

# St John's VA Church of England Primary School, Lemsford

Lemsford Village, Welwyn Garden City, AL8 7TR

**Inspection dates** 19–20 June 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
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, working closely with governors and staff, is bringing about improvements in teaching and pupils' achievement.
- During the current academic year, regardless of background or ability, pupils have made good progress. Swift action has been taken by leaders to ensure standards in reading, writing and mathematics are rising once more to match those usually achieved by the school.
- Teaching is now good in all classes and there is some highly effective practice.
- Pupils enjoy school and behave well. They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Their attendance is above average.
- Governors know the school well. They have improved the way they check on the work of the school and have set challenging targets for the senior leadership team.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In 2013, too few pupils reached the age related expectations in the Year 1 phonics checks and achievement in mathematics at the end of Year 6 was low.
- Standards in mathematics are still not as high as they are in reading and writing. Pupils' calculation skills are not sufficiently well developed.
- More-able pupils are not always challenged sufficiently.
- Teachers do not consistently provide pupils with sufficient guidance on how to improve their work or insist that they always present it as neatly as they should.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed seven lessons, of which five were seen together with the headteacher. He joined pupils, staff and parents for an assembly. The inspector spent time looking at pupils' books and hearing some pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 read.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, staff, groups of pupils, and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including the data the school has collected on pupils' attainment and progress, procedures for keeping pupils safe and the school improvement plan.
- The inspector met with several parents, took account of the 44 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and looked at a recent school survey of parents' views. He also took into account the 14 questionnaires returned by members of staff in making the judgements.

## Inspection team

David Wynford-Jones, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average primary school.
- Most of the pupils are of White British origin. The remainder come from a number of different minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils speaking English as an additional language is much lower than average. Almost none are at the early stages of learning English.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is well below average. The proportion identified for additional support through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average. Most of these pupils have behaviour, social and emotional difficulties.
- Very few pupils are supported through the pupil premium. This is additional government funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- In 2013, the school met the current floor standards, which set the government's minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The governing body manages the 'After School Klub' which operates during term time.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure pupils reach higher standards in mathematics by the end of Key Stage 2 by:
  - making certain that pupils continue to make rapid progress, particularly in Key Stage 2
  - raising the expectations of what the more-able pupils can achieve
  - focussing more sharply on developing the pupils' skills in undertaking calculations
  - ensuring that pupils' consistently present their work neatly.
- Make certain the proportion of pupils reaching or exceeding the expected level in the Year 1 phonics checks improves and that this improvement is sustained over time.
- Consolidate the improvements being made in marking and ensure that the examples of good marking found in English and mathematics are mirrored in other subjects.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Children get off to a good start and make good progress in the Reception class. They settle quickly and feel safe because relationships with the adults are good. Children take part enthusiastically in the various activities in the classroom and the well-organised outdoor areas.
- Children's skills on entry to the Reception class are similar to those usually found at their age. By the end of the year most are well prepared for Year 1 and are working above the expected levels in all areas of learning.
- Pupils continue to make good progress in Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards by the end of Year 2 are typically above average. Pupils' work and school assessment records show that outcomes this year are likely to be of a similarly high standard.
- In the past, pupils' progress in Key Stage 2 has not been as rapid as that seen in earlier year-groups, especially in mathematics. Pupils, especially the more able, were not always challenged sufficiently, and none reached the higher Level 5 in the 2013 National tests in mathematics. Standards in reading and writing were average last year and below average in mathematics.
- The school has taken swift and appropriate action to address the low outcomes in mathematics in 2013. The approach to teaching mathematics has been reviewed, expectations raised and additional group work introduced to challenge the more-able. As a result, standards in mathematics this year are much higher. Assessment records show that pupils are now making good progress and catching up on previously lost ground. Some weaknesses remain. Pupils' skills in undertaking calculations swiftly and accurately are not wholly secure, and the presentation of their work is not as neat and orderly as it should be. This untidy presentation makes it difficult for pupils to check their own work and mistakes are sometimes missed.
- In Year 6, pupils' reading skills are above those expected for the age. Most read confidently and can talk knowledgeably about their favourite books and authors. They recommend books to their friends and can hypothesise how the plot might develop. The most recent checks on the Year 1 pupils' phonic skills show a significant improvement in the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard. This is as a result of the more effective way the pupils are organised in the phonics sessions.
- Pupils' skills in writing are developing well. Standards in Year 6 are above the expected level. Pupils write in different styles and include a good range of imaginative vocabulary. They use metaphors, similes and alliteration confidently. These skills were evident in the poems they wrote about a 'captured bear', which involved describing how the bear might feel when asked to perform. The task encouraged pupils to reflect and to consider the feelings of others, and they responded to the challenge they had been set very positively.
- Pupils' work and school assessment records show that most pupils in all year groups are now making good progress. Good support for pupils who speak English as an additional language, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs helps them make similar progress to their classmates.
- Pupils entitled to additional support from pupil premium funding are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. There were no pupils leaving Year 6 last year who were eligible for the pupil premium and too few in the school as a whole to make a reliable comment on their attainment. School data confirms that the school uses the pupil premium effectively to

narrow any gaps between eligible pupils' achievement and that of the others.

- The primary school sports funding is being used appropriately. Staff are more confident in teaching a range of sports and pupils are eager to become involved. Pupils have a much better understanding of how sporting activities contribute to healthy living. For example, they have a good understanding of heart rate and the importance of warming up sessions and rest periods.

