

# St John's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Infant School

4 New Street, Chatham, ME4 6RH

**Inspection dates** 17–18 March 2015

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- The school has improved since its previous inspection. Senior leaders, including governors, ensure pupils feel safe, are happy and achieve well. The school is managed effectively.
- Results in national tests have improved over time. Standards are now similar to those found nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well.
- Children get off to a good start in the early years provision. Staff cater for their welfare needs carefully. They make good progress from their starting points.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language quickly gain the skills needed for them to be confident in tackling class work.
- Pupils behave well. The school's motto of 'believe and achieve' is something that pupils know and try hard to fulfil. All say they feel safe.
- Teaching has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. It ensures that pupils achieve well in their writing and number work. Reading is taught particularly well and, as a result, pupils read confidently by the time they leave.
- Staff effectively combine the teaching of Christian values with a range of activities to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain. There is a strong sense of respect for the diverse range of religions, values and beliefs represented in the school.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school, citing the way they engage with the staff as just one of the ways the school has improved recently.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 do not always write using a wide enough range of words. This is particularly true for those pupils who learn more slowly.
- Some activities in the early years do not always ensure that children are fully absorbed in their learning.
- At times, pupils in Years 1 and 2 are not confident in applying their mathematical skills in a variety of ways.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed eight lessons or parts of lessons, of which four were joint observations with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with a group of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and other members, the headteacher and other senior staff. Additionally, the inspector met with an adviser from the local authority.
- It was not possible to consider any responses made using the online Parent View survey as there were too few to be displayed. The inspector spoke to several parents when they brought their children to school and considered the responses to a parental questionnaire recently conducted by the school. The inspector took account of the 12 staff questionnaires completed during the inspection.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own information on pupils' current progress, planning and checks on the quality of teaching and assessment, the new curriculum, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding.
- The inspector listened to pupils read informally when possible and more formally with a small number of Year 2 pupils.

## Inspection team

Kevin Hodge, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- St John's is a smaller-than-average-sized school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs support is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils looked after by the local authority or known to be eligible for free school meals) is above average.
- Pupils attend the Reception class full time.
- There is an above average proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is also above the national average. A few of these pupils are at an early stage of learning English.
- Since the previous inspection there has been a number of staff changes. The deputy headteacher became the acting headteacher in September 2013. Governors are intending to make a permanent appointment later this term.
- Governors have applied for the school to become an academy early next term.

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

- Raise the overall quality of teaching and pupils' achievement to outstanding by:
  - ensuring that pupils in Years 1 and 2, particularly those who find learning more difficult, write using a wider range of words to extend the quality of their written work
  - increasing opportunities for pupils in Years 1 and 2 to use their mathematical skills in different ways
  - making sure that all pupils are aware of the importance of presenting their work neatly
  - ensuring that children in the early years provision benefit and learn more fully from the activities they choose for themselves.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- The acting headteacher leads the school well. She has effectively raised expectations among pupils, staff and parents in the way the school should improve. Supported by staff and governors, she has cultivated an atmosphere where all are valued, irrespective of their backgrounds or beliefs. This has helped to ensure that pupils behave well and has laid the foundations for better teaching.
- In this small school, middle leaders (those responsible for subjects or aspects of the school) have several responsibilities. Middle leaders are comparatively new in their roles and are still getting to grips with all aspects of their responsibilities. However, they work together well, such as having termly meetings to keep an eye on pupils' progress. They are beginning to have a positive impact on the school's work.
- Teaching has improved, largely because staff are helped to improve their practice following observations of lessons and scrutiny of the work produced by pupils. These observations identify those areas needing to improve and staff are supported well. Staff are clear that salary progression is linked to improvements in pupils' achievement.
- Activities to ensure that disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress are well managed. The same is true of those who speak English as an additional language. Pupils in need of extra support are identified quickly. Staff liaise with a range of outside professionals to call upon a wider range of expertise when needed.
- The school uses additional funding for disadvantaged pupils effectively. This is particularly so since the school identified and monitored this group of pupils closely. Leaders are now ensuring that gaps in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and their classmates are closing more quickly this year compared to last year.
- Although few parents responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire, many responded very positively when the school used its own questionnaire recently. Parents spoken to informally voiced their appreciation for feeling more valued and in staff being more available to them.
- The range of subjects taught provides pupils with a secure grounding in their basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics. A focus on writing has been successful in improving pupils' work. Basic mathematical skills are catered for well; although, occasionally, pupils are not always aware of how to use these skills in different ways. A wide variety of activities, including parents visiting the school to read with their children, have had a positive impact on pupils' achievement in reading.
- The school promotes its Christian values and makes sure that pupils, regardless of ethnic background, belief and tradition, all feel valued. The school ensures that pupils are fully aware of British values, including respect for others. The study of key events, such as Remembrance Day, as well as visits to local places of historic significance, adds to their good knowledge and understanding. The school is effective in helping to make sure that pupils are prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The local authority provides good support to the school. It is particularly effective in helping develop better teaching, raising pupils' achievement and support for senior leaders.
- Leaders use the primary sport funding effectively to increase pupils' experience and participation in a range of sports. This has helped the school provide for more swimming activities, specialist swimming teaching and sports ranging from trampolining to 'balanceability' activities.
- Although pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds, the school ensures equal opportunities for all and does not tolerate discrimination of any sort.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements and procedures are effective.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Following the previous inspection and subsequent review of governance, governors revised the way they work. This has included making links more directly with staff, changes to their committees and in the way they oversee the work of the school. This has enabled governors to have a more accurate view of what the school does well and what needs to be improved. They have a secure awareness of the quality of teaching. Governors know how the quality of teaching links to salary progression and what is done to reward good teaching and tackle weaker performance. They also know how well the school's performance compares to others locally and nationally. Governors' visits to the school are frequent and this ensures that governors are familiar with all aspects of the school's work. They have handled arrangements effectively for the school's plan to become an academy next term.

