

# St Alban's Church of England Primary School

St Albans Close, Ashmore Park, Wolverhampton, WV11 2PF

**Inspection dates** 3–4 February 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Activities for children in the early years classes are not always planned carefully enough to help them develop their skills quickly and make good progress.
- Pupils do not make enough progress in mathematics or writing. This means that standards are not as high as they could be.
- Pupils start in Key Stage 1 with broadly average standards. By the time they leave the school at the end of Key Stage 2, standards are still average.
- Teachers do not give pupils enough opportunities to practise their literacy skills in different subjects. This limits the progress they make.
- Not all teachers check carefully enough how well pupils are doing in lessons. They do not adapt the tasks when necessary to help pupils make more rapid progress.
- Some teachers ask pupils questions about what they are learning that are too easy. This does not help them think about, or develop, their knowledge or understanding.
- There are currently no specific leaders for mathematics and the early years. The roles are being covered by the head of school.
- Provision in the early years requires improvement because teachers do not always plan activities that result in purposeful learning.

### The school has the following strengths

- The strong senior leadership team regularly checks teaching and supports teachers who need help to improve.
- Leaders have ensured that there is no longer any inadequate teaching in the school. There is good teaching in a number of classes.
- Pupils' progress is rigorously checked and any at risk of falling behind are quickly helped to keep up. As a result, progress is accelerating and standards are rising.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and they are enthusiastic learners. Safeguarding practices are good and children feel safe in school.
- Governors are very supportive and meet regularly with leaders to check that improvements are happening as quickly as possible.
- The school makes sure that pupils understand other cultures and beliefs. Pupils of all ages talk knowledgeably about British values such as respect and democracy, and how these affect their lives.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed pupils' learning in 11 lessons, all of which were seen together with the St Alban's head of school.
- Meetings were held with the executive headteacher, both heads of school and other staff, a group of pupils and four members of the governing body.
- Informal discussions were held with parents.
- The inspector took account of the 15 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, the school's own parental and pupil questionnaires and the 18 responses to a staff questionnaire.
- The inspector observed the school's work and reviewed a range of documentation including: the school's checks on its performance; its analysis and tracking of pupils' progress; records of behaviour and safety; school improvement plans; records relating to classroom observations and the management of staff performance; safeguarding arrangements; records of meetings of the governing body.
- The inspector also looked at pupils' work, listened to pupils read and checked information on attendance.

## Inspection team

Susan Hughes, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

*In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.*

### Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- It is federated with St Thomas' Church of England Primary School with whom it shares an executive headteacher and a governing body. The executive headteacher is a Local Leader of Education.
- The senior leadership team comprises the executive headteacher, and a head of school for each of the two federated schools. All members of the senior leadership team work across both schools.
- Children in the early years start in a Nursery class where they attend part-time. Some move to the full-time Reception class at the beginning of the year in which they are five years old. The majority of children in the Reception class have not attended the school's nursery.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average at just less than one in five. About one in 25 pupils speaks English as an additional language and this is well below average.
- At about one in six, the proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is broadly average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils (those supported by the pupil premium, which is additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or looked after by the local authority) is well above average, at nearly one half.
- One pupil is currently educated off-site at Wolverhampton's Kingston Pupil Referral Unit.
- The school is a member of the Manor Teaching School Alliance. It works closely with the Manor Teaching School, whose headteacher is a National Leader of Education.
- There have been considerable changes to staffing since the previous inspection. Ten teachers have left the school and currently only one teacher in the school was there at the previous inspection. The mathematics subject leader left in December 2014.
- The head of school for St Alban's started in September 2013. She currently also leads the early years and mathematics throughout the school.
- The special educational needs co-ordinator took up post in April 2014 and the literacy leader started in September 2014.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6

