

St John's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Clay Lane Grove, Colchester, CO4 0HH

Inspection dates 22–23 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	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.

- Pupils make good progress. They reach standards that are above average and develop good personal skills.
- Teaching is good. Teachers motivate pupils to learn and have high expectations.
- Behaviour is good and pupils say they feel safe. They get on well together and show a good understanding of others.
- The school has good systems for checking how well pupils are doing and uses them well to identify those who need extra help.
- Leaders set clear priorities for improvement. They make sure staff training links well to the school's needs so that pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching continue to improve.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There are inconsistencies in some marking and how well work is matched to the range of ability in the class.
- Pupils are not always given the opportunity to express their thoughts and ideas and be actively involved in their learning.
- The role of some leaders is underdeveloped and mathematics is not sufficiently planned for in a range of other subjects

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons, of which three were joint observations with the headteacher. Inspectors observed two assemblies and ten members of staff were seen teaching.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of the governing body, school leaders and staff. Discussions were held with a representative of the local authority and an improvement consultant.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils during lessons about their work, looked at their books and listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors took account of 52 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and spoke to parents and carers at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors analysed responses from 30 questionnaires completed by school staff.
- Inspectors observed the school's work, looked at progress and attendance information, improvement plans, systems to check the quality of teaching and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Vivienne McTiffen, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Diana Songer-Hudgell

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is well below average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and for whom the school receives additional income (the pupil premium) is well below average. There are no children looked after by the local authority or those from service families currently in the school.
- The school meets the government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.
- The school runs a breakfast club and after-school club which are both managed by the governing body.
- The school received the International Schools (Foundation) award in 2012.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has experienced significant staff and leadership changes. The current headteacher took up post in January 2011 and the deputy headteacher joined the school in April 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - making sure that work is always well matched to the range of abilities in the class
 - giving pupils more opportunities to be actively involved in their learning and to express their thoughts and ideas
 - making sure that the best examples of marking and feedback already happening in the school are used consistently in all classes.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - developing fully the role of all leaders so they are sure about the quality of teaching and how well pupils do
 - making sure that the use of mathematics is planned into a range of other subjects and topics.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start in the Reception class with skills that are broadly in line with those expected for their age although, in some cases, speech, language and social skills are lower. Children make good all-round progress and are well prepared for the next stage of learning in Year 1.
- The good start made in the Reception class is built upon through Key Stage 1. Pupils make good gains from their starting points. Standards in writing and mathematics are average and improving. This is because of the school's focus on improving pupils' skills in writing and mathematics.
- By the end of Year 2, standards in reading are above average. Pupils say they enjoy reading and read regularly. They do well in learning about letters and sounds (phonics) so they are well equipped with the skills they need to read and write with confidence.
- By the end of Year 6, pupils reach above-average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils write frequently and extensively. They read widely. The school's tracking information and work in books shows that the upward trend in English standards is being strongly sustained after a dip in the 2011 Year 6 test results.
- Pupils add, subtract, divide and multiply confidently and enjoy using their skills. For example, during the inspection, they worked well together, looking at maps and using their knowledge of scale to work out distances. Pupils solve problems and carry out investigations competently.
- Pupils use technology well to gather information and present their work. They produce high-quality artwork and work together on projects. For example, during a topic on the Second World War, pupils in Year 6 planned and designed their own 'museum' for others to experience.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs do well because they are helped to make small steps towards their own goals. They often work closely with an adult in class and in small groups so they develop confidence in their abilities.
- Most pupils known to be eligible for free school meals do as well as their classmates because additional income the school receives is spent to benefit individuals and raise their achievement. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is too low to make meaningful comparison data with others groups of pupils. However, the school's information shows that gaps in performance of individual pupils, in both English and in mathematics, are closing and pupils are catching up to reach standards that are in line with their peers.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers give pupils practical tasks which are often linked to real life. For example, during the inspection, pupils in Year 4 made kites to help them understand the properties of shapes. In Year 5, the teacher prompted pupils to think about the use of multiplication and percentages in everyday life.
- Teachers develop speech and language skills well. During the inspection, pupils in Year 1 enjoyed talking together about 'wow' words and how they could improve their teacher's writing by adding adjectives. In some lessons, however, there is too much teacher-talk and pupils have

limited opportunity to express their thoughts and ideas.

