

St John's Church of England Voluntary Aided School, Weymouth

Coombe Avenue, Weymouth, Dorset, DT4 7TP

Inspection dates 14–15 April 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
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 determined leadership of the headteacher has further improved teaching and pupils' achievement since the last inspection.
- Leaders make very effective use of pupil progress meetings, to identify strengths and weaknesses, and to plan well-targeted additional support for pupils and training for teachers.
- Pupils' achievement throughout the school is good. By the time they leave Year 6, standards are above those expected nationally in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The quality of teaching is good across the school. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are supported well by teaching assistants.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs achieve well because adults quickly identify their needs and provide effective support.
- Strong leadership has rapidly improved provision in the pre-school and Reception classes; children get a good start to their education.
- Pupils are well cared for and feel safe in school. They are keen to learn and work hard. Pupils say, 'We try our best because we want to succeed.'
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. The caring atmosphere throughout the school reflects a strong sense of community.
- A wide range of activities and educational visits enriches the vibrant curriculum. This helps pupils learn well across all subjects.
- Governors share the leaders' ambition and vision for the school. They offer frequent challenge and have a good understanding of quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' achievement.
- The school engages well with parents and carers. Responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, were overwhelmingly positive about the school.
- As part of the Chesil Education Partnership, the school works productively with its partner schools to develop good practice.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Plans for improvement are not measurable enough for governors to check for themselves the difference the school's actions are making.
- There are not enough opportunities for teachers to share the best practice that exists in the school.
- Not all teachers implement the school's agreed marking and presentation policy with the same success, especially in mathematics.
- Although attendance is improving, it is below the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils’ learning in all classes, play and lunchtime behaviour, and one whole school assembly. They observed 15 lessons, two jointly with the headteacher. In addition, they listened to pupils read and observed them receiving targeted help to improve their reading skills.
- Inspectors held meetings and discussions with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, teachers, pupils and three members of the governing body. A telephone discussion took place with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documents including school development plans, work in pupils’ books, teachers’ planning, checks on pupils’ achievement, safeguarding information, and documents relating to the management of teachers’ performance.
- Inspectors took into account informal discussions with parents and the views of 37 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. Questionnaire responses from 15 members of staff were also analysed.

Inspection team

Dale Burr, Lead inspector	Seconded Inspector
Peter Thrussell	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is slightly smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- A new headteacher was appointed in September 2013.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. A very small minority of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is below the national average. This additional funding is for pupils who are eligible for free school meals or those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum standards set for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.
- There is a pre-school setting on the site, which is managed by the school's governing body and which children attend on a part-time basis. Once they join the Reception class they attend full time.
- In 2014, the school provided two Reception classes to cater for the increase in pupil numbers. This is set to return to one Reception class in September 2015.
- A breakfast club is provided by the school.
- The school has a range of links to other primary schools as part of their membership to the Chesil Education Partnership.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement by:
 - ensuring that all teachers' written feedback is equally effective in helping pupils to improve their work
 - insisting on the highest standard of presentation in mathematics to improve the accuracy of pupils' work
 - providing frequent opportunities for teachers to share best practice across the school.
- Strengthen the school development plan so that it includes clear measures of success and specifies how, and when, governors will check on the school's progress.
- Improve attendance further by rigorously implementing the initiatives in the new attendance policy, especially for families who take holidays during term time.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide strong leadership and are continually seeking ways to improve pupils' achievements. They have successfully managed the increase in the numbers of children in the early years classes and strengthened the leadership structure. All leaders are highly ambitious for the school.
- Middle leaders play an important role in driving whole school improvement. They offer timely and well-focused help to increase pupils' achievement. This is seen in the improvements in pupils' grammar, punctuation and spelling skills. However, best practice in presentation, marking and feedback has not been shared effectively in order to secure the same high standards across the whole school. This is particularly true of mathematics.
- School leaders regularly check the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. Assessment information, including work in pupils' books, is used to hold teachers to account for raising achievement. This helps the school plan and implement high-quality additional support for teachers and pupils.
- The curriculum is well planned and the school has successfully implemented changes to the new National Curriculum. Learning is brought to life by a wide range of visits and visitors, which motivates pupils to learn. For example, Year 5 pupils performed Shakespeare at Weymouth Pavilion as part of a school literacy project. This improved pupils' speaking and writing skills, as well as developing an appreciation of their cultural heritage.
- School leaders place a strong emphasis on learning about fundamental British values. During the inspection, pupils were learning about the value of democracy by exploring the rule of law and freedom of speech. Attractive displays of pupils' work around the school illustrate their understanding of respect and tolerance for other cultures and religions in Britain today. Discrimination of any sort is not tolerated and there are equal opportunities for all pupils.
- Leaders make good use of the primary sport funding. Sports coaches offer professional development for school staff as well as introducing pupils to new sports, such as tennis and basketball. Participation in a variety of after-school sports clubs and competitive sport is increasing. All pupils take swimming lessons and successfully learn to swim by the time they leave Year 6. The physical education leader has forged good links with a number of sports clubs. As a result, pupils pursue more sports in their own time which is developing healthier lifestyles.
- The local authority has a good relationship with the school. It has worked closely to improve the effectiveness of the early years provision. In addition, the school collaborates well with other local schools through its membership of the Chesil Education Partnership.
- Strong relationships with parents are at the heart of St John's success. They appreciate the approachability of staff and the way the school works with the local community. This was summed up by a parent who wrote that 'the whole ethos of the school is first class, with the staff showing 100% dedication and professionalism to the education and well-being of the children'.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is good. Governors know the school and its community well by maintaining a regular presence in school. They ask challenging questions to hold leaders to account, especially about performance results. They played a key role in improving the effectiveness of the early years provision by re-organising pre-school sessions and recruiting an experienced early years leader. Consequently, the provision for starting school is very effective.
 - Governors have sought additional guidance and training to interpret the school's data. They work closely with the deputy headteacher to understand achievement information. Governors receive detailed reports from leaders to keep them informed of the impact of the school's actions; however, they do not always use this information to check for themselves the impact of school development priorities.
 - The governing body has established good financial procedures and keeps a close check on the school's budget. Additional funding is well used, such as the pupil premium, which is helping eligible pupils achieve well in relation to their peers. Governors are knowledgeable about the quality of teaching and closely link decisions about teachers' salary progression to pupils' achievement.
 - Safeguarding procedures are strong. Governors check on the school's safeguarding arrangements and undertake additional training, such as safer recruitment. They ensure that policies and procedures meet statutory requirements.