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

- Improve teaching to raise standards further by ensuring that:
  - teachers give pupils opportunities to practise their literacy skills, and especially writing, in different subjects
  - all teachers regularly check how well pupils are doing in lessons, so that they can adapt tasks to help pupils of all abilities make good progress
  - teachers ask pupils challenging questions which help them develop their learning
  - in the early years, activities provide children with more opportunities to develop their skills and build effectively on previous learning.
- Strengthen leadership and management by ensuring that vacant leadership roles are filled and new leaders quickly develop the skills they need to drive improvements in their areas of responsibility.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- The marked improvement in the school since the previous inspection demonstrates the strong leadership of the executive headteacher. She has developed a skilled and dedicated senior leadership team who are driving improvements in all areas of the school. Leaders are committed to providing pupils with highly positive experiences in school so that they develop confidence and a love for learning.
- Leaders rigorously check how well pupils are doing, their behaviour and their attendance. They hold teachers accountable for the progress made by pupils in their class. The headteacher regularly visits the Kingston Pupil Referral Unit to check on the achievement and behaviour of the pupil being educated there. Her findings are reported to the governing body.
- Although some leaders are relatively new in post, their previous experiences have enabled them quickly to identify where improvements are needed. The leadership of literacy and special educational needs provision is good. Changes that these leaders have made are helping pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, make good progress.
- The leadership role for mathematics has recently become vacant. The head of school is currently overseeing this area, in addition to leading early years provision. Although the school plans to do so, new leaders have not yet been appointed to drive improvement in these areas.
- Very effective partnerships, especially with St Thomas' Church of England School and The Manor Teaching School, have supported the school's good progress since the previous inspection. Working closely with these and other local schools provides opportunities for staff to share expertise and develop their skills. Teachers have benefited from shared training sessions and visits to other schools to see good practice.
- The appraisal system, which rewards teachers only when their pupils make good progress, has helped leaders make sure that lessons are taught well. Teachers are clear about what is expected of them, and say they receive good support and training to help them meet their challenging targets.
- The curriculum is interesting and pupils enjoy the topics studied. Some teachers develop pupils' literacy skills well in different subjects. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 formulated well-constructed, reasoned arguments for favouring being either a Spartan or a Greek when learning about Ancient Greece. However, such skill development is not as effective in all classes.
- The pupil premium is used well to help disadvantaged pupils. They are supported by additional adults in the classroom and in small groups to help them achieve as well as other pupils. School data show that they make at least as much progress as other pupils, and in most cases do even better.
- Leaders had identified that many pupils in the school were unable to swim. Consequently, the primary sport funding is used primarily to provide swimming lessons for all pupils in Key Stage 2. The funding is also used to provide additional lunchtime and after-school sports clubs, which are encouraging more pupils to take part in physical activities.
- The school places great emphasis on equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination through its strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. Pupils' spiritual development is promoted through the school's Christian values. Pupils also learn about other cultures and beliefs, and the importance of tolerance and respect for the views of others.
- Pupils are keenly aware that their school values reflect British values and talk knowledgably about democracy and the rule of law. For example, studies of the Ten Commandments were linked to the need to have laws for a successful society. Pupils told the inspector how their school council is democratically elected. A child in the Reception class explained to the inspector the need to respect other people, 'If you don't respect them, you're not being kind.' Pupils are well prepared for life in modern, multicultural Britain.
- Leaders have reviewed and improved the safeguarding arrangements in school since the previous inspection. They make sure that the school is safe and secure and that policies and procedures are used

consistently. Leaders, including governors, ensure that the school's arrangements for safeguarding are effective and meet national requirements.

- The local authority has provided good support for the school by verifying teachers' assessments and the school's self-evaluations. It has also providing briefings and advice for senior leaders and governors.

#### ■ The governance of the school:

- Governors are very supportive and have shown resilience and determination in addressing the challenges they faced in improving the school. They challenge the school's leaders over the pace of improvement to ensure it does not drop. Their appointments of key staff have created a skilled leadership team which is building an increasingly strong team of teachers. Governors are very aware of the improving quality of teaching in the school and make sure that they use appraisal system only to reward with pay increases those teachers whose pupils achieve well.
- Governors use data confidently to check on pupils' progress. They attend regular meetings with senior leaders, talk to pupils and visit the school to see for themselves how it is doing. The governing body ensures that finances are managed effectively and checks that pupil premium funding is helping disadvantaged pupils to keep up with their peers. They understand that the primary sport funding is improving pupils' swimming skills and increasing the number of opportunities pupils have to take part in physical activities.

