

St John's Church of England Primary School

St John's Place, Canterbury, Kent, CT1 1BD

Inspection dates 27–28 February 2014

Overall effectiveness	Not previously inspected	
This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils	Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching	Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Inadequate	4
Leadership and management	Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- Pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 make inadequate progress. They leave the school with low standards in reading, writing and mathematics which are a long way behind other pupils' nationally.
- Pupils' rates of progress are too slow because there is too much weak teaching. Many pupils underachieve, so too few pupils reach the levels of which they are capable.
- Lower-attaining pupils do not apply phonics (knowledge of letters and their sounds) well enough to develop their reading properly.
- Teachers do not ensure lessons address the needs of pupils with different abilities. Too little is expected of more-able pupils, and work is sometimes too hard or too easy for others.
- Teachers have not been well supported or given enough help to improve their teaching.
- The headteacher does not provide clear direction and the management systems are ineffective.
- Other leaders are held back because of the absence of support to help them develop their roles and improve achievement and teaching.
- Some pupils behave poorly in lessons and there is too much low-level disruption. Pupils are excluded excessively because the school does not manage their behaviour well enough.
- The school lacks robust procedures to ensure good attendance. Consequently, pupils' attendance is low and pupils are not punctual.
- Governors do not hold leaders to account for pupils' achievement and they have insufficient understanding of pupils' progress.

The school has the following strengths:

- Children in Nursery and Reception make good progress. By the end of Reception their attainment is close to expectations.
- Pupils are kept and feel safe. The school has ensured that pupils have worthwhile playtime activities which they enjoy.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 20 lessons of which one third were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors held discussions with pupils, listened to a sample of them read, and looked at a range of their work.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, senior leaders and teachers.
- The lead inspector met, and held a telephone conversation with, a local authority representative.
- Inspectors considered the 33 responses to the online Parent View survey and the few letters sent by parents and carers. They also spoke informally to parents and carers.
- Inspectors considered responses to the 42 questionnaires returned by staff.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and examined the school's data on attainment and progress. They looked at a number of documents, including plans for improvement, safeguarding arrangements, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and records of school leaders' observations of teaching.

Inspection team

Eileen Chadwick, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Bryan Meyer	Additional Inspector
Peter Thrussell	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

The school should not appoint newly qualified teachers.

Information about this school

- This is a larger-than-average size primary school. The Early Years Foundation Stage department consists of a part-time Nursery (mornings only) and two Reception classes. There are two classes in Years 1 to 4 and one class in each of Years 5 and 6.
- The school opened as a new school in September 2012 following the amalgamation of two local primary schools. It received a monitoring visit by Ofsted on 8 February 2013. This was the school's first full inspection.
- The majority of pupils are White British. One quarter come from minority ethnic backgrounds and the proportion who speak English as an additional language is above the national average. Many minority ethnic groups are represented in the school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above average. The majority of these pupils have speech and language difficulties or behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
- Half of the pupils are in receipt of pupil premium funding (additional funding provided for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children looked after by the local authority and children with a parent or carer serving in the armed forces), which is well above the national average. A few pupils come from families with a parent serving in the armed forces.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The headteacher was given a period of authorised absence just before the inspection. An interim executive headteacher, the executive headteacher of Sturry Primary School, Canterbury, has been appointed to lead the school on a temporary basis.
- A senior leader has been appointed acting head of school and has responsibility for managing the school on a day-to-day basis. There have been many teaching staff changes since the school first opened.
- The school operated on two sites until the move to a single site in November 2013. The school is still undergoing extensive building work. Refurbishment of the building has taken longer than expected and some classes are still in temporary accommodation.
- The school provides a daily breakfast club for pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2 by:
 - improving teachers' behaviour management to ensure that pupils behave well and pay attention in lessons, and that more lesson time is devoted to helping pupils learn
 - ensuring teachers have higher expectations of pupils, to retain their interest and raise their achievement
 - focusing on improving pupils' basic skills, especially in mathematics, and building on what pupils already know to make sure that work is set at the right level for them
 - improving the teaching of phonics, ensuring that pupils practise their sounds regularly, that they are heard reading more often and that pupils' reading records show parents and carers their children's phonics targets
 - making sure that teachers' marking gives pupils clear guidance on how to improve their work.
- Raise attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - improving pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar, and their ability to use more interesting vocabulary when writing
 - identifying the most-able pupils' skills early and ensuring they have regular opportunities for higher level work, including in mathematics
 - ensuring that pupils' reading tasks across all subjects are matched to their abilities
 - providing additional support to raise the achievement of pupils in receipt of the pupil premium.
- Improve pupils' behaviour, attendance and punctuality by:
 - effectively tackling and reducing incidents of poor behaviour and the number of exclusions
 - ensuring that teachers consistently implement the behaviour policy, and that senior leaders and governors closely monitor its impact
 - implementing robust procedures and working closely with families to raise attendance rapidly and to improve punctuality.
- Improve the skills of leaders and managers at all levels, including governors, by:
 - reviewing the leadership structure, clarifying roles and developing the skills of senior and middle leaders so that they take a full part in improving teaching and pupils' achievement
 - ensuring that teachers are provided with well-judged training leading to good subject knowledge, in order that their teaching of English and mathematics becomes consistently effective
 - ensuring that the school improvement plan gives more subject-specific actions for improving English and mathematics, showing how actions will be checked and judged, and who will be responsible for them
 - improving performance management systems to ensure that teachers' pay is linked to their performance
 - ensuring that members of the governing body receive training backed up with detailed and accurate information about the school's performance so they are better able to challenge school leaders.

