

St John Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School Danbury

Little Baddow Road, Danbury, Chelmsford, CM3 4NS

Inspection dates 30–31 January 2014

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.

- The headteacher, supported well by the deputy headteacher and governing body, has successfully built on and improved the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection.
- This has resulted in year-on-year improvements in the quality of teaching, and rising standards.
- Pupils of all abilities and from all backgrounds make good progress.
- Most teaching is good, and some is outstanding. Teachers ensure that tasks take into account the interests and needs of pupils, allowing them to learn effectively.
- Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. Pupils are extremely polite and take pride in their uniform and presentation of work.
- Pupils and parents say that the school is very safe and all pupils get on well together. Adults, throughout the school, are focused on ensuring that all pupils receive the care they need to ensure their good well-being.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching is outstanding.
- In some mathematics lessons, pupils of all abilities spend too long on work they have already mastered when they could be given a given fresh challenge.
- Teachers do not always make sure that pupils follow the advice given in marking on how to improve their work.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage do not make as much progress in developing their understanding of the world as in other areas of learning.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 13 lessons, eight of which were jointly observed with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with pupils, parents, members of the governing body, the local authority adviser, school adviser and staff.
- Inspectors observed the school's work, looked at policies, self-evaluation and development planning, monitoring records, safeguarding documents, information about pupils' progress, samples of pupils' work, and heard pupils reading their books.
- The views of 72 parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's online survey (Parent View) were taken into account. In addition, a letter from a parent was taken into account, along with 26 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Christopher Cheswright, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Isobel Randall

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is in line with the national average; the largest group have autistic spectrum disorders.
- The number of pupils who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium (which provides additional funding for looked after children, those known to be eligible for free school meals and those from forces families) is below the national average.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The school meets the current government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make more teaching outstanding by ensuring that:
 - pupils act on the advice given by teachers in marking, in order to improve their work
 - pupils of all abilities do not spend too long on work they can already do, but move on to more challenging activities.
- Make sure that practical activities for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage help to develop their knowledge and understanding of the world.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join the Reception class with skills, knowledge and understanding that are typically below the levels expected for their age. Children now make good progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage, developing good learning skills, especially in their writing and use of number. The majority of children enter Year 1 with a good level of understanding in most areas, although their understanding of the world is less well developed.
- Since the last inspection the attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 has risen as a result of the headteacher's focus on improvements in teaching, especially in literacy. Teachers' assessments of Year 2 pupils' attainment in 2013, and data for the current Year 2 pupils, show that standards are significantly above average in reading, writing and mathematics, with marked increases in writing. Their achievement in Key Stage 1 is now good.
- Results of Key Stage 2 national tests have risen and were well above average in reading and mathematics in 2013. Attainment in writing was lower, but the proportions of pupils making and exceeding expected progress compared favourably with national averages in all three subjects. The school's leaders have identified boys' writing as a focus; this is currently being effectively addressed through more interactive teaching and the use of texts that engage boys, as was seen in Year 6, where good-quality writing by boys and girls was based on the story *Beowulf*.
- Accurate school data show that the attainment of the current pupils in Years 5 and 6 in reading, writing and mathematics is on track to continue the rise in standards shown in 2013. Pupils' progress is rigorously checked through half-termly pupil progress meetings with senior leaders. This has led to teachers having higher expectations, and all groups of pupils, including the more able, are currently making good progress across Key Stage 2.
- The gap between the attainment of those receiving the pupil premium and their classmates widened slightly in 2013; they were one term behind in writing and nearly three terms behind in mathematics, but one term ahead in reading. However, their progress was very similar to that of other pupils. The attainment gap is narrowing for eligible pupils currently at the school; in most year groups they are making the same good progress as their classmates. This is particularly evident in Years 3 and 4, where extra support is being especially effective.
- Pupils enjoy reading. Results in the Year 1 screening check for phonics (the sounds letters make) were considerably above average; the vast majority of children achieved at least the expected standard. They are challenged to think hard all the time when they are learning to sound out words and are generally confident at reading unfamiliar texts. Teachers encourage reading at home and this is evident through the pupils' reading journals, which are completed helpfully with parental comments.
- Pupils from minority ethnic groups or who speak English as an additional language benefit greatly from the skilled staff who support them. As a result, they make good progress.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are making good progress as a result of the specialist help and guidance they receive. Their progress is tracked by the senior leadership team and the work of the learning support assistants is adapted to meet individual needs. Relevant training is provided where this is required, for example to provide help and guidance for pupils who have autism. This support, and that provided to families, is allowing these pupils to develop good social and learning skills while at the school.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching and learning have improved since the last inspection because the headteacher has held all teachers firmly to account by insisting on very clear targets. Support and training are provided to develop more consistent practice. As a result, teaching is now usually good, with some outstanding teaching leading to pupils making accelerated progress.
- A good focus on improving the teaching of phonics (the sounds letters make) and mathematics has resulted in a more consistent approach. This has increased pupils' confidence in reading and mathematics and given them a range of strategies to help them to cope with new work.
- Teaching in most lessons observed during the inspection was good or outstanding, and where this was not the case the headteacher had already identified developmental needs. In all lessons the pupils benefit from teachers' high expectations for ways of working and presentation. This has led to them striving to do better at all times and strengthens their good attitudes to learning.
- Pupils in all year groups enjoy their lessons. In an outstandingly well-taught Year 6 English lesson the teacher used role play to develop the pupils' understanding, in order to write a diary entry. Pupils asked questions of the character Hrothgar, in the story *Beowulf*, which demonstrated their good understanding of plot and character.
- Teachers' lesson planning in all year groups demonstrates that they are taking account of the different ability groups within each class. However, this does not always translate into practice. In mathematics lessons, pupils of all abilities are sometimes not moved on quickly to new work, once they are secure in their understanding. They spend too long consolidating what they can already do. For example, in a Year 4 lesson pupils used a number of strategies to solve fraction word problems, but did not move onto more challenging problems.
- Teaching assistants are used particularly well to support learning. They frequently lead group activities that link closely with what the class are doing. The extra help and guidance is well planned and allows all pupils to be fully included in the same topic and to learn successfully. In a Year 5 mathematics lesson, the supported pupils were successfully developing their use of mathematical language so that they could round off decimal numbers.
- Teachers motivate and build confidence through good questioning skills that make pupils think hard. In a science lesson on shadows the questions challenged pupils and gave them the confidence to hypothesise about what makes shadows. Questions asked of pupils of different abilities develop confidence in the less able and challenge the more able. For example, in a Year 6 mathematics lesson, new vocabulary was introduced and the questioning encouraged pupils to use technical words in their answers.
- Marking across the school is more consistently effective in raising standards than at the last inspection and uses 'tickled pink' and 'green for growth' as the common principle. Where marking is most helpful it provides comments that pupils can relate to their targets, allowing them to identify what they needed to do to progress. In some cases, teachers do not make sure that pupils are following the guidance they have given in order to improve their subsequent work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Behaviour in lessons during the inspection was consistently