### **The quality of teaching is good**

- Teaching in all classes is good and some that is highly effective. As a result, pupils throughout the school are now making good progress in English and mathematics. Recent improvement in Key Stage 2 is helping pupils to make up lost ground and achieve well.
- Teachers' expectations of all pupils are now generally much higher but this is less true of the more-able pupils, given their starting points and known skills. In other respects, nearly all lessons are well planned. Most teachers ask questions skilfully to check and develop pupils' learning.
- Pupils' progress is checked regularly. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively to help pupils who are finding the work difficult and in some classes also support those who are more-able. All staff strive to ensure that all pupils are fully included and have equal access to the same learning opportunities as other pupils.
- Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well and encourage them to share their ideas with each other and with the adults. This promotes their social skills and their ability to communicate clearly with others. The emphasis placed by the school on developing good relationships between pupils and reinforcing their sense of unity with one another is one reason for pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The marking of pupils' work in their English and mathematics books is good. Pupils are given clear guidance on what they have to do to improve their work. This helps them to make rapid progress and reach their challenging targets. However, teachers rarely mark work in other subjects to the same level. Pupils are seldom reminded of their targets in these subjects and they do not always develop their skills here as well as they do in their English and mathematics lessons.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The vast majority apply themselves conscientiously in lessons. They want to do well and please their teachers and clearly enjoy their learning. Pupils' attendance is consequently above average for primary schools.
- Most pupils behave well at all times and are proud of their school. They move around the buildings sensibly. They interact well over lunch and play amicably on the playground and the school field. They look after one-another and are polite in the way they speak to each other and to adults. Pupils show respect for the environment. Displays and equipment are valued. There is no litter.
- Incidents of inappropriate behaviour or racist incidents are very rare. Pupils say that should an incident occur, they are confident it will be dealt with fairly and swiftly by the senior leaders. They know about different types of bullying, for example name-calling, fighting, racial bullying,

or religious intolerance.

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. The school meets the latest requirements for safeguarding. Members of the governing body check to make certain that procedures are followed and the site is safe.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Pupils know who to turn to if they are worried, and are confident they will be listened to. They are aware of potential dangers when using the internet. Older pupils have already considered potential dangers when they take part in the residential educational visit to an activity centre later this term.

### **The leadership and management are good**

- The governing body, headteacher and senior leaders have acted quickly to tackle the dip in the 2013 Year 6 mathematics tests and the Year 1 phonics checks. Staff, too, have responded positively to leaders' initiatives. Systems for checking on pupils' progress and teaching quality, as well as the way the curriculum is taught, have all been reviewed. Pupils are now making good progress and standards are rising.
- Senior leaders know the school's strengths and have identified the key areas for development. These are set out in their detailed improvement plan. Senior staff and subject leaders are supporting the headteacher effectively and contributing to the leadership and management of the school.
- The headteacher undertakes regular observations of teaching and its impact on pupils' learning. Pupils' attainment and progress data are discussed regularly. Teachers are asked to explain if any pupil is falling behind and what they intend to do about it. The information is shared with the governing body and used to decide if the teachers should receive a salary increase.
- Staff have attended courses and are working together effectively to incorporate the changes required by the revision of the National Curriculum.
- Teachers plan the term's work well in advance and upload an overview of the areas to be covered onto the school web site so that parents know what topics their children will be covering and how they can help. In all classes, there is a suitable focus on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. When possible, subjects are brought together through a theme or topic so that natural connections and links between subjects can be explored and brought to pupils' attention.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. Pupils are given many opportunities to enrich their education, for example by working in groups, helping to develop the school grounds and by taking part in a range of sporting activities and educational visits.
- The local authority has provided appropriate support. The school makes good use of the system of termly visits by officers to review the school's performance, plan for future developments and to help the governing body in setting targets for the headteacher.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body has reviewed and modified the way in which it checks the work of the school. Governors now have a robust overview of the strengths and areas for development. Governors set the headteacher suitably challenging targets and check the progress of the actions to tackle the priorities identified in the improvement plan. For example, they ask the headteacher about the quality of teaching and pupils' attainment, progress and behaviour.

Governors' recent training in understanding pupils' performance data and making national comparisons, supported by detailed documentation from the headteacher, helps them understand where teaching is consistently good and where additional support is needed. They know how targets are set for teachers to improve, and understand the process for rewarding good teaching. Governors are keen to promote good relationships within the school and the local community and will not accept discrimination of any sort.

- Governors monitor the budget closely to ensure that money, including the pupil premium allocation and the primary sports funding, is spent as intended. For example, the pupil premium money is being spent on resources and additional staffing to support pupils' learning in literacy and numeracy. The sport funding is being used to employ specialist sports staff, train teachers, to extend the range of sporting activities and clubs and to enter various sporting competitions. They ensure all requirements regarding keeping pupils safe are met and regularly reviewed.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	117435
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	444290

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	105
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Sally Laflin
<b>Headteacher</b>	Amanda Evans
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 June 2009
<b>Telephone number</b>	01707 322589
<b>Fax number</b>	01707 325757
<b>Email address</b>	admin@stjohns561.herts.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit [www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk), or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)  
[Store St](#)  
[Manchester](#)  
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2014

