

# St John's CofE Primary School

Heath Road, Sandbach, Cheshire CW11 2LE

**Inspection dates** 4–5 February 2016

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The headteacher provides ambitious leadership. Areas for improvement are accurately identified and robust actions are successful in improving the quality of teaching and raising standards.
- Strong leadership and teaching in the early years ensures that children get off to good start in their school life.
- The work of the school to keep pupils safe, especially when online, is a particular strength.
- Pupils are well behaved. They listen attentively to their teachers and are keen to do their best. Older pupils are excellent role models to pupils new to the school.
- Teaching is good across the school. As a result pupils make progress in reading, writing and mathematics that is broadly similar to that seen nationally.
- Pupils say that learning in many lessons is fun. Teachers' good subject knowledge and enthusiasm helps to fuel pupils' interest in a broad range of subjects.
- The school promotes pupils' personal development and well-being very well. Many pupils and some parents describe the school as being like a large family.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school to learn and spend time with their friends. As a result, overall attendance was above the national average in 2015.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils do not always use teachers' feedback effectively, in line with the school policy, to improve the quality of their work.
- The progress that pupils make in reading, writing and mathematics is not better than good.
- The information that the headteacher provides to governors is occasionally overly complicated. As a result, governors do not always have a deep understanding of the impact of leaders' actions.

## Full report

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

- Improve leadership and management further by:
  - providing governors with the concise information they need to gain a deep understanding of the impact of leaders' actions to improve standards in the school
  - reviewing how governors organise their meetings so that they make the very best use of the information provided to them and can stringently hold leaders to account.
  
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
  - making sure that teachers use their checks on the work that pupils do during lessons to recognise when they require further challenge to accelerate or deepen learning
  - ensuring that pupils and teachers adhere to the school marking and feedback policy, so that teachers' marking has a consistently positive impact on improving pupils' work.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher's passion to ensure that every pupil succeeds is contagious. As a result, an ambitious and highly inclusive culture permeates the school community.
- The headteacher and other senior leaders make effective use of a newly introduced system to track the progress that pupils make. Other checks on the quality of teaching, such as looking at pupils' books, help to identify strengths and areas of weakness across the school accurately. Planned actions for improvement are outlined in the school development plan and are followed up robustly. As a result, most teaching throughout the school is good.
- The headteacher and other senior leaders demonstrate a good capacity to ensure further and continued improvements. A recent dip in the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) screening check, for instance, has been robustly tackled. As a consequence, a significantly improved proportion of current pupils are now working at the expected standard and can apply their skills to their reading and writing.
- Mathematics and English subject leaders make an effective contribution to improving standards in their subjects. Changes to the way that writing is taught, for example by introducing more frequent opportunities for pupils to redraft and improve their work, is beginning to pay dividends. Likewise, a greater focus on developing basic skills in mathematics, such as through motivational times tables challenges, is also improving pupils' abilities in this area.
- Pupils' passion for learning is stoked by a lively and richly stimulating curriculum. Their skills across a broad range of subjects are nurtured and developed very effectively through carefully interwoven activities. In Key Stage 2, pupils put their geographical and historical skills to good use when they answered the question, 'Why was the River Nile important to the Ancient Egyptians?'
- Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural knowledge and understanding is developed well across the school. High-quality music teaching, introduced from the early years, helps pupils cultivate a love of the arts. Children from the Reception Class, for instance, thoroughly enjoyed learning about how to respond to music by using puppets and a giant floor keyboard during an energetic lesson, delivered by a specialist music teacher. Pupils' singing, observed during inspection, at their 'worship assembly', was exceptional and further demonstrates the richness of this aspect of the school curriculum.
- Fundamental British values are promoted very effectively. Thought-provoking displays of art help pupils to think deeply about worship, forgiveness, compassion, trust and friendship. Respect and tolerance of other cultures and faiths is central to the school ethos. Pupils learn about how sacred books such as the Qur'an are treated and research how religious festivals including Hanukkah are celebrated.
- Senior leaders and governors carefully consider how best to use the pupil premium funding the school receives. They track its impact on the achievement of disadvantaged pupils across the school forensically. Evidence from pupils' books and from the school's own assessment information shows that current pupils make progress that is in line with other pupils with similar starting points.
- Specialist sports coaches are employed using the sports premium funding. This has allowed the school to provide a free after-school sports club for pupils, increasing the number who are involved in sporting activities. Furthermore, a new outdoor adventure trail has been installed on the school playground that is helping to improve pupils' fitness, agility and stamina.
- Leadership of the provision for pupils with special educational needs is effective. Systems and procedures to track pupils' progress have been overhauled so that the impact of support is now closely monitored to ensure that it is having a positive impact. The addition of drop-in sessions for parents and a new information handbook have further added to the help that parents receive to support their pupils. One parent summed up the effectiveness of the support that her child had received, typifying that seen across the school: 'They nurtured her learning so that she could grow at her own pace. She is now exceeding expectations in a number of subjects. Nothing is too much for this school.'
- **The governance of the school**
  - Governors generously give of their time to visit the school to find out for themselves what impact leaders' actions are having. Regular joint meetings with teachers also enable governors to ask challenging questions about the progress that pupils are making.
  - Governors have a sound understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They receive a range of very detailed reports from the headteacher and subject leaders. On occasion, however, information can be difficult to fully interpret and allow governors to get fully to the heart of the