### The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are kind and enthusiastically welcome visitors to the school. They are keen to recall visits to the local library, the day when they posted letters to Santa Claus or the 'best places' on the playground.
- Pupils say that behaviour is typically good, although admit that occasionally some pupils find it hard to follow school rules. Within lessons, most pupils are attentive, listen carefully and want to please their teachers. Behaviour is good rather than outstanding because pupils' attitudes to learning are not exemplary across all classes and year groups.
- The school has worked hard to improve attendance, which, although dipping occasionally, is broadly average. Pupils are punctual and enjoy school. They particularly enjoy the fact that their parents come into school with them on Wednesdays to read with them.
- Pupils are proud of their school council. They enjoyed talking about their efforts to raise money for toys in the early years classroom by having a cake sale. They also feel proud to have had some influence over the choice of food on offer at lunchtimes, but appreciate the efforts made to make lunches special. This included having shamrock shaped biscuits on St Patrick's Day, and daily homemade bread.
- Parents who responded to the school's questionnaire or spoke to the inspector felt that behaviour had improved and that the school's small size helped everybody to feel valued.

## Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils now have a good understanding of how to keep safe, particularly if they feel they are being bullied. Their better understanding also means they are less likely to be unkind to their friends. Pupils are typically caring to others, irrespective of their backgrounds. They say that they feel safe.
- Pupils said they know what to do if they feel unhappy. If this is the case, a member of staff is assigned to that particular child until they feel the problem is resolved.
- Visitors to the school, such as local police officers, fire crews and other professionals, help to develop pupils' awareness of staying safe. A recent safety week helped pupils gain an understanding of how to keep safe within the community and the dangers of talking to strangers. Their understanding of what to do when using computers is also good. As one pupil said, 'You should never tell people who you are, if you've never met them – they could be anyone.'
- Parents also agree that the school is a caring, safe place for their children to be.

## The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching over time has improved and now enables pupils across the school to achieve well. This is evident from pupils' work, their books and displays, which reflect good progress over time.
- Teaching ensures that nearly all lesson activities are well organised and interesting, helping pupils to enjoy their learning.
- Teaching ensures pupils are generally confident in their writing, knowing different grammar rules. In one class, pupils enjoyed using a 'writing mountain' to plan their story. While their writing has improved, the school recognises that there is scope for pupils to develop further the range of words to use within their stories or reports. This is particularly true of those pupils who find learning more difficult, as they do not always use a good variety of words in their written work.
- Teaching ensures that all groups of pupils have activities that are set at the right level for them to make good progress. Just occasionally, the most able pupils finish their work quickly and are not always set a new task soon enough.
- Overall, skills in mathematics are taught well. For example, in Year 1, pupils learned how to group different numbers into odd and evens connected with work on Venn diagrams. As a result of effective learning, they were able to group the numbers, using the computer to check their answers. Pupils generally have accurate number calculation skills, but are not always fully aware of how the skills can be used in different ways.
- Teaching assistants contribute well to pupils' learning, particularly the learning of those with special educational needs and those at an early stage of learning English. In one lesson, a teaching assistant was observed successfully developing the vocabulary of a small group of pupils. Pupils at an early stage of learning English also benefit from being 'buddied' with other pupils and in having teaching materials organised just for them.
- Teachers ensure that pupils enjoy their lessons. For example, in a mathematics lesson, pupils were keen

to sing a song that reinforced their learning and the use of their 'izzy, whizzy, brain'.