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

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are polite and show respect to each other and to adults. Pupils told inspectors about their work and life at school and how the school encourages them to 'try their best' and 'be a responsible member of the community'.
- In the majority of lessons, adults plan tasks which motivate pupils to do their best. Behaviour is not outstanding because, on occasions, not enough pupils take the greatest pride in the presentation of their work, especially in mathematics.
- The school council encourages pupils to improve the school. For example, older pupils develop responsibility and self-confidence through roles such as 'playground pals'. These help motivate pupils to behave well at break and lunchtimes.
- Teaching assistants are skilled at supporting pupils with specific behavioural needs so others' learning is not disrupted. A programme to support pupils' social and personal development has been successfully introduced in helping a small number of pupils who have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
- Pupils report that any incidents of inappropriate behaviour are dealt with well by staff. They told an inspector that they 'have a right to learn and a responsibility to behave well'. A scrutiny of school behaviour records and inspection findings confirm these positive views.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Bullying is rare. Older pupils have a good understanding of cyber bullying and produced a video to educate younger pupils. Anti-bullying ambassadors are included in helping school leaders review relevant school policies. Pupils stated that they 'stamp out bullying and know that teachers at school will stop any form of bullying'.
- Pupils are taught to keep safe through a well planned citizenship programme. For example, talks by police and specialist visitors teach the pupils about healthy lifestyles and the dangers associated with social media. A school e-safety newsletter provides additional guidance to parents about safety out of school.
- Staff are checked prior to their appointment to make sure they are suitable to work with pupils. Staff and governors are proactive and carry out risk assessments to make sure the school is safe for staff and pupils, for example by installing a fence to improve security in the junior playground.
- School leaders are determined to improve pupil attendance. Much work has been done to promote regular attendance, including communicating to parents the importance of attending school, whole school rewards and a well-organised breakfast club. Persistent absence and punctuality have improved; however, attendance is below the national average because a small minority of families take holidays during term time.
- Parents and carers agree that their children are happy and safe in school.

