not all sessions to develop an understanding of letters and sounds move learning forward at sufficient pace, new marking procedures are not fully embedded and the learning needs of gifted and talented pupils receive limited attention.
- Behaviour is another area that has improved since the headteacher's arrival. The pupils are keen to do well, and their thoughtful and considerate conduct in lessons and at break times promotes a calm and welcoming environment. Attendance is above average and has steadily improved because the school has worked hard to eradicate persistent absence.
- The headteacher has brought stability to the school and secured improvements in several key areas, particularly in her first priority of teaching. She has laid the foundations for future improvement and is supported by skilled subject leaders and an effective governing body. Self-evaluation is thorough and based on increasingly secure assessment data and rigorous monitoring of performance.

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

- Raise the achievement of boys in writing by providing more interesting contexts to stimulate their thoughts and generate greater motivation.
- Bring greater consistency to teaching and increase the proportion of good and better lessons by:
  - increasing the pace of learning in sessions to develop pupils' knowledge and skills in using letters and sounds (phonics)
  - improving marking so it provides more effective feedback on the steps pupils need to take to meet their targets.
- Develop a more coherent curriculum that:
  - provides clearly planned opportunities for pupils to apply skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology across subjects
  - identifies and provides targeted programmes to challenge gifted and talented pupils.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Children make satisfactory progress in Reception from starting points slightly below those expected for their age. The classroom and outside area provide a stimulating environment for purposeful play and exploration. Children become increasingly independent because they are suitably challenged by the learning experiences, which balance well direct teaching by adults with opportunities for them to take the initiative in planning their own learning. Their attainment is broadly average by the time they enter Year 1.

When at its most effective, learning across the school is fast-paced and pupils consolidate their skills securely. However, this is not consistently the case, and pupils rarely use information and communication technology to enhance their learning. Parents and carers feel that their children make good progress, although inspection evidence indicates that this is not yet the case. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs learn and progress at a satisfactory pace. Carefully planned actions to meet their targets enable these pupils to access all areas of learning, but their impact is not always carefully evaluated, particularly when learning difficulties arise because of behavioural problems.

The pupils' learning has become more effective in mathematics when they apply their skills to problem solving. For example, pupils in a Year 5 and 6 class used a wide range of mathematical understanding, including knowledge of fractions and percentages, to find questions with the answer '6' before systematically tackling

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complex problems and checking their answers carefully.

Pupils make satisfactory progress in reading, and attainment is broadly average by the end of both Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils appropriately use their understanding of the sounds made by letters (phonics) to help them to read unfamiliar words. Handwriting has received good attention from Year 1, where many pupils already write in a neat and joined-up style. The more-able pupils in this class wrote clear instructions about how they made their 'Olympic Torch' connecting their statements by 'next' and 'after that' with a small number using 'finally'. This activity engaged the boys in the class well, but they do not always find the contexts for their writing as interesting. This accounts in part for their lower achievement than girls in writing.

Year 6 test results have fluctuated in recent years, but rose in 2011 after a sharp fall the year before. Results were average overall but slightly higher in English than mathematics because more pupils reached higher levels in reading.

### **Quality of teaching**

Parents and carers, as well as pupils who responded to the questionnaire, are largely of the view that teaching is good. Inspectors found that there is an increasing proportion of good teaching, but that this is not consistent across the school. The most effective teaching seen used imaginative methods and provided challenge for all pupils. Confident delivery and challenging questions, to which the pupils were expected to respond thoughtfully and in detail, reflected a clear understanding by teachers of how pupils learn. These qualities were seen as pupils in Year 2 followed the teacher's instructions quickly and quietly when recording their solutions to mathematical problems. Engaging methods, such as the use of puppets, caught the pupils' attention and helped them to work through the mathematical language before writing number sentences. Tasks were pitched carefully at a level both accessible and challenging for the pupils. Pace can be slower in less effective lessons, particularly when adults do not check that pupils are on task to meet their expectations.

The teaching of reading is satisfactory, and lessons teaching the connections between letter patterns and the sounds they represent to younger pupils move their learning forward at no more than a sound pace. However, sessions are planned well for pupils to develop wider reading skills such as comprehension, and to promote an interest in books. Pupils are encouraged to be creative and use their imaginations when responding to books they are studying, such as when pupils in Years 5 and 6 were expected to balance both sides of an argument for and against sailing around the world like the characters in *Kensuke's Kingdom*. Teachers promote teamwork well, by asking them to collaborate on tasks, engaging them in discussion and getting them to constructively assess each other's work.