- In the Reception class, well-chosen topics inspire learning. For example, during the inspection, children enthusiastically embarked on a 'dinosaur hunt', recording the name of each one as they found it. The activity encouraged exploration and imagination and developed speaking and writing skills well.
- Teachers make sure pupils are clear about their work and what they should achieve by the end of a lesson. They skilfully question to check understanding. In most cases, teachers give pupils the chance to comment about their learning and they provide useful written and verbal feedback so pupils know how to improve. This approach is not consistent in all classes.
- Pupils do well in reading and writing because teachers place strong emphasis on developing vocabulary and using punctuation correctly. They make sure pupils learn a range of ways to understand what they are reading and regular reading sessions promote pupils' confidence and enjoyment well.
- Teaching assistants make a major contribution to developing pupils' personal, social and creative skills. They work with small groups to develop speech and reading skills. In lessons, they help pupils with their learning but sometimes the work is too hard. Teachers do not always make sure that work is set at the right level so all pupils make the best possible progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils say they enjoy school and this is shown by above-average attendance. Very few come to school late or stay away for long periods of time. Pupils are keen to learn and listen attentively in lessons. They share resources and work together well.
 - Behaviour is good. Pupils are proud of the standards of behaviour in their school. One said, 'Everyone is kind to each other.' They recognise some may find it difficult to behave well but they show tolerance towards others and clearly understand the difference between right and wrong.
 - Pupils say they feel safe and talk sensibly about different types of bullying. They know how to keep themselves safe because the school helps them to understand how to deal with any concerns. Incidents are rare but any that do arise are stringently recorded and followed up.
 - Pupils respond well to adults and try to do their best. For example, during the inspection, they enthusiastically took part in sessions run by a visitor to help them develop skills as playground leaders. They say they like being actively involved although opportunities for them to do so in lessons vary from class to class.
 - Pupils are keen to win house points and celebrate each others' achievements. They willingly accept responsibility and make decisions in the school council. They develop an understanding of wider world issues, reflected in the International Schools award, and are interested in others from different backgrounds, faiths and cultures.
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The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher knows exactly what he wants the school to achieve and is quickly moving it forward after an unsettled period of staff changes. A strong leadership team is successfully raising pupils' achievement and improving the quality of teaching demonstrating that they have the capacity to improve the school further. At present the checking of teaching and learning is better developed in some areas and subjects than others.
 - Training and targets for staff to improve their work are well matched to the school's needs. Positive responses from the staff questionnaires indicate staff feel well-supported in their work. This good school receives light-touch input from the local authority and the headteacher makes the most of any external help and training opportunities to benefit the school.
 - The school provides a good range of subjects which are enhanced by clubs, trips and visitors. Good partnerships, including with the local secondary school and church, widen pupils' experiences. Subjects are often linked together in interesting topics but leaders do not sufficiently make sure that mathematics is systematically planned into a range of subjects.
 - Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good, ensuring children make a good start in the Reception class. There are good arrangements for children starting school. Staff check children's progress regularly and collate samples of work in 'Learning Journeys' which are contributed to by parents and carers.
 - Closing any gaps in performance is one of the school's main priorities. Systems are used well to check the progress made by every pupil, leading to effective extra help. A strong focus on values creates a harmonious and happy school where individuals are respected and helped to flourish. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.
 - The headteacher actively seeks the views of parents and carers and maintains good daily links. A very small minority who completed the online questionnaire expressed dissatisfaction over information about their children's progress. The inspection found that the school acts upon suggestions from parents and carers to ensure effective methods of reporting progress.
 - The breakfast and after-school clubs are well run and offer valuable facilities for parents and carers. Staff know pupils well and provide enjoyable and sociable activities at the start and end of the school day.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors know how well the school is doing and what it needs to do to improve. They are highly supportive of the school's work and have successfully seen it through staffing and leadership changes. Governors visit the school regularly and know staff and pupils well. They look at information on pupils' progress and raise questions if pupils are not doing well enough. Governors authorise spending, including the pupil premium, and know how the money is spent. They recognise the link between good teaching and good achievement and are well prepared for making decisions on how to reward good teaching or tackle any underperformance. They make decisions about staff development and training. Governors use the range of experience within their ranks well and undergo any necessary training to maintain their skills. The governing body carries out its responsibilities well and ensures safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.
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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

Unique reference number	115065
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	413232

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	212
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Diana Turner
Headteacher	Nicholas Hutchings
Date of previous school inspection	14 May 2008
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