The quality of teaching**is good**

- School records indicate that teaching is consistently good across the school, including in the early years. Teachers typically plan lessons which capture pupils' interests. Good teaching ensures that pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics continues to improve.
- School leaders have created a positive learning culture. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to ensure that pupils make good progress. Pupils in need of extra help receive effective support so that they achieve well over time.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly. Where marking is effective, pupils know how to improve and teachers check that advice is acted upon. However, this is not evident in all pupils' books and the excellent practice in some classes has yet to be shared fully between all teachers.
- Teachers give pupils many opportunities to practise their reading and writing skills in different subjects. For example, a Year 6 history display celebrated pupils' powerful and emotive writing after reading about the Blitz. Pupils told an inspector that 'interesting topics make learning fun'. Reading is promoted exceptionally well; pupils enjoy taking part and collecting badges in the reading challenge.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is improving because training and development are effective. For example, in mathematics, teachers using more problem solving in lessons, and in English they are integrating grammar, punctuation and spelling across a range of subjects. This is improving the quality of teaching and raising standards.
- Work in pupils' books is mostly presented to a good standard, particularly in topic and literacy. In mathematics, not all teachers insist that pupils present their work to the highest standard.

The achievement of pupils is good

- In the pre-school and Reception classes, a large majority of children start school with low-level literacy skills. Historically, some children have not made enough progress in reading and writing. Rigorous plans have been put into action to ensure that teachers give children frequent and purposeful opportunities to write. As a result, teachers' expectations of what children can achieve are higher and the proportion of children on track to achieve and exceed a good level of development at the end of Reception is now close to the national average.
- Progress in reading is strong because phonics (letters and the sounds they make) is taught well in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2. More children do well in the Year 1 national phonic check than is typical nationally. Additional support for pupils who need extra help means they catch up quickly.
- Since the last inspection, pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 has improved considerably and is above that seen nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. The school's latest tracking data and work in pupils' books indicate that this trend is set to continue.
- Pupils achieve well in writing from their individual starting points. Teachers give pupils many opportunities to practise their writing across a range of subjects. For example, Year 3 pupils wrote impressive 'Volcano' poetry as part of their topic, including good use of personification and alliteration.
- Pupils' attainment in spelling, punctuation and grammar has been weaker in the past. The English leader has been quick to tackle this and pupils are now making better progress.
- In Year 6, in 2014, the attainment of the small proportion of disadvantaged pupils in writing was about four terms behind other pupils in the school, and two and half terms behind other pupils nationally. In reading, it was three terms behind other pupils in the school and two and a half terms behind other pupils nationally. In mathematics, it was approximately five terms behind other pupils in the school and pupils nationally. The school has good evidence to show that the gap between the attainment of these pupils and that of their classmates is beginning to close in all year groups.
- Disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress. Their needs are well understood and additional support is carefully matched to their differing ability levels.
- The most able pupils achieve well. The school checks on progress regularly and sets demanding targets. Lessons typically provide challenge, as seen in Year 4 where the most able were developing mathematical reasoning through a complex division problem. In 2014, at the end of Year 6, the proportion of pupils making more than expected progress was well above the national average in reading and writing.

The early years provision is good

- Children start in the pre-school with below, and sometimes well-below, typical skills for their age. They make good progress, especially in developing their social development, because adults act as positive role models and offer high levels of care and support.
- Behaviour is well managed and children are kept safe at all times. Routines are well established and ensure no time is wasted moving between activities. The early years is a safe place to learn because adults are vigilant with regard to children's safety and well-being.
- Leadership of the early years is strong. The pre-school and Reception staff work closely to provide children with meaningful learning experiences. The new leader has placed a greater emphasis on developing children's early literacy skills. More children than previously are on track to enter Year 1 with the necessary reading and writing skills.
- Teaching is consistently good across a wide range of learning activities. As a direct result of effective training and support from the local authority, adults have raised their expectations of what children can achieve, particularly in writing. This was demonstrated in an activity where boys and girls were enthusiastically writing messages in a bottle, linked to their seaside topic. The leader has rightly identified the need to share best practice amongst all staff to improve further the quality of teaching.
- The outdoor environment is well used and enables the children to take part in creative play. Regular visits to the forest area provide children with a variety of first-hand experiences. Children enthusiastically told the inspector about 'cooking on the fire', and shared their writing from this memorable visit.
- Parents are encouraged to play an important role in their child's learning. Learning journals (information from ongoing assessments) provide parents with a good overview of their child's progress, including regular opportunities for parents to add their own 'WOW moments' from home. These and other contributions underpin the strong partnership between school and home.
- Children are well placed to continue their good start in Year 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	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. 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.

School details

Unique reference number	113836
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	461795

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	247
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Reverend Tim Greenslade
Headteacher	Amanda Aze
Date of previous school inspection	10–11 May 2011
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