

St John's CofE Primary School

Hertford Road, Digswell, Welwyn, AL6 0BX

Inspection dates 16–17 July 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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 because teaching is good.
- Children in Nursery and Reception make good progress.
- Teachers provide work that is challenging for pupils of all abilities.
- Pupils enjoy school. They like learning and are keen to do well.
- Pupils behave well. They say they feel safe and that bullying is rare. They say that staff would deal with any problems quickly and effectively.
- The headteacher provides excellent leadership. He works well with other leaders, staff and governors so that all pupils make good progress.
- Leaders provide good training for teachers to improve their skills. Leaders are well trained and this helps them to be effective in their roles.
- The school is improving.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils do not always fully follow the guidance they are given on how to improve their work.
- Teachers do not always make sure that pupils know what the next steps in learning are so pupils can make links to previous work to help them move on in their learning.
- Sometimes teachers' questioning does not involve enough pupils in discussing what is being learned.
- Occasionally teachers talk for too long so that pupils do not have enough time to learn on their own.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed nine teachers in 14 lessons or parts of lessons. Two of these were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with staff, pupils, governors, and a representative of the local authority. Inspectors also spoke to parents bringing their children to school on both days.
- Inspectors examined documents about the school's work, including information about the achievement of pupils, development planning and the school's self-evaluation.
- They took account of 70 responses to the Parent View online questionnaire, telephone calls and emails from a small number of parents, and the school's own survey of parents' and carers' views. They considered 27 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Edward Wheatley, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Deborah Whittle

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is average in size.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups has increased since the time of the previous inspection. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is broadly average and a very small number are in the early stages of learning English.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average, and the proportion supported at school action plus or with statements of special educational needs is above average. The school has a small number of pupils with a combination of learning and emotional difficulties.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is low. This is additional government funding given to schools for children looked after by the local authority, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who have a parent in the armed forces. Currently there are no pupils with a parent in the armed services.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- There is a privately managed and run preschool on the school's site which was not inspected at this time.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching to outstanding and raise pupils' achievement further by making sure that:
 - pupils have opportunities fully to follow the guidance they are given in teachers' marking on how to improve their work
 - teachers make sure pupils know the next steps in learning so that they can see how their learning is developing and links to work they have already done
 - when teachers question pupils, they make sure that all pupils are involved in discussing what is being learned
 - teachers limit how long they talk so that pupils have enough time for their own learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Standards are rising, and have been above average in recent years. In the current Year 6 attainment is broadly average, but this is the exception. This is because there is a higher than usual proportion of pupils with complex learning and emotional needs in the year; this affects the overall standards reached by pupils, because their test results are low. Nevertheless, currently, more pupils than average reach the highest National Curriculum levels.
- Children start the Nursery year with above the expected skills for their age. They make good progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage and almost all reach or exceed the expected levels by the end of Reception. Most children have extremely good personal, social and emotional skills.
- In other years the trend of rising standards is being maintained, with a notable proportion of pupils working at higher than expected levels for their age. There are no marked variations in the performance of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds.
- In all years pupils make better than expected progress and more and more pupils are reaching higher standards. In 2012, the proportions of Year 6 pupils making and exceeding the expected progress were considerably higher than the national figures in both English and mathematics. The school is continuing its work to improve the performance of its most able pupils.
- Pupils write well. They express themselves clearly and write equally well in a wide range of styles. They have a large vocabulary, spell accurately and link together their ideas well to form complex sentences.
- Pupils read widely and well, and obtain considerable enjoyment from reading. Those who find reading difficult link sounds and letters together successfully to read difficult words. Results in the 2012 phonics screening check were above average, and they are higher in the current year.
- Pupils' mathematical skills are good. They calculate accurately both mentally and on paper, and apply their skills effectively to mathematical problems.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress. They are generally well supported so that they understand what is expected of them, given effective guidance, and encouraged to work by themselves and with other pupils. Those pupils with a combination of learning and social difficulties make good progress from low starting points and against the targets in their individual education plans.
- The very small number of pupils at the early stages of learning English make good progress, and quickly gain the language skills to help them learn effectively in all subjects.
- Pupils supported by the pupil premium funding make good progress. There were not enough pupils known to be eligible for free school meals in 2012 to comment on their attainment without identifying them; the same is true of the current Year 6 cohort. Funding is spent effectively on books and resources for various subjects and to make sure these pupils have the same experiences as other pupils in terms of trips and school activities.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers assess pupils' progress accurately. They use this information effectively to plan work matched to pupils' learning needs and to identify gaps in their knowledge that need filling.
- Teaching is challenging. Teachers provide extension activities for able pupils, and for slow learning pupils they make sure new skills and knowledge are taught in small steps so that pupils learn effectively.
- Teachers usually provide a wide range of activities in lessons, including opportunities for pupils to work independently on problem solving work. Literacy and numeracy activities are included in most subjects, and this is helping continue the steady improvement in standards and progress.
- In most lessons teachers make sure that pupils have opportunities to extend and reinforce their learning by working with other pupils to share their ideas and knowledge. This works well and makes sure that pupils develop good social skills, tolerance and respect for each other.
- As a rule, teachers' questioning is good. It probes the depths of pupils' understanding, and makes sure other pupils contribute to discussion so that good ideas, knowledge and understanding are shared.
- Learning assistants are effective. They work well with different ability pupils to help them practise newly gained skills, or to extend their understanding and knowledge. They encourage pupils to work with each other and also to work independently. This contributes well to pupils' confidence in explaining their own ideas.
- Teachers support the most able pupils well. In whole class lessons, and when able pupils are withdrawn from lessons for particular support, work is challenging, and expectations of these pupils are high.
- Teachers' marking is mostly good. It provides clear information about how well pupils are doing, and usually gives pupils good advice on how to improve their work. Sometimes pupils do not follow the guidance given, or if they do, they do not follow it in full.
- On other occasions it is not clear to pupils what the next steps in their learning are. This sometimes means that they do not see how new learning links to what they have already learned.
- While teachers' questioning is often searching, it does not always make sure that all pupils are involved in discussing what is being learned. Occasionally, teachers spend too long explaining what pupils should learn rather than making sure pupils have enough time to spend on their own learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils behave well and enjoy learning. Relationships between pupils are good. Pupils are polite and friendly and help visitors to the school. They look after each other well. For example, in hot sunshine, pupils remind each other that they should drink water and wear sunhats.
- Pupils feel safe. They have a good understanding about the different forms of bullying and say that bullying is extremely rare. They say that they would go to any adult if they were worried about anything, and are sure that their concerns would be dealt with.

