

St John's Church of England Primary School

Cunningham Road, Tunbridge Wells, TN4 9EW

Inspection dates 27–28 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Standards reached by all pupils at the end of Year 6 are high compared to those reached by pupils in other schools.
- Pupils make good progress because teaching is good overall and improving over time.
- Pupils behave well. Pupils, staff, parents and carers agree that the school is a safe place.
- The subjects that pupils learn are planned around topics that are exciting, imaginative and enjoyable. This is a key factor in pupils' positive attitudes to learning.
- Pupils receive a good start to school life in the Early Years Foundation Stage and make good gains in acquiring new skills.
- The headteacher and her deputy provide a clear direction for the school to improve. They have identified areas for improvement accurately.
- The school provides good professional development opportunities for teachers and those in leadership positions. These are helping to bring about improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.
- The governing body is very supportive and knowledgeable about all aspects of the school's work.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The targets set for pupils' next steps in learning are not sufficiently well matched to their needs and abilities. This slows their rate of progress.
- The new team of middle and senior leaders have not yet had the opportunity to develop the skills they need to carry out their full monitoring roles and this limits their impact on improving the school's overall effectiveness.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in all classes. They visited 32 lessons of which four were joint observations with either the headteacher or the deputy headteacher. In addition inspectors made a number of short visits to lessons, assemblies and the breakfast club.
- They held meetings with leaders and managers, staff and pupils, members of the governing body, a parent or carer and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors met informally with parents and carers at the beginning and end of the school day and took account of the 144 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- They observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's current information about pupils' progress, the self-evaluation summary, the school self-evaluation and improvement plan, checks on the school's effectiveness, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and safeguarding documents.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work, listened to them read, and checked information on pupils' attendance.
- The inspectors analysed 43 questionnaires from staff.

Inspection team

Gay Whent, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Peter Thrussell	Additional inspector
Elaine Hamilton	Additional inspector
Shelley Davies	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a much larger-than-average-sized primary school.
- The school runs a breakfast club.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in three Reception classes.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who are learning English as an additional language is average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium (extra government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children looked after by local authorities and children of service families) is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to outstanding by making sure that all teachers:
 - set precise targets for each pupil, closely matched to their abilities and next steps in learning
 - refer to these targets when they feed back to pupils on the success of their learning and give pupils time to reflect on and respond to their comments.
- Strengthen the impact of leadership and management by ensuring that all new leaders:
 - develop their skills in checking the progress of pupils in their key stage and do so often enough to quickly identify the pupils who need extra help and guidance, and to be fully accountable for their progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Achievement throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage is good because teachers plan a wide range of well-matched and interesting activities. Children enter with lower than expected levels in literacy and numeracy skills. They make exceptionally good progress in speaking and good progress in reading and writing, counting and carrying out simple calculations. They play and work together well, listen to each other and share toys and equipment happily.
- Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2 is broadly average; however, by the end of Year 6 it is above average. Achievement in reading is high. The proportion of pupils making expected or better progress is higher than in other schools nationally.
- All groups of pupils who benefit from the pupil premium make good and better progress as their needs are accurately identified and a range of very effective strategies put into place to improve their learning. In the 2012 national assessment at age 11, their attainment, as demonstrated by their average point scores, was in line with that of other pupils in the school and better than that of similar pupils nationally.
- Most disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make at least expected progress and many make good progress. This is because the support pupils receive is finely matched to their next learning.
- Those pupils whose first language is not English make good or better progress as a result of many well-planned opportunities for them to talk and develop their vocabulary.
- Pupils enjoy reading. The teaching of phonics (learning about the sounds that letters make) has been a high priority since September. It is effective and involves actions which pupils enjoy repeating. Reading is a high priority in the school. The library is a highly valued resource which is very well led and run and used by pupils of all ages. Older pupils say, 'There are books you can't take your eyes off.'