matter. The headteacher and the recently elected chair are at the early stages of addressing this issue.

- Governors take their statutory responsibilities to keep pupils safe seriously. The designated safeguarding governor undertakes an annual safeguarding audit to ensure that all policies and procedures are in place and that robust checks have been undertaken to ensure the suitability of staff to work with children.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Pupils who spoke to inspectors were clear that they are kept safe in school. Pupils are proud of their efforts to work alongside leaders and promote this aspect of the school's work. They hit the local newspaper headlines recently when they organised an event, outside the school gates, to remind drivers to reduce their speed. Key policies and procedures are kept up to date and reflect recent changes in legislation.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- In many lessons learning is fun. Teachers' enthusiasm is infectious and fuels pupils' desire to learn. In a Key Stage 2 science lesson, for instance, pupils' knowledge about irreversible changes moved forward rapidly as they observed the effect of mixing vinegar and bicarbonate together.
- Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. They plan lessons that build upon prior learning and provide appropriate challenge for all groups of pupils, including the most able. As a result, pupils make good progress during most lessons. In a Key Stage 2 mathematics lesson, for example, a group of pupils who worked with the class teacher developed their reasoning skills as they were supported in solving algebraic equations.
- Pupils are clear as to what is expected of them. This is because in many lessons teachers demonstrate the skills required to complete activities well. This was evident in a Year 4 writing lesson where learning for many pupils was deepened as the teacher modelled how to use semi-colons and prepositions to enhance descriptions of characters from the film *Rio*.
- Most teachers check on the progress that pupils are making during lessons to ensure that learning doesn't falter. Teachers recognise where a concept has not been fully grasped and pause lessons to reshape learning or reiterate an important point. However, on occasions, teachers do not use these checks as well to recognise when learning may be accelerated for those pupils who are ready to move on to more challenging tasks.
- In every class the positive relationships between teachers and pupils contributes strongly to effective learning. Teachers take every opportunity to praise the work of pupils and share successes with the rest of the class. As a consequence, pupils are confident and keen to learn. In the early years, for instance, children's pride and willingness to answer questions grew throughout a phonics lesson as their teacher subtly celebrated every small achievement.
- Teaching assistants work effectively, in collaboration with class teachers, to help learning move forward. Their strong subject knowledge enables them to offer clear explanations to support pupils in and out of class. In a Year 2 writing lesson, for example, pupils were effectively helped to apply their phonic skills to their writing by their skilled teaching assistant.
- Marking and feedback in pupils' books is developing in line with the school policy. However, in some classes the policy is not yet fully embedded. As a consequence, the impact of teachers' marking on helping pupils to improve and extend their work is not consistently strong across the whole school.
- Teachers give opportunities for pupils to share their learning with their peers and discuss new ideas. This helps to deepen understanding. Pupils improved the quality of their work in a Key Stage 1 English lesson when they checked the quality of their peers' writing and suggested how to correct mistakes.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupil's personal development and welfare is outstanding. Those pupils who spoke to inspectors state that they 'think of the school as a caring place; like a family'. Pupils display a mature understanding of the difficulties that some of their peers face and what they can do to help them. As one pupil stated, 'If someone is looking sad we have been taught to go over to them to help.'
- Pupils relish the opportunities they are given to improve their school. The Head Girl and Head Boy describe their role as being 'the voice of the children'. Pupils' ideas are taken seriously and acted upon by