### The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

#### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are polite and pleasant to each other and adults, and older pupils keep an eye out for younger ones. For example, during the inspection a girl in Year 6 helped one of the Reception children fasten her coat and scarf before going out in the cold weather. Most parents who completed Parent View and the school's own questionnaire agree that behaviour is good.
- Adults throughout the school, including in the early years, act as good role models in the way they speak to pupils. Their caring manner sets a tone of respect and consideration. Pupils respond by treating adults and each other similarly respectfully. They automatically support each other in lessons, readily share equipment and thank each other for holding open doors.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about their work and try hard in lessons. There has been a marked improvement in the work in pupils' books over recent months. The neat handwriting and well-presented work, especially in Years 5 and 6, illustrates how proud pupils are of their learning and their school.
- Even when the work in lessons is not so interesting and pupils lose focus, they rarely disturb other pupils' learning. Pupils who find behaving well difficult are sensitively supported and their behaviour improves as because the behaviour policy is consistently applied.
- The school has worked closely with parents to encourage good attendance and this has improved. However, children from a small number of families have especially poor attendance and this pulls down the overall school attendance to well below average. Most other pupils attend well and arrive punctually.

#### Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils, including those in the early years, are well supervised at playtimes and they say they feel safe in school because, 'everyone protects you'. All parents and carers who responded to Parent View feel their children are safe in school.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in different situations outside school. They understand how to stay safe when using the internet. Older pupils especially appreciate the risks of talking to someone unknown online. They understand what to do to keep themselves safe in this, or any other potentially dangerous situation.
- Pupils understand what bullying is and the different forms it can take, including verbal and cyber-bullying. They spoke enthusiastically about anti-bullying week and many posters around school give guidance about

how to deal with bullying. Pupils told the inspector that there is very little bullying in school. Any incidents are quickly and effectively dealt with by the teachers.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Teaching has improved as a result of recent staff changes and the amount of good teaching in the school is increasing. Teaching still requires improvement, however, as it is not yet consistently good throughout the school. The school's leaders are providing effective support where it is needed.
- The teaching of mathematics requires improvement. Some teachers do not check how well pupils are doing regularly enough during the lesson. This means that pupils who find the work easy, or have mastered a skill, are not given work that deepens their understanding.
- The teaching of literacy has improved since the previous inspection, but still requires improvement. Pupils learn spelling and punctuation from as early as the Reception class and use the skills in their English lessons. However, teachers do not give pupils enough opportunities to practise these skills in different subjects, so they do not become confident readers and writers as quickly as they could.
- Teachers do not always ask questions which help pupils develop their knowledge and understanding. Sometimes questions are too easy and require simple answers, or the teacher provides the answer for the pupil. More skilled teachers challenge pupils to explain their learning and, through asking searching and probing questions, get them to think in greater depth and lead them on successfully to the next stage in their learning.
- The teaching of reading is good. Recent changes to the way phonics (the sounds that letters represent) is taught in the early years and Key Stage 1 mean that pupils are now making good progress. Pupils use their phonic skills well to read unfamiliar words. During the inspection a pupil in Year 1 in the early stages of reading remembered what sound 'oa' makes and successfully sounded out 'groan'. A pupil in Year 2 confidently read 'mysterious' and talked enthusiastically about the sort of books he enjoyed reading.
- Pupils especially enjoy their learning when explanations are clear or when teachers model what they have to do. In Year 2, pupils were well prepared for a role-play session interviewing characters from a story. They threw themselves wholeheartedly into the activity and produced questions and answers that were thoughtful, used high-quality vocabulary and employed complex sentence structures.
- Disadvantaged pupils are well supported by additional adults who work closely with the class teachers to provide the right sort of help, either in the lesson or in small groups outside the lesson. This extra input means these pupils make good progress.
- The learning difficulties of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are accurately identified, sometimes while still in the early years classes, and appropriate support provided. Well-briefed and trained additional adults provide sensitive support to enable them to work and achieve alongside their classmates. As a result, these pupils also make good progress.
- Teaching of most-able pupils is not consistent across all classes. In some, good teaching means that pupils are given tasks which help them make rapid progress. Other teachers do not check pupils' learning carefully enough and the most-able pupils often have work which is too easy for them, which slows their progress.