An external review of governance, including the school's use of the pupil premium, should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Pupils' learning and progress are inadequate. The government's minimum expectations for attainment and progress have not been met. The school has not been effective in addressing the legacy of pupils' low levels of attainment on entry from when the school first opened. Inadequate progress in Key Stages 1 and 2 is compounding this failure.
- Attainment is low in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 and at the end of Year 6. In 2013 just over a quarter of Year 6 pupils attained the nationally expected standards. Also, attainment in Year 2 is not improving and so pupils are poorly prepared for the next stage of their education.
- National phonics checks show that Year 1 pupils' reading skills have been too low. Lower- and some middle-attaining pupils in other year groups read hesitantly because they have a limited understanding of phonics. They are not given opportunities to practise their sounds enough. This limits their ability to tackle new words.
- Too often, pupils' weak reading skills limit their progress in other subjects, for example, in mathematics and geography. Lower- and middle-attaining pupils are not making enough progress in Years 1 and 2 because the activities set for them are too easy.
- Pupils do not achieve well at the higher levels. More-able pupils make inadequate progress because the work is often too easy for them. The most-able pupils are not identified early enough and their attainment slips as they move through the school.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium, including the few from military families, also make inadequate progress. In 2013, the attainment of pupils eligible for pupil premium was a year behind others in the school in reading and writing, and 18 months behind in mathematics. There has been some improvement, although the current Year 6 pupils' attainment remains low. It is in line with their peers' attainment in reading, and within six months of their peers' attainment in writing and mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, as well as pupils from minority ethnic groups, including those who speak English as an additional language, make similarly slow progress compared to their peers.
- In Key Stage 2, lower- and middle-attaining pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar are weak. Very few pupils are on track to achieve higher levels because they do not use a wide enough vocabulary.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics is inadequate. Assessments and pupils' work in books and in lessons show progress is slow in Years 2, 3 and 4 for pupils of all abilities.
- The younger children achieve better because of good leadership and management throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage. They enter the school with knowledge and skills that are well below the levels expected for their age. After making good progress in both Nursery and Reception, pupils' attainment on entry to Year 1 is just below that expected for this age, including in literacy and numeracy.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- The quality of teaching is inadequate. It is weaker in Key Stage 1 and in the lower part of Key Stage 2 than in the rest of the school. While there is some stronger teaching, it is still too variable from one year to the next.
- Too often, provision in one year has to patch up shortcomings of teaching and progress in a previous year. For example, the current Year 6 pupils had a very turbulent Year 5, when they were taught by many different teachers and made inadequate progress.
- Teachers' management of pupils' behaviour is inconsistent and inadequate overall. Learning time is lost when teachers need to spend too much time dealing with a few disruptive pupils in their classes at the expense of other pupils' learning. Too often, teaching fails to take the differing

abilities of pupils into account and all do the same work.

- Subject knowledge is weak for too many teachers and they have not received sufficient, effective training to improve it. There has been little training in mathematics and, as a result, some teachers' expectations are low.
- The school has implemented a new system for teaching phonics since the start of this term. All staff have been trained, but leaders have not yet checked pupils' learning in these sessions or verified how well phonics are applied to other literacy activities. Consequently, teaching weaknesses are not being addressed quickly enough. For example, teachers provide lists of common words for pupils to learn during other reading activities instead of consistently helping them to apply phonics skills.
- Lower-attaining pupils are not heard to read on an individual basis regularly enough and pupils' home-school reading records do not include information about the key sounds and letters they should know. This limits parents' and carers' ability to help their children.
- Pupils' weak reading skills are highlighted by tasks set across the curriculum. For example, in some mathematics and geography lessons, the reading levels are too advanced for lower-and middle-attaining pupils. This limits their learning in these subjects as well as in reading.
- The use of teaching assistants is inconsistent. Some are deployed well, for example, in the support for the well-being of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. However, their effectiveness is sometimes restricted by the type of learning activities that teachers provide; for example, when pupils with special educational needs are given very easy mathematics tasks which fail to build on what they already know.
- Marking is getting better, but does not give pupils enough feedback on how to improve their work, for example, by suggesting how they can improve their spelling by applying phonics.
- The quality of teaching is most consistently good across the Nursery and Reception classes. In these situations teachers' good subject knowledge raised their expectations of what pupils could achieve and, they captured pupils' interest by successfully ensuring their work was well matched to their abilities.
- Children in Nursery and Reception have many interesting things to do. They work well with adults and each other, and they make rapid progress in developing their speaking and personal skills. They are given a stimulating curriculum and teachers give children good opportunities to learn and develop their interests.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are inadequate

