

St John the Evangelist CofE Primary School

Ivy Road, Macclesfield, Cheshire, SK11 8QN

Inspection dates 20–21 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- From broadly average starting points, pupils achieve well to reach above average attainment in mathematics, reading and writing.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are now making good progress.
- Pupils are keen to learn. They behave well throughout the school, look after one another and feel safe.
- Support staff make a strong contribution to pupils' learning.
- The curriculum provides a wide range of stimulating and exciting experiences for pupils.
- The headteacher displays an unflinching commitment to excellence, which has ensured good-quality teaching, despite a number of recent absences.
- School leaders, including governors, work very well as a team. Their successful actions have a positive impact on pupils' achievements. The school continues to improve.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils have too few opportunities to apply and develop their literacy and numeracy skills across a range of subjects.
- Teachers do not insist that older pupils always produce work in their best handwriting.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 15 lessons. One observation was carried out jointly with the headteacher. A team inspector observed the headteacher giving feedback on the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. Meetings were conducted with governors, the staff team and groups of pupils. In addition, a phone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority and also the school's Leadership Partner.
- In order to evaluate the views of parents, 53 responses posted on the online questionnaire (Parent View) were analysed. In addition, an evaluation was made of the recent questionnaire of parents' views carried out by the school. Eleven questionnaires were completed by staff.
- Information from the scrutiny of a range of school documentation added to inspection evidence. This included the details relating to safeguarding, the improvement plan, the school's procedures for gaining an accurate view of its performance and records of pupils' standards and progress. Inspectors listened to two groups of pupils reading.

Inspection team

Jean O'Neill, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

John Shutt

Additional Inspector

Kathleen McArthur

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St John's is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- It offers before- and after-school care, which is managed by the governing body.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. A small proportion is at an early stage of learning English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported at school action is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding is below average. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school holds the Sportsmark and Healthy School status.
- The school has strong links with the local faith high school as part of a cluster of feeder primary schools; the high school provides additional specialist teaching, for example, in modern foreign languages and sport.
- There has been some turbulence in staffing in recent years, due to unavoidable absence.
- Pupils in Years 1 to 6 are taught in mixed-age classes.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching, so that achievement becomes outstanding by:
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to apply and develop their literacy and numeracy skills across a range of subjects
 - ensuring that all teachers require older pupils to produce work in their best handwriting
 - using the existing strong local partnerships to develop peer coaching for staff, within the school and the wider community.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Children currently in the Reception class started the year with skills that were broadly typical for their age, and are making good progress in all areas of learning. For example, they show secure knowledge of letters and sounds and how to blend the sounds to read words. Reception children in the two previous years also made good progress, but because they had started with significantly lower levels of skill overall, they entered Year 1 below the expected level for their age.
- Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 1 and, by the end of Year 2, typically achieve high standards in reading, writing and mathematics. However, currently Years 1 and 2 pupils are reaching slightly lower standards because of their lower starting points; this still represents good progress. Pupils enjoy learning mathematical language, using this well to program the movement of a toy. They are confident and articulate communicators.
- The proportion of pupils who met the required standard in the Year 1 check on their phonics skills, which investigates their knowledge of letters and sounds, was above average in 2012 and again in 2013. However, outcomes for the current Year 1 pupils reflect their lower starting points, despite them making good progress in this aspect.
- Most Year 2 pupils are becoming fluent readers, who are confident in describing what they have read. They enjoy a wide variety of reading, at home and at school, with clear preferences – a pupil stated, 'Pop-up information books about animals are my favourites.' Year 6 readers describe how they still find 'sounding out' techniques useful when tackling unknown words. They discuss their favourite series enthusiastically, describing the 'cliff hanger' excitement of a book 'you can't put down'.
- Progress in all subjects in Key Stage 2 has significantly exceeded national expectations over the last two years. Overall, many pupils make outstanding progress in writing from their starting points; all make expected progress, and nearly half make more than expected progress. Despite this, some older pupils take less care with their handwriting than they could.
- Attainment by the end of Year 6 has been well above average for the last three years in reading, writing and mathematics. Inspection evidence and school data indicate current attainment is at least as strong, with many Year 6 pupils achieving the highest levels. However, pupils are not always able to apply and develop these writing and mathematical skills as well in other subjects.
- The small group of pupils with English as an additional language make equally good progress because of the strong support they receive.
- Pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, now do at least as well as other pupils in the school. Their attainment in all subjects is now above that of all pupils nationally. It is at least at the same level as that of others in the school, although in previous years it has been lower. This improvement is the result of concerted and successful actions by the school to provide precisely targeted additional support, resulting in good progress at both Key Stages 1 and 2 for these pupils.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress because of the effective teaching and good support they receive from skilled teaching assistants. The increasing numbers of pupils whose circumstances may make them highly vulnerable are very well supported to make progress at least in line with that of all other pupils. This reflects the school's good promotion of equality of opportunity.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Pupils learn quickly because the activities are at the right level of difficulty to ensure that all, including the most able, work productively. This was seen, for example, in Key Stage 2, where the very skilful teaching encouraged pupils to respond enthusiastically and learn a good deal, as a result of very effective questioning and instruction.

