

# St John's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Infant School

4 New Street, Chatham, Kent, ME4 6RH

**Inspection dates** 28 February – 1 March 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>3</b>
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Teaching is not consistently good enough in Key Stage 1 so pupils' rates of progress vary too much. Teachers do not always make it clear for pupils what they are learning.
- Tasks set for pupils do not always link to the teaching at the start of the lesson. Lesson time is wasted organising resources, or with some pupils awaiting instructions, slowing their rate of progress.
- Teachers do not use teaching assistants well enough when teaching the whole class.
- Although pupils have a sound understanding of different types of bullying and say that it rarely happens, they do not understand that bullying is not always physical.
- A small minority of pupils expressed concerns about the rough play of others. The school's systems for recording low-level behaviour incidents are not robust enough.
- Leaders do not use national benchmarks rigorously enough to see how well the school is performing. Their view of the school's effectiveness is too generous. Evaluations of the difference sessions for pupils that are falling behind are making (interventions) are not precise enough.
- The governing body does not demonstrate sufficient knowledge and understanding of the school's performance to challenge school leaders sufficiently and hold them to account.

### The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher, staff and governors are passionate about making pupils' experiences of school the best they can be.
- The school takes very effective action to broaden pupils' experiences and promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Pupils' achievement in mathematics and the proportions that reach above-average levels have shown sustained improvement since the previous inspection. Staff training has led to improvements in teaching.
- Pupils enjoy school, feel very well cared for and find learning 'fun'.
- Parents are unanimous that their children feel safe at school.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed parts of 13 lessons and small group sessions across all three classes. He was accompanied by the headteacher for most of these observations.
- The inspector spoke with parents, staff, six members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector also talked with pupils about their learning and experiences of school, examined their work and listened to their reading.
- The inspector took account of 21 responses to the online survey (Parent View). Questionnaires returned by 13 staff were also analysed.
- The inspector observed the school's work and reviewed a range of the school's documentation including information about the progress of pupils currently in school, the school's own monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching, records of behaviour and incidents, safeguarding documentation and the minutes of meetings held by the governing body.

## Inspection team

Clive Dunn, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school. Pupils are organised into three classes, one per year group.
- The majority of pupils are from a range of minority ethnic groups with just over 40% of pupils being of White British heritage. Approximately one third of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children who are looked after by the local authority, and children of service families) is much higher than the national average. There are no pupils currently in the school who are looked after by the local authority or from service families.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs supported at the school action level is broadly average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is much lower than average. No disabled pupils attend the school.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

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

- Improve teaching, particularly in Key Stage 1, so that it is consistently at least good and leads to all pupils remaining fully engaged and achieving well, by:
  - focusing sharply on what pupils are learning throughout all of their activities, including during reading sessions
  - checking carefully that pupils understand what they are doing and what they are supposed to be learning from the activity
  - making better use of time in lessons so that all pupils progress more quickly
  - meeting pupils' differing needs more precisely throughout all parts of the lesson, including by making better use of teaching assistants.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
  - using national benchmarks more rigorously to check how well pupils are doing compared to pupils across the country, and ensuring the school's systems for self-evaluation and improvement planning are accurate and sharply focused
  - more rigorously evaluating the impact of additional interventions for potentially vulnerable pupils by precisely measuring how much they accelerate the progress made by different groups of pupils, including White British pupils, and responding accordingly
  - increasing the effectiveness of the governing body in challenging school leaders and holding them to account for securing a good standard of education. An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.
- Deepen pupils' understanding of the different forms bullying can take and implement robust systems for recording, tracking and reducing low-level behaviour incidents.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 do not build consistently well enough on the good start they make in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Attainment at the end of Year 2 is broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics. Although this represented good progress for the previous Year 2, current pupils are not on track to reach the same levels, despite their Year 1 starting points being higher.
- While there are clear signs of improvement, achievement is also variable for pupils whose circumstances may make them potentially vulnerable, including pupils with special educational needs, or who speak English as an additional language. Pupils mostly keep pace with their peers, but where pupils are working at a lower level, not enough make the accelerated progress necessary to catch up. This is because teaching does not meet their differing needs well enough. The very small numbers from particular ethnic groups often do well, although the attainment of White British pupils remains below national averages.
- Pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding are doing much better. The gap between their attainment (as shown by their average points scores) and that of other pupils is closing quickly in English and mathematics, and is smaller than that seen nationally. Leaders' evaluations of their use of the funding, including individual costs for strategies such as small group or individual additional help sessions (interventions), show how these strategies help to accelerate pupils' progress.
- Pupils enjoy school and talk of learning being 'fun'. They have positive attitudes to reading, and enjoy stories and predicting what might happen next. Pupils are particularly enthusiastic when given practical tasks to do, such as Year 2 pupils trying to find the difference in each other's heights. However, they do not always understand well enough what they are supposed to be learning to make quicker progress.
- Pupils' knowledge of letters and the sounds they make (phonics) is improving. Last year, a much lower proportion of pupils than seen nationally reached the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check. An extensive training programme for adults and a more rigorous system for teaching phonics introduced by leaders this year are enabling pupils to make better use of their phonics when reading and writing.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage achieve well. They start school with a lower range of knowledge, understanding and skills than expected for their age. Adults' careful assessments of each child's capabilities, and a wide range of purposeful activities focused clearly on what children need to learn, ensure that they make good progress and transfer to Year 1 having reached expectations for their age.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Not enough teaching is consistently good at Key Stage 1. A lack of clarity about what pupils are supposed to be learning in some lessons slows their progress. In recently introduced reading sessions, pupils have opportunities to practise their skills, but adults miss chances to develop and teach new reading skills, such as in guided reading. Teachers do not always check pupils' understanding well enough to avoid time being wasted by pupils who have not grasped the purpose of the lesson. Lesson time is also wasted in organising resources.
  - When the whole class is together, teachers do not make best use of teaching assistants to help them meet the full range of pupils' needs. Some pupils spend too long on the carpet listening to teachers' input that is not linked to their learning or activities.
  - Across the school, there are common strengths in teaching. Positive relationships between adults
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and pupils create a safe and nurturing learning environment. Teachers extend pupils' understanding by helping them to link new learning with things they have learned before.