- Pupils take on responsibilities readily. For example, Year 6 pupils act as buddies to Reception class children, and take their roles seriously in looking after them at lunchtimes. Other pupils, as part of an environmental group, check the wild life in a local river, and recently identified Japanese knotweed to the local authority so that it could be removed.
- Pupils' attendance is broadly average. The small amount of absence arises mainly through families taking extended overseas holidays in term time. The school works hard to reduce these. It has had some success and continues to work with families to reduce absence further.
- Occasionally pupils' attention wanders in lessons, and this is usually when teachers talk for long periods of time and pupils do not settle to their own work quickly enough.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher gives excellent direction for the school's improvement. All leaders have a good understanding of the school's weaknesses, and act quickly to deal with them. For example, they have dealt successfully with past minor weaknesses in pupils' writing skills and are now focused on improving the performance of the most able pupils.
- The school has dealt effectively with past inadequate teaching, and is now working successfully to ensure all teaching is at least good. It provides training for leaders at all levels, so that they can accurately evaluate pupils' performance and the quality of teaching in their subjects, and take action to introduce improvements where necessary.
- Teachers have targets to help them improve their teaching, which they know they have to meet in order to move up the salary scale. These targets are linked to challenging progress targets for pupils, teachers' professional development, and to the school's own priorities for improvement.
- The local authority provides valuable professional training, especially in evaluating the quality of teaching, and making sure the school's assessment procedures are accurate. The school also has effective links with other schools to share effective teaching skills.
- The school organises the subjects it teaches well. It provides many opportunities for pupils to find out about other religions and cultures. This is helped by its strong links with a school in Zambia, with local churches, and what pupils learn in geography, art and history about other people and different traditions. This contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led, and temporary staff absence is managed well to ensure children's experience in school remains good. The school has effective links with families and the private nursery on the school site. The school makes good use of its indoor and outdoor areas to make sure children have a wide range of learning opportunities, and develop good independent learning skills.
- Throughout the school pupils are well-cared for. The after-school-club is well managed and provides a wide range of activities for pupils to enjoy.
- The responses to the Parent View online questionnaire are generally positive, but with a small percentage of concern in all areas that parents or carers responded to. However, the large

number of parents, carers and pupils spoken to during the inspection were exclusively pleased with the school. Parents and carers feel communications with the school are good, the school is well led and managed, pupils are safe and well cared for, they behave well and have suitably challenging, appropriate homework.

- The school effectively promotes good achievement by all pupils. It readily accepts pupils from elsewhere who have a wide range of problems that challenge the pace of their learning. Standards are generally rising, progress is improving and the quality of teaching is good and improving. The school is working hard, and with steady success, to reduce the absences taken by pupils during term time. The school shows strong capacity for further improvement.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body is well informed and its members attend a wide range of training courses to make sure they support the school effectively. Governors know about how well the school's pupils perform compared with pupils nationally, and they are well informed about the progress made by different groups of pupils within the school. They question the headteacher and other staff closely to make sure that no pupils are falling behind. They plan how they spend their funds carefully and know, for example, the positive impact of funds spent to promote the progress of pupils supported through pupil premium funding.
 - Governors know how good teaching is, how it is being improved and that teachers only make progress on the salary scales if they meet their performance targets. They make sure that safeguarding requirements are met, and that the school has secure procedures to ensure it appoints appropriate new members of staff.
-

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	117460
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	405708

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	225
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Reverend Dr Keith Suckling
Headteacher	Robert Price
Date of previous school inspection	5 May 2011
Telephone number	01438 714283
Fax number	01438 712991
Email address	admin@digswell.herts.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2013