- Mathematics and writing are taught particularly well. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and develop pupils' understanding very effectively. In Years 5 and 6, pupils are taught in smaller groups according to their ability; tasks are precisely matched to their needs and pupils have the challenge and support they need. Pupils say this 'makes work easier to understand so that you can get better levels in the SATS'. However, pupils do not have enough opportunities to apply their mathematical and writing skills in other subjects.
- Good use of the indoor and outdoor areas enables the younger children to enjoy practical activities that enhance their learning. Reception children use writing materials, building blocks, musical instruments and tablet computers with confidence. Challenging activities promote high levels of concentration and application, so that these young children quickly develop confidence.
- Positive relationships between pupils and adults in the classroom contribute well to pupils' learning and progress. Pupils say there is 'lots of challenge and fun'. However, teachers do not always demand the best of older pupils in their handwriting, which in some cases is weaker than at the start of the year.
- Teaching assistants provide good support for pupils of all abilities because they are well briefed and knowledgeable. They run 'challenge maths groups' for the most able pupils in Years 1 and 2, as well as providing classroom support for pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable and those with special educational needs.
- Pupils almost always have clear guidance in teachers' marking and in lessons. Pupils say this 'tells you how you can get your work even better'. Teachers regularly check on how well pupils are doing; for example, in mathematics, three pupils who were struggling were quickly spotted, and a teaching assistant was redirected to support them, to good effect.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils enjoy lessons and most try hard. A few pupils say that behaviour is 'ok rather than good', but they understand that some may struggle to control their behaviour and they welcome the support given by specialist staff, such as the learning mentor. Comments from parents and the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) indicate that pupils enjoy school and behave well.
- Pupils are polite, kind and get on well with one another. Behaviour is not yet outstanding because a few pupils sometimes do not concentrate as well as they might.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils have a good awareness of different forms of bullying and say that 'Teachers won't have it!' Racism is not tolerated. Pupils insist, 'We're not racist here, we're all the same.' They understand how to keep themselves safe on the internet and are aware, for example, of the dangers of social networking sites.
- Attendance is broadly average. Pupils enjoy after-school and lunchtime clubs, which include a wide range of sport, music, art and drama activities.
- A specialist sports coach, known to all as 'Football Phil', provides valuable support to pupils who may lack confidence and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, to build their self-assurance and extend their skills. Pupils and the support staff much enjoy these sessions.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher and staff have the highest ambitions for pupils, so that all pupils now achieve well. Senior leaders have a very accurate view of the school's performance and set the appropriate priorities for the future. Development plans are very well thought out and provide a clear view of the school's next steps.
- Senior leaders have maintained and strengthened the drive for improvement despite the unavoidable absence of a number of staff in recent years. Middle leaders are now skilled in using information from checking on pupils' progress, in order to improve pupils' learning in lessons.
- Leaders at all levels make regular observations of lessons and check on the quality of learning in

pupils' workbooks. Following these checks, clear strengths and areas for improvement are identified and followed up, with very good impact on the quality of teaching.