good and often outstanding. School records confirm this good picture. In most lessons pupils approach their learning with enthusiasm and have the school's ethos so embedded in their practice that learning is not interrupted. The vast majority of parents and staff who expressed a view agree that behaviour is good.

- Pupils get on well with each other and are polite and respectful to adults. They wear their uniform with pride and movement around the school is calm and ordered. During a wet playtime the children quietly amused themselves in the classrooms, devising games and activities in groups. In a celebration assembly pupils were proud to receive their awards for working hard or contributing to school life, and all the staff and pupils genuinely celebrated the success of these pupils.
- Bullying is rare in the school and all pupils are aware of the various types of bullying, including cyber-bullying, and advice produced by pupils from a range of year groups is displayed prominently around the school. Year 6 pupils act as play leaders, organising play with younger children at lunch time and creating a supportive atmosphere for these children.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Staff identified that the leadership style of the headteacher engenders a supportive environment for all pupils with clear expectations that everyone has a responsibility for keeping pupils safe. Parents overwhelmingly agree that their children are safe at the school and one said, 'If I have any worries I can go straight to a teacher to sort it out.'
- Attendance is broadly in line with the national average and has risen in the past year. The school tracks attendance rigorously and the number of pupils who are away from school for long periods has been reduced a great deal in the past year. The school is working closely with families to reduce this further. Pupils are very punctual to school and consistent staff expectations mean that this approach continues throughout the school day, so all lessons start promptly.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and her deputy have worked exceptionally well together in developing a team of staff in the school that share the same high expectations of behaviour and achievement, and show them at all times.
- Leaders have a clear and accurate awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and this has been instrumental in improving the achievement of pupils and ensuring the areas for improvement identified in the previous report have been tackled. For example, leaders have provided more activities in writing and reading to enthuse boys effectively.
- There has been a clear focus on improving teaching. The progress of all pupils is checked regularly by leaders through a variety of methods including lesson observations, 'learning walks', data tracking and reviewing pupils' books. This enables them to hold teachers to account for achievement in each class.
- Since the last inspection, teachers' planning has given pupils good opportunities to use their literacy and numeracy skills in other curriculum areas, such as written work on the Titanic and life in Japan. In planning the new curriculum for 2014 the pupils have been consulted on the topics that interest and engage them, and this has been used to plan the structure of the curriculum. English and mathematics will be taught within the topics.

- Subject leaders make a good contribution to school improvement. The literacy and mathematics leaders carry out extensive research before introducing strategies, such as those to improve boys' engagement in reading and writing and introducing 'Mathletics' to support learning in mathematics. Following the progress meetings every half term they engage in a range of monitoring and supportive roles to ensure that pupils who need to are catching up.
- Parents are highly supportive of the school and would overwhelmingly recommend it to other parents. They are confident that their views are listened to and acted on. The Parents Forum allows views to be discussed regularly with school leaders and governors.
- Safeguarding and child protection arrangements are regularly reviewed and meet current statutory requirements.
- The sports funding from the government has been used recently to upgrade the swimming pool facilities to provide swimming for all pupils in the school and the wider community. Funding is also being used to train staff in dance and gymnastics to enhance the new curriculum. Sporting equipment is being upgraded to increase the range of sports available to pupils. The school has not yet measured the impact as initiatives are recent.
- The local authority has provided support through reviews, most recently on marking, and has accessed high quality support from a 'good teaching' programme to ensure all classes have access to a good teacher.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are clear about the school's strengths and weaknesses through their good analysis of data and rigorous monitoring. For example, they visit the school frequently to ensure that the information they receive on the achievement of pupils is accurate.
 - The governors have good expertise in using national assessment data when judging the impact of teaching on pupils' achievement. This helps ensure that governors have effective information to support performance management, including when agreeing salary increases for staff.
 - Governors have developed an effective committee structure, and use their skills well to lead the committees and carry out regular monitoring and evaluation in the school.
 - The governors are clear about how the school uses the pupil premium and have recently agreed the appointment of two qualified teachers to strengthen the impact of one-to-one tuition and small group work to narrow the gap between eligible pupils and others.
 - The governors have a programme of training to develop and enhance their skills, and work closely with the local authority.

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	115112
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	430749

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	218
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lynne Rand
Headteacher	Claire Williams
Date of previous school inspection	14 June 2012
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