- Reading is taught particularly well. Pupils who read to the inspector effectively used a range of skills, including phonics (letters and sounds) and the use of picture clues, to work out unfamiliar words and phrases.
- Pupils' work is marked carefully and usually ensures that pupils have a clear idea of how well they are doing. Occasionally, pupils are not always expected to present their work as neatly as possible.

### The achievement of pupils

is good

- From their starting points, children now make good progress in writing, mathematics and reading throughout the school. They achieve well, and this is an improvement since the previous inspection.
- Pupils reached average levels of attainment at the end of Year 2 in 2014 in reading, writing and mathematics. These results were the school's best for some time. As a result, pupils are now better prepared for their start in junior school.
- Pupils mainly make good progress across the school. Writing has been the weakest area and the school has worked successfully to bring about improvement. There is now a greater emphasis on spelling, punctuation, grammar and writing across subjects.
- The school supports disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs well. This helps them to make good progress in their learning. Good involvement of their parents and a high level of care through, for example, having a member of staff specifically responsible for them, ensure they achieve well, both academically and personally.
- Those pupils who are new to speaking or writing English achieve well. The support they have when they start includes special packs of work. These help them settle quickly and make progress quickly. Further ongoing support from staff and outside professionals makes sure this continues.
- Pupils from all ethnic backgrounds achieve well.
- Those pupils at the early stages of learning English receive specific support to develop their spoken and written skills. This helps to improve their language skills quickly and, in turn, supports their progress across a range of subjects.
- The most able pupils make good progress and achieved well in last year's national tests. The work set for them is usually demanding and supports their progress.
- In last year's national tests, disadvantaged pupils were behind others in reading, writing and mathematics. The school looked thoroughly at the reasons why. Leaders quickly arranged extra support for those pupils coming through the school. Current checks indicate that the gaps in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and their peers, both in the school and nationally, are now closing. Overall, these pupils are making good progress.
- There is a strong emphasis on reading in the school. Parents are fully involved from the outset. Regular effective guided reading sessions, combined with exciting book corners and books, help pupils enjoy reading and achieve well. The proportion of pupils meeting the required standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check was above average last year, reflecting the good emphasis on the teaching of phonics across the school.

### The early years provision

is good

- Children in the early years achieve well. They join the school with skills that are generally lower than those typical for their age, particularly in their social and language skills. The proportion that reaches a good level of development by the end of the Reception year compares favourably with schools locally and nationally. This means they are now well prepared for their start in Year 1.
- The good teaching of phonics helps develop children's reading and writing skills well. Children enjoy practical activities such as writing out a speeding ticket when acting as a police officer, writing a shopping list in the class kitchen or quietly reading in the book corner.
- Children who arrive come from diverse ethnic heritages. Staff are sensitive to this and frequent meetings with parents help to dispel any worries they might have. This ensures children settle quickly regardless of their differing backgrounds and experiences. Careful checks on how well they are doing help identify any areas that need to be tackled quickly. For example, the class teacher correctly identified the need to improve children's ability to manipulate small objects and strengthen their grip.

- The clear focus on reading starts in the early years. There is regular high quality guided reading, strong links with parents in reading with their children at home and once a week at the beginning of the school day.
- Strong, caring and supportive relationships ensure children feel safe, behave well and enjoy their learning. Other adults working in the class keep a close eye to ensure that children are happy and safe, although they do not always spot when children have lost interest with a particular activity.
- Children can choose different activities, outside or inside. They are often planned well to capture children's interests, such as when painting symmetrical butterflies. However, some of the activities are not planned well enough to maintain children's interests. This means that some children 'skip' from activity to activity, rather than learn more deeply and gaining the maximum benefit from their experience.
- There are extremely good links with parents through, for example, induction, advice on reading with their children and contributing to their children's learning. Additionally, parents spend time with their children in the classroom at the start of the school day. All of these things help to foster a strong sense of partnership between school and home.
- The early years is effectively and enthusiastically led and managed. The leader has ensured high quality care and safety for the children and she contributes to other aspects of the school.

## 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>	118640
<b>Local authority</b>	Medway
<b>Inspection number</b>	453598

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>	5–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	90
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	James Wyper
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jo Collman
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	28 February–1 March 2013
<b>Telephone number</b>	01634844135
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<b>Email address</b>	office@stjohns.medway.sch.uk

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