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Children start in the early years classes with skills that are broadly typical for their age. Literacy skills and a wider understanding of the world are less well developed. They make steady progress in the Nursery and Reception classes and their skills are still broadly average when they start in Key Stage 1.
- Pupils typically start in Key Stage 1 with average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2014, they left the Key Stage with skills that were still broadly average. Standards in each subject had improved

since the previous year.

- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2014 showed a similar improvement on the previous year. However, in 2014 pupils in Year 6 left the school with standards that were no better than average.
- In 2014, the progress pupils made between Key Stage 1 and the end of Key Stage 2 was inadequate. However, school records show that weak teaching in the past had hindered the progress of these pupils. In their last year in the school pupils made better progress, but this was not good enough to improve their overall achievement.
- School data show that as teaching is improving, so is pupils' achievement. Pupils currently in the school are making good progress in writing and mathematics in some classes, but their progress is limited by weaker teaching in other classes. Most pupils are achieving well in reading.
- In 2014 the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 was two terms behind other pupils in the year group in mathematics and reading and half a term ahead in writing. In relation to pupils nationally, they were two and a half terms behind in mathematics and reading and a term behind in writing. They had not made as much progress as other pupils in the school in mathematics and reading, but had made better progress in writing. Because of the good progress being made by disadvantaged pupils currently in the school, gaps in attainment are narrowing and there is now little difference in the attainment of these and other pupils in Year 6.
- The results of the most recent screening check on how well Year 1 pupils understand phonics were below average. Improvements since September 2014 to the way phonics are taught means that pupils currently in Year 1 are working at a higher level than in previous years.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress in most year groups. Because their needs are now identified quickly, the well-targeted help they receive means that most achieve well.
- The achievement of the school's most-able pupils' is improving but varies between classes. More pupils are working at a high level than in previous years, especially in Years 5 and 6. In some classes, these pupils make good progress but in others they are not making the progress they could. Generally, their achievement improves as they move higher up the school.

### **The early years provision**

### **requires improvement**

- Some activities are not planned effectively to develop children's skills as well as they could. Although children participate happily in the activities, the skills being developed are not clear, limiting progress. For example, children in the Nursery enjoyed riding bikes and pushing prams round the outdoor learning area, but there was little evidence that this was giving them new skills or experiences.
- Where activities are better planned, pupils talked knowledgeably about their learning. For example, children in the Reception class enthusiastically wrote about their favourite books to recommend them to others. In learning about China, these were able to inform the inspector that they were writing Chinese 'characters', not letters. Children are enthusiastic about their learning and behave well.
- Teachers in the early years regularly record what the children are doing by taking photographs and making careful notes about their conversations. However, these are sometimes a record of participation rather than an assessment of the progress pupils are making. This means that future activities are not then building effectively on their experiences.
- Teachers and other adults create a safe and nurturing environment for children. They are well supervised and adults are sensitive to children's feelings and needs. Adults foster a caring attitude towards each other, model good manners and encourage pupils to try hard. For example in a phonics lesson, nursery children listened carefully to the teacher's instructions before they sensibly discussed the illustration in

their reading books with their partner.

- The early years is currently led by the head of school. She checks teachers' records regularly and tracks the progress children are making. The leader makes sure that all staff are well trained and supported to improve their teaching. In 2014, the proportion of pupils who achieved a good level of development was just below average, but higher than in the previous year. Children are adequately prepared for their move to Key Stage 1.

## 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>	104364
<b>Local authority</b>	Wolverhampton
<b>Inspection number</b>	453788

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	136
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Nick Watson
<b>Executive Headteacher</b>	Helen Morris
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	6 February 2013
<b>Telephone number</b>	01902 558825
<b>Fax number</b>	01902 558827
<b>Email address</b>	stalbansprimaryschool@wolverhampton.gov.uk

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