- Behaviour is inadequate because incidents of bad behaviour from individuals and low-level disruption during lessons are too frequent. There has been a high rate of exclusions during the last academic year by comparison with last term and compared with national averages.
- Some pupils who were excluded during the last academic year have also been excluded this year. This shows the school has not had enough impact on improving their behaviour. There has been a small drop in the number of pupils excluded in recent months, but it is too early to judge whether this is an improving trend.
- Staff do not consistently apply the school's behaviour policy and not all are sufficiently well trained to manage some pupils' challenging behaviour. A minority of pupils do not develop positive attitudes to learning.
- Pupils' attendance is low despite small improvements during this academic year. The school has started to analyse the attendance of different groups, but does not seek reasons for poor attendance or follow this through, including with pupils' families. A number of pupils are late, and steps taken by the school to correct this are not having enough impact.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure requires improvement. Systems to check absence are not thorough enough. Pupils say they feel safe and most parents, carers and staff agree with this view. Pupils know how to maintain safety when playing with the outdoor equipment or when using the internet. They say that bullying and name-calling occurs occasionally but adults deal with this.

- Playground space is limited due to the building work. Staggered play and lunchtimes for different year groups help to promote a good standard of safety in the playground.
- Pupils much appreciate the play leader system where older students on work experience lead sporting activities. Pupils say that playground behaviour has improved since this was introduced.
- Pupils enjoy attending the breakfast club and are given a nourishing start to the school day.

The leadership and management are inadequate

- The school lacks a sense of direction because the substantive headteacher has not introduced sufficiently stringent systems for managing a larger than average school. There is no deputy headteacher and senior leaders' roles are unclear. Some senior leaders are inexperienced and not trained to lead the school when the headteacher is absent.
- School leaders at all levels have not secured essential improvements in achievement and teaching since the Ofsted monitoring visit last year. The school has not demonstrated the capacity to secure future improvement.
- Senior leaders are not held to account for pupils' underachievement. The capacity of middle leadership is weak. There are no specific subject leaders for science, information and communication technology, and most other subjects.
- Some senior leaders have too much to do and they are given little opportunity to develop their roles properly. Too often they cannot perform their leadership roles because they are used as supply teachers to attempt to offset gaps caused by high teaching-staff turnover.
- Checks on the quality of teaching are regular but lack rigour. There has been limited attention to helping teachers understand how well they are supporting pupils of different abilities to learn in reading, writing and mathematics. Literacy and numeracy leaders have had very limited opportunities to check teaching by observing lessons.
- Teachers' pay is not yet linked to their performance; they do not have clear targets for improvement linked to their annual appraisals. Training needs are not identified well enough, for example, there is no system to pinpoint what teachers need to do to improve their teaching in literacy and numeracy.
- School improvement planning does not provide enough detail for how initiatives to improve teaching and learning in reading, writing and mathematics, or for measuring their impact, will be achieved. For example, there are insufficient details of how the new phonics systems will be evaluated, or which members of staff will be involved.
- The local authority provides intensive support to help the school to introduce systems to help to bring about improvement. However, leaders have not acted sufficiently on recommendations, such as the need to develop a suitable leadership structure.
- The curriculum does not meet pupils' needs in either Key Stage 1 or Key Stage 2. The school does not meet its aim to provide equality of opportunity.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and provides some opportunities for sport and extra-curricular activities. It has recently received primary school sports funding and is using this to employ more sports coaches.
- Safeguarding procedures and practices meet requirements and are effective.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are committed to the school, but have not been rigorous enough in challenging school leaders or holding them to account for the school's weak performance. They have had training in interpreting the school's performance data, but do not evaluate how well different groups of pupils are achieving. Governors are aware of how pupil premium and sports funding is spent, but have not evaluated its impact on improving outcomes. Governors have not received enough information on different groups' attendance to monitor pupils' absence and punctuality well enough. They have not challenged the school on the reasons for exclusions. They have not ensured that procedures to develop staff and monitor their performance are adequate, and have not established links between teachers' performance and their salaries. Governors are uncertain about how to challenge the headteacher, and need

further training to help them to do this.

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	137071
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	430662

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	327
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jon Christopher
Headteacher	Jo Warnock
Date of previous school inspection	Not applicable
Telephone number	01227 462360
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