- Adults focus strongly on correcting and developing pupils' spoken language, including those who speak English as an additional language. For example, in a Year 1 lesson about shape, pupils worked in pairs to explore and find shapes in the classroom, meaning that they had to speak together and use the vocabulary themselves.
- Leaders have rightly introduced a consistent approach to teaching phonics across the school. Adults maintain a brisk pace through a sequence of well-focused activities. There is a strong emphasis on how pupils can use and apply these skills in their reading and writing. Pupils refer to things they have learned in these sessions when attempting to read unfamiliar words at other times of the day.
- Teachers' marking regularly shows pupils the next steps they need to take to improve their work. Pupils have a secure knowledge of their individual next-step targets, and Year 2 pupils know the levels they are working at and are keen to reach the next level.
- Individual and small-group interventions focus closely on pupils' learning needs. Adults' firm and purposeful but very encouraging approach, using lots of praise, ensures pupils achieve well during sessions. However, the school does not evaluate precisely enough how successful each sequence of interventions is at accelerating pupils' progress to help them catch up and secure equal opportunities for pupils as they move on to the next stage of their education.
- Teaching is strongest in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Mixing well, children are purposeful and engaged while exploring the varied opportunities both inside and outside. Adults support and extend children's learning well as they choose their own activities, for example developing vocabulary to describe and compare sizes in the 'Three Bears' Cottage' role play area.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils**

### **requires improvement**

- When teaching is not good enough, a minority of pupils do not remain engaged. This slows the pace of their learning.
- Although pupils feel safe at school and are overwhelmingly positive about their experiences, a number expressed concerns about the rough play of others. The school does not have sufficiently robust or formal systems for recording low-level behaviour issues or incidents throughout the school day to be certain of the accuracy of pupils' perceptions.
- The school's records and the views of pupils, parents and staff show that bullying is rare. Pupils have a sound understanding of what constitutes bullying, but do not always understand that this does not have to be physical. Pupils are entirely confident that adults in school always listen to them if they have a problem and will resolve any issues.
- Pupils mostly respond quickly to adults' instructions. They are enthusiastic, welcoming and friendly. Pupils learn well how to build relationships and be polite and respectful, benefiting from adults' reinforcement of manners. Behaviour in the dining hall and during assemblies is good.
- The school has good systems for tracking and improving the behaviour of pupils with particular behavioural needs and there have been no exclusions in recent years. The school does not tolerate discrimination of any kind and racial incidents are extremely rare.
- Although there is still some way to go, rigorous systems to raise attendance are securing improvements.

### **The leadership and management**

### **requires improvement**

- Leaders at different levels do not compare the school's performance rigorously enough with national benchmarks. Consequently, although much of the detail of written evaluations is technically accurate and leaders identify important areas for improvement, their view of the
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school's effectiveness is too generous. Plans for improvement are not focused sharply enough on which precise measures of pupils' achievement require improvement and by how much.

- Nonetheless, the school is demonstrating the capacity to improve. Mathematics results, and the proportion of pupils reaching above-average levels in reading, writing and mathematics have shown sustained improvement since the previous inspection. Results in writing in 2012 reversed a previously downward trend and pupils' attendance is showing sustained improvement. Action taken by leaders to improve the quality of teaching has secured improvements in key areas, for example in the teaching of phonics.
  - The headteacher is passionate about the school, and has the support of pupils, parents, staff and governors. She highly values the input from the local authority. It has helped to get the school on the right track and begin to secure necessary improvements, although has not yet had sufficient impact to ensure a good enough education for all pupils.
  - The high priority given to enriching pupils' experiences through visits, visitors and wide-ranging extra-curricular activities promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very effectively. Various sporting activities, the 'Musical Showcase' where pupils sing and perform using instruments, African drumming and the whole-school trip to the sea are just some of the countless examples. In 2012, the school received a 'Bishop's Commendation for Church Schools in the Diocese of Rochester' for the range and quality of activities. Pupils have regular opportunities for personal reflection, through assemblies or in the prayer garden, and are involved in leading collective worship.
  - Safeguarding meets statutory requirements.
  - **The governance of the school:**
    - The governing body is committed to the school as a key part of the local community. It has a sound knowledge of pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching. However, governors accept school leaders' information and assertions too readily and share their generous view of the school's effectiveness. The governing body does not demonstrate sufficient knowledge and understanding of national benchmarks it can use to challenge this view. Individual governors have attended training on various aspects of governance, although the whole governing body has not recently had any bespoke training specifically targeted at improving its effectiveness. Systems for determining performance management outcomes and pay decisions and reporting these to the governing body lack rigour, particularly in the light of available performance data.
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## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	118640
<b>Local authority</b>	Medway
<b>Inspection number</b>	401774

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	87
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	James Wyper
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs M Ryan
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	16–17 September 2009
<b>Telephone number</b>	01634 844135
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