senior leaders. A system to ensure that all pupils get their choice of lunch has recently been introduced as a direct result of pupils' feedback.

- Pupils' physical well-being is very well promoted. In the autumn term pupils and their families successfully completed the challenge of travelling (by foot, on bike or by swimming) the equivalent distance between the school and its partner school in Uganda. Furthermore, their efforts helped pupils raise a substantial sum of funding towards improvements at the Ugandan school.
- Pupils are proud of their school and are proactive in improving its environment. To this end they undertake a range of jobs, such as becoming school gardeners. Members of the Eco team recently raised money at the school Christmas Fair to spend on the school grounds.
- Senior leaders and teachers take every opportunity to develop pupils' personal qualities across the school. Weekly assemblies to recognise pupils' achievements are well attended by parents. Awards that celebrate the importance of friendship and taking responsibility for yourself effectively teach pupils the importance of these personal values.
- Pupils have a very clear understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They take a lead role in this area, for instance by designing 'slow your speed to 20 mph' posters to promote road safety outside the school. The teaching of e-safety is a significant strength of the school. Learning in this area is substantial and equips pupils with a broad range of sophisticated skills. Pupils in upper Key Stage 2, for example, consider how to create positive online communities. The work of the school in this area is used as an exemplar by the local authority.
- Bullying or discriminatory behaviour is not tolerated at the school. Pupils say that any form of bullying is a rare occurrence and adults are trusted to resolve any issues quickly.

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. During lessons pupils generally listen to their teachers attentively and respond with enthusiasm to the questions asked of them. Occasionally pupils' enthusiasm can get the better of them, which results in calling out or low-level chatting.
- Pupils get along well with each other irrespective of their background or culture. Inspectors' observations in lessons show that pupils work well with their peers, listening with respect to the views of other. Pupils also play amicably at breaktime. Older pupils are excellent role models to younger children and are proud of being 'buddies' to them when they start school.
- Pupils say that they enjoy coming to school and as a consequence do not miss school often. In 2015 the proportion of pupils absent from school was below the national average.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

**are good**

- Against a backdrop of year-on-year improvements, the proportion of pupils who reached the expected standards at the end of Key Stage 2 fell in 2015. Nonetheless, the progress that pupils made from their starting points was broadly in line with that seen nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. Evidence in pupils' books and from assessment data shows that current pupils are on track to reverse this dip in 2016.
- Good teaching ensures that pupils make strong progress across Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2015 the standards that pupils reached in all subjects by the end of Year 2 was significantly above the national average.
- In the past pupils have reached standards in the phonics screening check that were broadly in line with other schools nationally. However, in 2015 standards fell sharply. The school has robustly addressed the issues that contributed to this decline. Lessons observed during inspection show that the quality of the teaching of phonics is now good, with pupils making the progress expected of them. School assessment information shows that the majority of those pupils who did not reach the expected standard at the end of Year 1 are now on track to do so in Year 2.
- Evidence seen during lessons and in books shows that current pupils make good progress in their writing. The basic skills of punctuation, spelling and grammar are generally applied well. Pupils develop their writing skills across a wide range of subjects. In Key Stage 2 for example, pupils developed their understanding of biographies when writing about Tutankhamun.
- Current pupils make good progress in mathematics. Books show that pupils are confident in fluently solving calculations. Pupils are increasingly able to apply their mathematical understanding to solve problems. Pupils in a lower Key Stage 2 class, for instance, were able to interpret data from graphs to solve a range of challenging questions.

