

St John the Baptist Voluntary Aided CofE Primary School

Hillside Lane, Great Amwell, Ware, SG12 9SE

Inspection dates 12–13 June 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		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- St John the Baptist is a welcoming, calm and purposeful school with a family ethos. It is led and managed well.
- Governors provide effective support and challenge to the senior leaders, who have ensured that teaching and pupils' achievement continue to improve.
- Pupils make good progress and reach standards that are above average in English and broadly average in mathematics by the time they leave. They do particularly well in writing and develop a wide vocabulary and confidence in speaking.
- Teaching is typically good and some is outstanding. Teachers plan interesting activities that engage pupils well. They make good use of skilful questioning to promote pupils' understanding.
- Pupils are happy at school. They say they like their teachers and enjoy learning. They behave well, and feel safe and well looked after.
- Children settle quickly into the Early Years Foundation Stage. They learn how to get along with one another and develop their speaking, listening and writing skills well.
- Staff and pupils enjoy good relationships, so teachers manage behaviour easily. Pupils are polite and sensitive to one another's needs.
- The variety of subjects interests and engages pupils, and promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Music and sport feature prominently and many pupils participate in physical activity.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always plan challenging activities for the more-able pupils, who do not always make as much progress as they could.
- Some pupils make slower progress in mathematics than in reading and writing.
- Teachers do not always provide clear guidance on what pupils should do to improve their work in mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons or parts of lessons, including eight which were observed jointly with the headteacher. They also looked at pupils' written work in English, mathematics and other subjects.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body and three other governors, the headteacher and other school leaders. An inspector spoke by telephone to a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke formally to two groups of pupils, and informally with other pupils in lessons and around the school. An inspector listened to pupils reading and talked to them about their reading habits.
- School documents examined included: the school's own evaluation of its performance and its development plan; information about pupils' progress and the support given to disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs; evidence about the quality of teaching; and records about behaviour, safeguarding and attendance.
- Inspectors took account of 18 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), two letters and an email from three parents and the views expressed by parents as they arrived to drop off their children.
- An inspector analysed 21 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

James McVeigh, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Philip Garnham

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St John the Baptist Primary School is smaller than an average-sized primary school. There is one class in each year group from Reception to Year 6.
- Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (the extra government funding given to schools for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or in local authority care) is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below the national average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school runs a breakfast club.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching by making sure that all teachers:
 - give pupils clear written guidance on how to improve their work in all subjects
 - always plan suitably challenging activities for more-able pupils to make them think hard and make even more rapid progress.
- Raise pupils' achievement in mathematics by providing them with more opportunities to apply their mathematical skills in solving problems.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start school in Reception with typical levels of skills and understanding for their age and make good progress. They develop their social skills quickly and get on well with adults and each other. Children speak and listen to one another carefully. They have good knowledge of phonics (the sounds that letters make) and develop their early writing and spelling well.
- An above-average proportion of pupils start Key Stage 1 with a good level of development. Pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2013, pupils reached above-average standards overall, though higher in reading than in writing and mathematics. School performance information shows they are reaching higher standards in all three this year.
- In Key Stage 2, all pupils make good progress in writing and most pupils also make good progress in reading and mathematics. However, in 2013, some of the most able pupils did not make as much progress as they could have done in reading and particularly in mathematics. Pupils have too few opportunities to apply their mathematical skills in solving real-life problems.
- By the time pupils leave school in Year 6, they reach higher standards in writing than is seen nationally. Current school information about pupils' progress and their written work in books show that pupils are now making stronger progress in reading and mathematics and reaching higher standards. Pupils' progress in all years and subjects is good.
- Pupils have many opportunities to write for a variety of purposes and in a variety of styles. They learn to write and spell well. For example, pupils in Year 5 produced a well-fashioned script for a newsreader based on a story about aliens.
- Although pupils in Year 1 did not perform as well as the national average in the 2013 screening check for phonics, pupils do learn to read quickly. They enjoy reading and read often. Pupils say they always have a book from the library to read and regularly read to an adult at school.
- Pupils develop confidence and good skills in speaking. They speak regularly in front of their classmates. Each Year 4 pupil spoke confidently and articulately to pupils and parents at an assembly to explain what they had learned in a topic on the Second World War.
- Pupils in all years who are disabled or have special educational needs make good progress. Well-planned extra support from teachers and suitably trained teaching assistants is effective and meets their individual needs well.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to promote more rapid progress of eligible pupils. Extra help such as targeted academic support and extra resources is used to raise attainment in reading, information communication technology and music. The attainment gap between current eligible pupils and others is closing in all subjects. There were too few eligible pupils in Year 6 in 2013 to comment on their attainment without risk of identifying individuals.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers manage their classes well and plan activities that pupils enjoy. They have established good relationships with pupils and have high expectations of their behaviour, and of the quality and quantity of their work. They encourage pupils to share their ideas with each other and to evaluate each other's work.