In spite of the action taken this year to improve marking, several pupils say they are unclear how well they are doing or how to improve their work. The most effective marking gives clear guidance on the steps pupils should take to meet their targets.

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However, marking is not consistently effective across the school and pupils are not always expected to respond to their teacher's marking in order to improve their work.

Careful adaptations to lessons, additional programmes and the skilled input from teaching assistants support disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, but the school does not identify gifted and talented pupils or provide them with additional challenge.

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

Pupils show respect for the views of others, try hard in lessons and listen attentively to their teachers. Many pupils take on responsibilities willingly, whether as play leaders, representatives on their school and eco councils or helping newcomers settle in quickly and make friends. Members of staff are consistent in their approach to managing behaviour through praise and encouragement. Pupils are very clear about the system of rewards and the consequences if they do not live up to the school's high expectations of them. They are desperately keen not to 'owe' teachers time if they fail to abide by the class code of conduct. Most parents and carers judge behaviour as having improved so that it is now good, which is a view shared by their children and the inspection findings.

Pupils say how safe they feel in school, which is a view overwhelmingly supported by their parents and carers. The school helps pupils to identify risky situations when using the internet and to stay safe through bicycle and road safety training. There are few incidents of bullying because, as one pupil said, 'We all play well together and if there are any problems, the headteacher quickly sorts it out.' There are marked improvements in behaviour over time, particularly for pupils with specific needs. Disruptive incidents are rare and decreasing as school records clearly show. When problems do occur, time with an adult in the 'learning zone' helps pupils understand how to modify and improve their behaviour.

### **Leadership and management**

The new headteacher articulates a clear vision and direction through the priorities tackled already and her plans for the future. Morale among staff is increasing, and parents and carers report greater confidence in the school since her appointment. Her successful action to improve assessment and teaching is leading to an increase in pupils' progress and rising attainment. The rigorous monitoring of staff performance, including by subject leaders, enables the headteacher to set clear targets for improvement for each teacher. The good practice available within the school is used well as a model to which teachers can aspire by working alongside or observing these colleagues at work in the classroom.

The governing body is challenging, supportive and fully involved in helping to shape the school's direction and monitor the impact of planned actions. The views of parents, carers and pupils are taken into account when identifying areas for

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improvement. Governors take seriously their responsibilities for ensuring that safeguarding procedures meet requirements and are implemented effectively.

The headteacher has introduced more robust systems for tracking the progress of pupils and taking action if any are in danger of missing their targets. However, the information is not routinely analysed to identify any variation in the achievement of different groups of pupils. This limits the school's ability to promote equality and tackle discrimination and is reflected in the lower achievement of boys in writing.

The headteacher's attention is turning to identifying how literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology can be developed more effectively than at present across subjects. Art and music contribute well to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and the wide range of sport plays a major role in developing teamwork and fair play. Pupils are also encouraged to focus on how to fulfil the school's core values such as 'thoughtfulness'. Pupils have more limited opportunities to learn about different peoples and cultures, although recent work on the Olympics is a useful vehicle for studying some of the competing countries.



## 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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 to 31 December 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.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
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.**



18 June 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of St John's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School Danbury, Chelmsford, CM3 4NS**

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspection team when we visited your school recently, and particularly to the Year 6 pupils who showed us around. Thank you also for sharing your views with us and returning the questionnaires. Inspectors thought you gave confident answers and were polite and courteous in all our meetings with you. We were also pleased to see that attendance has improved, as has your behaviour. Consequently, St John's is a calm and happy school and you are starting to make more rapid progress.

We found that St John's is a satisfactory and improving school. The teachers are pulling together behind your new headteacher to improve teaching so that you can learn more rapidly. Members of staff take good care of you and help you to understand how to keep yourselves safe. You clearly enjoy the sports activities on offer and take your responsibilities as play leaders and council members very sensibly.

There are three main areas where inspectors feel the school could improve. We have asked the headteacher and staff to:

- increase the progress made by boys in their writing
- bring teaching consistently up to the quality of the best
- plan the curriculum more carefully so that you develop your literacy, numeracy and computer skills more consistently in all subjects.

You have an important part to play in this, by continuing to work hard and maintaining recent improvements in your behaviour and attendance.

Yours sincerely

Martin Beale  
Lead inspector

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