- Teachers' performance management targets are based upon the school's key priorities and on leaders' findings from their checks on teaching. Expectations for teachers are high. They are linked clearly to the nationally expected standards for teachers and to salary progression. Teachers are regularly held to account for the progress of the pupils in their classes, which makes a significant contribution to the good progress that pupils achieve over time.
- Staff appreciate the wide range of professional development they receive, attending training courses that are well matched to their needs. The school also provides effective support to other schools, for example, in the teaching of mathematics and gymnastics, and to other Early Years Foundation Stage settings. Senior leaders acknowledge the need to build on this by providing opportunities for teachers to coach and mentor one another, both within and beyond the school.
- Leaders have raised the achievement of the pupils supported by the pupil premium funding, by employing specialist staff to provide challenge and support to these pupils at all ages. Gaps between how well these and similar pupils in the school are doing have now been closed.
- The curriculum promotes good achievement and provides many enrichment opportunities, including learning musical instruments, German, Spanish and Mandarin and a wide variety of sports. The school checks that finances are used well to ensure all pupils, including those supported by the pupil premium funding, regularly go on educational trips and visits. Other experiences to meet pupils' needs and interests include a gifted and talented club. The curriculum is not outstanding because pupils have too few opportunities to apply and develop their literacy and numeracy skills across a range of subjects.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted exceptionally well. Pupils demonstrate a clear understanding of right and wrong and are effectively encouraged to consider and reflect on spiritual matters; this was seen, for example, in some enchanting writing by the youngest children on 'What Heaven is like', in which one pupil wrote, 'The angels are giggling.' Cultural development is promoted very well through themed weeks focusing on the work of artists or music projects.
- The primary school sport funding is being used well to provide a specialist teacher to train staff, to deliver physical education lessons and to provide well-attended extra sports opportunities in school. Pupils and staff benefit from the extra professional development offered by the specialist coach. This is extending the skills of class teachers and leading to sustainable improvements in the teaching of physical education and promotion of sports.
- Leaders ensure that arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements.
- Parents support the school enthusiastically, for example, by high attendance at special assemblies and other school events. Almost all parents who answered the online questionnaire (Parent View) would rightly recommend the school to another parent.
- St John's has benefited from the advice of the local authority, which provides light-touch support for this good school. Strong partnerships with the local learning community of primary schools and the high school enable the shared employment of a family support worker, a sports coach and modern foreign language teaching, all of which enhance the school's own provision.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The highly skilled governing body knows precisely the school's strengths and areas for development because governors find out for themselves how well the school is performing. For example, they rigorously analyse national comparative data and ask searching questions in meetings, fully holding senior leaders to account for their actions.
 - Governors have ensured that all groups of pupils do well and that the pupil premium funding is now used effectively to ensure that pupils known to be eligible for free school meals attain at least as well in English and mathematics as other pupils in the school. This is achieved through good-quality small-group teaching and the employment of additional staff, including a skilled and effective learning mentor who provides valuable support for pupils whose circumstances might put them at risk.
 - Governors accurately describe teaching in the school as 'consistently good, but with not enough outstanding teaching'. Their view that the headteacher's performance management

'cascades into the teachers' performance management' shows a clear understanding of these processes, which have been very effective in tackling underperformance.

- Financial planning is prudent, with thorough discussion of the additional spending to raise the attainment of groups of pupils, and careful regard is given to medium and long-term implications of decisions on staffing.

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	111331
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	439554

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	293
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dai Roberts
Headteacher	Caroline Waites
Date of previous school inspection	10 February 2009
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