- Teachers and teaching assistants often use skilful questioning to prompt pupils to explain their thinking and to extend their understanding. For example, the teacher's rapid and effective questioning of pupils in Year 6 helped them to develop their understanding of how articles in a newspaper are constructed.
- Teaching assistants are deployed well and provide good extra support for identified groups or individuals. They usually encourage pupils to solve problems for themselves rather than giving answers too quickly.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage is well organised. Children's routines, for example, in sitting on the carpet, asking questions or choosing activities, have been established so that the school day runs smoothly. Teaching is good and children make good progress in interesting activities planned for them, including writing and using numbers. For example, children in Reception enjoyed singing to a beat and made good progress in developing their language skills and learning how to help each other.
- Teachers mark pupils' written work regularly. Marking is particularly helpful in English. Pupils' writing is checked closely and teachers give them good advice on what they need to do to improve it. Pupils understand the marking system in English and act upon the advice they are given. There is less guidance provided in mathematics.
- Some of the most able pupils do not make as much progress as they could. They do not always have enough opportunities to tackle harder work in lessons.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are polite and sensible as they move around the school, despite the narrowness of some corridors, and when playing. They know the rules about behaviour. Pupils are eager to earn certificates for behaving well and to avoid sanctions such as losing some of their play time.
- The few incidents of minor misbehaviour are recorded fully. Pupils have a good understanding of bullying and the forms it can take. They say that bullying rarely occurs and when it does, teachers sort it out quickly. School records confirm pupils' views. Any pupils who have no-one to play with can sit at the 'Buddy Bus Stop' in the playground. Pupils say they would invite anyone at the stop to play with them.
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning. In lessons, most pupils are keen to learn. They listen to their teachers, settle to work without fuss and respond quickly to teachers' instructions. Sometimes, if activities are too hard or too easy, a few pupils can become unsettled and do not work as hard as they could.
- Pupils proudly take on extra responsibilities, for example as a Year 6 'carer' with the role of helping children in Reception, as a monitor to help teachers, or as a house captain.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. The playground is well supervised. There is a good range of equipment for games, and climbing apparatus embedded in a safety asphalt surface.
- The site is secure and visitors are appropriately vetted. School staff are trained in first aid and safeguarding. Pupils say they feel safe at school and each one knows an adult they can talk to if they have any concerns.

- Pupils know about the composition of healthy diets and the need for regular exercise. They have learned about road safety and being vigilant when using the internet.
- Pupils say they like their teachers and find lessons interesting. The school promotes the need for regular attendance well. Attendance was at the national average in 2013, and school records show that to date this year it is above average.

The leadership and management are good

- The school has a friendly but businesslike atmosphere. It is well managed and daily activities run smoothly. Parents have good opportunities to visit the school and to celebrate pupils' work. They attend assemblies led by each year group for a review of work completed so far and enjoy house teas, where parents and pupils of one house can socialise.
- The headteacher has been successful in her constant drive to improve the quality of teaching, particularly considering the high proportion of teachers who are new to the profession. Leaders regularly check that the work of teachers and teaching assistants is improving and that pupils are making good progress. Teachers are set challenging targets related to pupils' progress and the quality of their own teaching. Staff have good opportunities to improve their skills, including through attendance at well-chosen external courses.
- Teachers new to the profession are well supported, using experienced teachers as mentors and by taking advantage of the local authority's induction programme. Subject leaders develop their leadership roles well by working with senior leaders to check the quality of teaching and raise achievement in their subjects.
- Senior leaders, with good support from the local authority, have an accurate view of the school's strengths and the areas they need to improve. They have effective plans to address identified shortcomings. For example, the slower progress pupils make in mathematics has triggered a new initiative in the teaching of mathematics.
- The school offers a good range of subjects that appeal to both boys and girls and generate an enthusiasm for learning. Exciting topics involve interesting events and activities. Year 4 pupils visited an aviation museum and created model Anderson shelters when studying the Second World War. Pupils review and consolidate their learning when they present summaries of their work to parents in class assemblies. Music and sport have a high profile. Further enhancement comes from a wide range of clubs, including dancing, singing and sailing.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through lessons, assemblies and regular visits to the local church. Pupils visit different places of worship and work on joint projects with another school in London with a different ethnic mix of pupils, and a school in Gambia. The school ensures equality of opportunity for all and effectively discourages all forms of discrimination. For example, eligible pupils are helped to make better progress through carefully targeted use of the pupil premium funding.
- The primary school sports funding is used effectively to raise pupils' participation in physical activity with the consequent benefits for their health. A wider range of sports and activities have been introduced, including inter-school competitions, and teachers' skills in sports coaching have improved. More pupils are now involved in physical activity.
- Parents appreciate the breakfast club that the school manages. Those who attend have a healthy breakfast and time to socialise with others and enjoy games with an academic slant,

such as ones involving number facts.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body is well organised and governors have a suitable range of relevant skills including in education and business. Their skills are enhanced through training from the local authority. Governors are well informed about the performance of staff and pupils. They receive thorough reports from the headteacher and make their own focused visits
- Governors are committed to supporting the school but also well equipped to challenge senior leaders about the impact of their work. They produce challenging targets for the headteacher to meet
- Governors make sure money is wisely spent. For example, they make sure that the pupil premium funds promote pupils' achievement, that teachers' pay awards are warranted and that the primary sports funding raises pupils' participation in sport
- The governing body ensures safeguarding arrangements meet current national requirements.

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	117432
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	443961

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	193
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stuart Elsom
Headteacher	Susan Robinson
Date of previous school inspection	17 February 2011
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