

St John's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Buckhurst Hill

High Road, Buckhurst Hill, IG9 5RX

Inspection dates 17–18 October 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		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Real-life experiences gained from trips to museums and places of interest, along with creative and imaginative use of subject matter such as art, music and sport, are helping pupils to learn effectively.
- Pupils of all abilities make good progress. By the time they leave the school, some pupils' achievement is outstanding, especially in mathematics.
- Teaching is good overall, and some is outstanding. The best teaching is seen in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 2.
- School leaders know each pupil's abilities very well. They know how to help teachers to make learning better for pupils when they are not doing as well as they could.
- The behaviour of the pupils is outstanding. Their enthusiasm, interest, and attention in lessons are exemplary. Pupils are courteous and respectful to one another and to the adults in the school.
- Attendance is above average. Pupils say they are very happy at school and feel safe.
- Parents are highly supportive of the work of the school, and value every aspect of it.
- The school promotes excellent spiritual and cultural development. Relationships and communication between pupils and adults are of an exceptionally high quality.
- The governors know the school well. They ask challenging questions and support the school well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In Key Stage 1, the progress of pupils dips from the excellent start they have made in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Some pupils, particularly boys, are not making the same progress in writing as in other subject areas.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 16 lessons or parts of lessons. Of these, eight were observed alongside senior leaders.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work in their books and at the displays around the school. Special written work kept by the school, showing pupils' progress in writing, was looked at with senior school leaders.
- An inspector listened to pupils read in Key Stages 1 and 2.
- The inspectors spoke informally with pupils at lunchtimes and break times. They spoke with pupil representatives from the school council.
- The inspectors took account of the 125 responses to the online questionnaire (parent View) and letters received from parents.
- Inspectors held meetings with the Chair and the Deputy Chair of the Governing Body, a representative from the local authority, and senior staff in the school.
- The inspectors looked at a number of documents, including the school's own evaluation of its performance, the school's development plan, and its data on the progress pupils make in each year group. They reviewed the performance of pupils at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and through the test results at the end of Key Stage 2. Safeguarding procedures were also looked at by the inspectors. They viewed the school's website.

Inspection team

Teresa Kiely, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Kanwaljit Singh

Additional Inspector

Simon Hughes

Additional Inspector

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The school is expanding and now has two classes in each year group up to the end of Key Stage 1.
- The large majority of pupils are White British. Other pupils come from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. Only a very small proportion speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is well below average. This is additional funding for groups such as pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils supported by school action is below average, as is the proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The school is part of a consortium called Epping Forest Schools Group, made up of 20 schools.
- The school has recently been accredited as a teaching school and currently has six trainees working full time at the school.
- The headteacher is a 'national leader in education' and the deputy headteacher is a 'specialist leader in education'.
- 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?

- Make more teaching outstanding by ensuring that:
 - teaching in Key Stage 1 is of a consistently high quality and enables all pupils to engage in challenging activities that promote independent learning
 - teachers arrange writing activities that address the needs of all groups of pupils, particularly boys, by clearly explaining tasks and giving pupils enough time to complete them well.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start school with skills that are typically in line with what would be expected for their age. Their profile results, the school's own records and the progress seen during the inspection show that they leave the Reception class exceptionally well prepared for Year 1.
- By the time pupils reach the end of Year 6 they have made good progress, particularly in mathematics and reading. Generally, the standards that the pupils reach are above average, and the progress they make is also good. The achievement in writing is weaker than seen in other subject areas, although progress here was better in 2013.
- The 2012 test results for Key Stage 2 showed a changing picture of progress for some pupils. Although standards were above average, there was a marked dip in the progress that some pupils had made during their time in the school. This dip was particularly marked in writing, for boys and those with additional needs. The school has addressed this issue and the 2013 results are better. However, its own records show that some year groups are still showing inconsistencies in progress that are now being addressed.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs achieve well. Although the Key Stage 2 results for this group of pupils in 2012 were weaker, they generally make good progress. The school closely tracks the progress of individual and vulnerable pupils. They often have additional adults working with them in class, and this helps them to make good progress.
- Only a very small number of pupils are known to be eligible for pupil premium. It is not possible to report on their achievement at the end of Year 6 without identifying individual pupils. Throughout the school, however, they generally make good progress.
- More-able pupils achieve better results in mathematics than in English. Recent results show that some pupils are now achieving higher standards in English, including the recently introduced Year 6 spelling, punctuation and grammar test.
- When pupils fall behind their classmates, the school closely monitors their performance and informs parents of the lapse. The school then works with the teachers to develop an effective support plan so that they can make better progress.
- The results of the Year 1 screening check in phonics (letters and the sounds they make) were below average in 2012. The results in 2013 showed a marked improvement, and pupils' phonic skills at the end of Year 1 are now broadly average.
- The progress for all pupils slows in Key Stage 1 from the rapid progress they have made during the Reception Year. Key Stage 1 results in 2013 show that, in all subjects, pupils are now performing in line with other schools. This is a drop from their achievement in previous years. Boys do not make the same progress in writing as they do in other subject areas.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is generally good, with a significant proportion that is outstanding. The school uses every opportunity to encourage teachers to continue to develop and improve their practice. As a result there is, particularly in Key Stage 2, a successful and exciting method of teaching that uses real-life experiences to further develop pupils' understanding. This was particularly evident

in an English lesson, where a recent trip to St Katharine's Docks in London was used to stimulate pupils' senses prior to a writing session. Pupils were asked to smell the herbs and spices that might have been sold in the market, and then to work together in groups to create a sound display of the chants that people would have used in the past as they sold their wares. The pupils responded enthusiastically, and this improved their communication and writing skills.

- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, teachers carefully plan for the development of children's early literacy and numeracy needs. This runs alongside a rich learning environment, where children can independently develop their talk and listening skills by taking part in role play, such as a 'shop' and 'clinic'. Adults are highly successful at modelling language, and supporting children's learning through play.
- In Key Stage 1, teaching is good overall but sometimes weakened because some teachers fail to design suitably challenging tasks for all pupils. There is then not enough opportunity for pupils to be active and learn independently.
- The school is developing new ways of teaching writing. Some of the teaching seen during the inspection was outstanding. It was exciting and highly motivating to all the pupils. However, some gave pupils limited opportunities for independent writing. In these sessions, teachers talked too much, reducing the amount of time available for writing, and were not quick enough to check whether pupils either understood the content of the writing tasks or had enough opportunity to write independently. This limited learning for some of the most able pupils and boys.
- All the adults who work with the pupils know what they need to do to support their learning. They provide encouragement and ask questions that will help pupils to understand. They know how to break the tasks into smaller steps when these are needed for pupils who have additional learning needs, to further support their good progress.
- Pupils' work is marked regularly and thoroughly. Pupils know their targets for improvement and are able to describe what they need to do next to move their learning on.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils show high levels of engagement with learning and their behaviour is outstanding. They show extremely positive attitudes to learning, regardless of whether they are learning independently, in a group, or as a class. Their behaviour does not change, whatever the learning situation, because they have a genuine thirst for knowledge.
- Pupils are able to learn together very effectively in social groups. These skills are also shown during break times and at lunchtimes. Pupils are very warm, polite and friendly to one another and to the adults who work with them.
- Pupils' attendance is consistently above the national average.
- Pupils are very appreciative of the school. They say they feel safe in the school. They have an excellent understanding of all the different types of bullying. They understand how to keep safe when using the internet or mobile phones.
- Parents strongly agree that their children are safe in the school and are very positive about pupils' behaviour. A large majority of parents say that the school deals effectively with bullying.

- The behaviour management policy and procedures for behaviour management are extremely well thought out. Incidents of bad behaviour and bullying are rare.

The leadership and management are good

- The school is continuing to grow and develop in a number of ways because of the drive, enthusiasm and ambition of the senior leaders. The school is heavily oversubscribed, and the governors know that this is because of its successful reputation in the local community.
- Teaching is good, and often outstanding. The inspectors agreed with all the judgements that were made jointly with senior leaders, who accurately monitor the quality of teaching. Teachers are encouraged to regularly research the subject areas for which they have responsibility.
- Staff development is given high priority in the school. Teachers regularly share their practice with trainee teachers and with teachers from other schools.
- Leaders know their school extremely well. They know what needs to be done to continue to improve pupils' performance. They are successful at addressing and developing the learning needs of individual pupils within each class and year group. As a result of the dip in achievement for Key Stage 2 pupils in 2012, the progress that pupils make is more carefully monitored, and actions taken if the performance of any pupil drops below expectations. This has enabled the school to achieve better standards this year.
- The school pays close attention to developing its teachers' skills. The performance management systems support teachers and reward the best teaching.
- The school employs a range of strategies to bring about further improvements. However, not all initiatives, such as the revised approach to teaching writing, are carefully monitored to confirm that they have made a positive impact on pupils' learning across all groups.
- Over a number of years, the school has developed a creative and highly stimulating curriculum. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is promoted extensively. Assemblies make an outstanding contribution, particularly to the moral development of pupils. The school is aesthetically very pleasing because it displays many examples of pupils' artwork that are of an exceptionally high standard.
- The school has worked out plans to spend the new national sports funding for primary schools. This will include providing additional training for all teachers so they are able to deliver high-quality lessons in physical education. The school competes in a number of tournaments; pupils have access to many sporting activities.
- Parents expressed strong support. They were overwhelmingly positive about the school and would recommend it to other parents.
- The local authority provides 'light touch' support. It has visited the school once this term.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body knows the school extremely well. It is well placed, with a range of skills, knowledge and well-chosen training, to continue to successfully support the school to fulfil its ambitions, and also asks challenging questions that help the school further. Governors question the quality of the teaching and support leaders in monitoring it. They ensure that

teachers' pay is linked to the progress of their pupils. They work carefully with the staff to ensure that safeguarding policies and practices meet national requirements. They monitor the use of financial resources, such as the effective use and impact of the pupil premium.

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	115094
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	427210

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	378
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Nicholson
Headteacher	Peter Tidmarsh
Date of previous school inspection	6 December 2007
Telephone number	020 850 42934
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