- The most-able pupils in school make progress that is broadly in line with the national average. Teachers generally plan lessons that meet their needs and challenge them appropriately. As a result, every pupil from this group made at least expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they left Year 6 in 2015.
- Pupils with special educational needs make progress that is in line with other pupils in the school. This is because class teachers and the leader of the provision for this group of pupils diligently track how well they are doing. Work is planned to meet their needs and appropriate support is put in place when required. Those adults who work with this small group of pupils are skilled and contribute strongly to the progress that they make.

## Early years provision

## is good

- Effective leadership and strong teaching ensures that children make good progress from starting points that are broadly typical of those expected for their age. In 2015 the proportion of pupils reaching a good level of development was broadly in line with the national average. As a result, children are well prepared for the demands of Key Stage 1.
- Excellent relationships between adults and children underpin the effective learning that takes place within the Reception Class. Adults' enthusiasm captivates interest and as a result children listen attentively and eagerly, ensuring that learning moves forward for all pupils. In a phonics lesson, for instance, pupils embedded their learning of letter sounds when the class teacher expertly inspired their learning through a number of short and snappy activities.
- The class teacher and teaching assistant use questioning effectively to help children think more deeply about their learning and add further challenge to activities. Children were excited and learning leapt forward during a letter hunt in the sand when their teaching assistant asked them to find the letter that made the 'oi' sound.
- Adults use what they know about children's prior learning to plan interesting activities that meet their needs and challenge them appropriately. They ensure that the learning that takes place is purposeful and focused by demonstrating exactly what is expected in each area of the classroom. Children were able to explain to an inspector, for example, how to measure the size of their feet and record their findings.
- Children's behaviour in the early years is excellent. This is because adults have high expectations and clear and well-established routines are in place.
- Children enjoy playing and learning alongside each other, sharing resources such as 'diggers' sensibly with one another. Children are eager to learn and their positive attitudes contribute strongly to their learning during focused lessons such as phonics and writing.
- The strengths of the class teacher are mirrored by the teaching assistant. Her strong subject knowledge enables her to support and challenge pupils well. Children's learning moved forward effectively, for example, when she led a session to write instructions on how to look after a recently planted seed.
- The early years leader has a very clear and accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. Detailed analysis of the progress that children make is used to identify areas in need of further improvement and incisive actions are put in place.
- Work to involve parents in their child's learning has been successful. Parents are given resources such as word books to support reading at home. The recent addition of a digital record of children's work, available online for parents to view and add to, has further enhanced this aspect.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	111334
<b>Local authority</b>	Cheshire East
<b>Inspection number</b>	10001336

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>	162
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Sue Ashley
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Rob Whittle
<b>Telephone number</b>	01270 762859
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.stjohnssandbachheath.cheshire.sch.uk">www.stjohnssandbachheath.cheshire.sch.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:head@stjohnssandbachheath.cheshire.sch.uk">head@stjohnssandbachheath.cheshire.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	28–29 June 2011

## Information about this school

- St John's CofE Primary School is a smaller-than-average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below average (pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, and those who are looked after by the local authority).
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below the national average. However, the school has a higher proportion of pupils from the Romany, Gypsy or Irish Traveller ethnic group than that seen nationally.
- The proportion of pupils who speak, or are believed to speak, English as an additional language is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is below the national average.
- In 2014 the school met the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons in each class of the school, including a joint observation and learning walk with the headteacher.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, members of staff, four representatives of the governing body and a representative of the Diocese of Chester.
- Inspectors examined a wide range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance, school improvement planning, assessment information and reports on the quality of teaching.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils informally during the school day and observed them during playtime, lunch and before and after school. They also met formally with one small group of pupils, including the Head Girl and Head Boy, to chat about their learning and behaviour and safety.
- Inspectors heard a number of children read.
- Inspectors took note of displays around the school.
- A range of pupils' books were checked.
- Inspectors spoke to a small number of parents at the start of the day. They also took account of the 28 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 38 responses to the school's own recent parental questionnaire.
- One further Ofsted inspector joined the inspection on the second day of the inspection.

## Inspection team

Martin Bell, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Linda Griffiths

Ofsted Inspector



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