The quality of teaching is good

- Children start their school life in the Early Years Foundation Stage with a positive learning experience. A broad range of opportunities is planned from investigating a large, unusual egg which has arrived in the school to participating in planting spring bulbs in compost. These activities inspire the children's interest and ensure their good learning.
- Teaching in most subjects, including reading, writing and mathematics, is usually good and there are examples of outstanding teaching.
- Where teaching is outstanding all pupils are fully engaged in learning and make visible progress throughout the lesson. This is also seen in their books over the year. Teachers plan activities and lessons with a high level of challenge for the pupils. Lessons have a sense of pace and a real purpose. In one Year 4 lesson pupils explored a wide range of words describing 'big' waves, following their visit to the sea at Hastings, using a thesaurus to help them.
- Teaching assistants are skilled and play a full part in lessons, often taking responsibility for the learning of groups. They have the same good questioning skills as the class teachers. Effective teaching strategies and appropriately targeted support and intervention ensure that most pupils' individual needs, including those of the most and least able, are met well.
- Teachers set high expectations, particularly of pupils' behaviour, and this ensures a calm, purposeful working environment.
- Teachers use assessment well to establish what pupils have learnt. They set targets for pupils' next steps in learning, but these are not always precisely matched to pupils' needs and abilities and teachers do not often mention these targets when they mark pupils' work. This hinders the progress pupils make.
- Pupils say that teachers' marking helps them to improve their work. However, pupils are not

given enough time to reflect on the comments made and take action on the areas identified by teachers for improvement. As a result progress slows.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils behave well and are enthusiastic learners. They say they enjoy their learning. Almost all parents and carers agree that their child is happy at the school.
- Parents and carers, staff and governors agree that behaviour is typically good. However in those lessons where pupils are not moving on quickly enough in their learning, the amount of challenge they are given means that they can be distracted and the level of their learning decreases. As a result behaviour is not yet outstanding.
- Relationships between pupils and between pupils and adults are a strength of the school and ensure a purposeful working atmosphere. Pupils are kept very safe and the vast majority of parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View) agree that their children feel safe.
- There are few recorded incidents of bullying. Pupils confirm this and say that they feel extremely safe and that bullying is very rare. Pupils as young as Year 2 know what bullying is and can explain it well. They say they are confident that adults will sort out any problems they may have. Older pupils say that bullying is rare and treated very seriously.
- Pupils are well aware of different types of bullying and are able to talk about cyber-bullying.
- Pupils play safely and considerately at playtimes and know how to keep themselves safe, both in school and in the wider world.
- Pupils' enjoyment of their school is evident. This is reflected in consistently above-average attendance which improves each year. The breakfast club provides a positive start to the school day, punctuality is good, and there have been no permanent exclusions since the last inspection.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, together with the deputy headteacher, provides strong leadership. A new more robust senior leadership team of four assistant headteachers together with the School Business Manager and a new middle leadership team have been in place since September.
- Those new to leadership are developing their skills well. New leaders say that the support they are receiving, alongside their training, is improving their skills effectively. They have not yet begun to apply these skills through regular checks on the progress of pupils in their key stage, though this is a key aspect of their role that they are being trained to carry out.
- Leaders focus effectively on ensuring that all pupils have equal opportunities to succeed and that there is no discrimination. Pupils are very well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- School self-evaluation is focused on the right priorities to lead the school to outstanding, particularly in relation to the restructuring of the new leadership team in order to ensure that all pupils fulfil their potential. The improvements since the last inspection alongside the shared determination of staff and governors indicate that the school is well placed to continue to improve.
- The school enjoys good relationships with the majority of parents and carers. Those spoken to at the start and the end of the school day were very positive about the school's work. They agree that their children are happy at the school and doing well.
- The more creative approach to the curriculum excites learning imaginatively and promotes spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils say that they thoroughly enjoy the topics together with the educational visits that they make. Recent visits to local castles have provided a good stimulus for learning.
- Safeguarding procedures are thorough and pupils are kept safe.
- The local authority has provided light-touch support for this good school.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governance of the school is strong, well informed and well organised. It is committed to supporting the school and has clear plans in place to secure the future effectiveness of the governing body. The governing body ensures that safeguarding requirements are met. Governors are well trained and ensure that the school is a safe place for all pupils through careful financial planning and keeping a close eye on the budget. Governors make sure that pupil premium funding is correctly directed at benefiting the learning of pupils in receipt of the funding, as seen in their achievement. They challenge the school's performance in terms of the quality of teaching and have high expectations for the school. Governors monitor the management of teachers' performance well and ensure that it is used to recognise and reward good teaching. They are closely involved in checking the effectiveness of the school self-evaluation and improvement plan.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	118611
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	403353

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	654
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Martin
Headteacher	Beverley Sulway
Date of previous school inspection	15 November 2007
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