

St John's Church of England Primary School

Priory, Wellington, Somerset TA21 9EJ

Inspection dates

29–30 September 2015

Overall effectiveness

Good

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| 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 | Requires improvement |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher has secured significant improvement since the previous inspection. He is ambitious for school improvement and has successfully communicated and shared his high expectations of what pupils can achieve with staff, governors, pupils and parents.
- The quality of teaching is good, particularly in writing. Pupils know how to improve their work because teachers mark their work carefully and provide them with useful feedback.
- Behaviour in lessons and attitudes to learning are good. Pupils are polite, helpful and confidently say that, if bullying occurs, it is dealt with immediately by adults.
- The school's work to support disadvantaged pupils is effective. The majority of pupils make better than expected rates of progress in all classes. When disadvantaged pupils are compared to non-disadvantaged pupils nationally, the gap is closing.
- Outcomes for all pupils have improved significantly throughout the school. Pupils in all year groups are making consistently good progress. Standards by the end of Year 6 are above the national average in writing and mathematics and well above in reading and spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Children make an excellent start to their education in early years. High-quality teaching, effective classroom organisation and a precise focus on the learning of all children ensure they make good progress in all areas of learning.
- Senior leaders use the information gathered on pupils' learning to identify where further improvements in teaching and learning can be made.
- The governing body effectively supports and holds the school to account. Governors work closely with the headteacher to check carefully on how well the school is doing and what needs to be done to continue the improvement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching in mathematics does not enable the most-able pupils to apply their mathematical skills and deepen their understanding sufficiently.
- Plans for improvement and development are not sufficiently detailed to identify precisely what needs to improve.
- Pupils' awareness and understanding of life in modern Britain is underdeveloped.

Full report

In accordance with section 13(5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and learning by ensuring that priorities to improve outcomes for specific groups of pupils are clearly defined, time-specific and tightly linked to the school's performance related pay process.
- Improve the quality of teaching in mathematics to ensure that:
 - the most-able pupils are stretched sufficiently
 - disadvantaged pupils' progress is further accelerated.
- Develop pupils' understanding of individual liberty, tolerance and respect so that they are better prepared for life in modern Britain.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Standards have improved since the last inspection. This is because the headteacher has successfully introduced a culture of high expectations and achievement throughout the school. He has established a clear vision to improve the quality of education that the school provides. In addition, he has put systems and procedures in place to measure the progress the school is making. There is a strong sense throughout the school that it is a learning community that is working effectively together to achieve the best possible outcomes for pupils. As a result, the quality of teaching and learning has improved rapidly in the past two years.
- Senior and middle leaders have a thorough understanding of how well pupils are achieving. They use the regular information from pupil progress meetings with teachers to carefully measure the progress of every pupil. This enables them to swiftly identify pupils whose progress has slowed. Leaders provide effective learning programmes for individual pupils who need to catch up.
- The leadership of teaching, learning and assessment is effective. Leaders ensure that teachers and their assistants improve their skills to support the learning of pupils. Information gathered through the regular checks on pupils' progress is used to provide staff with further training to improve teaching.
- School self-evaluation is accurate. Leaders have a clear understanding of how to improve the school further. This clarity of focus is not always communicated sharply in the school development plan.
- Leaders use the pupil premium funding effectively to support pupils' good personal and academic development. Additional teachers have improved the quality of teaching by providing precise, high-quality teaching for disadvantaged pupils. There is a wide range of other support arrangements which, together with consistently good teaching, has resulted in progress measures for disadvantaged pupils exceeding those nationally.
- The school has made good use of the sports premium funding. It has been deployed to enhance the quality of sporting activities offered and to strengthen the skills of teachers and pupils. The school's records show that there has been a significant increase in the numbers of pupils participating regularly in sport.
- The curriculum is carefully planned to engage pupils' interest. Pupils talk with enthusiasm about their learning. Termly enrichment weeks bring learning to life through extended reading, writing, art, music, performance and mathematics activities. For example, the school's recent focus on the traditional story of 'Little Red Riding Hood' captured the imagination of pupils of every age. As a result, pupils produced exceptional art work and extended writing.
- The school's Christian ethos and promotion of British values underpin its spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision. Pupils are taught effectively about democracy, equality and how to be a good citizen. Assemblies are often used to allow pupils to think and reflect on the school's Christian values. However, older pupils lack an understanding of how opposing points of view and beliefs can sometimes lead to radical and extreme views that threaten the freedom and liberty of others.
- Leaders have developed an effective partnership with the local authority and a national leader of education. This has supported school improvement effectively, for example through staff training, observation of good practice and improving assessment.
- The school successfully involves parents in school life and fosters good relations. The majority of parents who spoke with inspectors were very positive about many aspects of school. Parents of older pupils were able to describe how expectations and standards have risen since the previous inspection and that 'all staff are approachable and want to help'. For example, a parent of a child who recently started in the Reception class described how he was made to feel welcome and reassured by staff on his child's first day at school.

The governance of the school

- The governing body has a good understanding of the standards in the school. Governors have undertaken training and have now acquired the skills and confidence to effectively challenge as well as support the headteacher.
- Governors monitor the school's budget carefully. Through the regular reports they receive from leaders they are able to understand the impact of school improvement work. For example, governors now have a secure knowledge of the effectiveness and impact of work funded by the pupil premium grant.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Governors are clear about their statutory responsibility. The Chair of the Governing Body regularly checks these arrangements, procedures and training records and reports to the full governing body.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching is consistently good or better. This results in pupils making good progress from their starting points and better progress in reading and writing than in mathematics.
- Teachers and staff together have created a positive atmosphere in which pupils can learn. Classrooms and corridors are bright, well organised, orderly and enhanced by high-quality displays that support learning and celebrate pupils' work. The close, effective teamwork established between teachers and teaching assistants in every classroom supports the learning of all pupils.
- School leaders at all levels use assessment and progress information to quickly identify pupils who are making slower progress. This information is used to plan appropriate teaching and learning programmes matched to individual needs. This enables pupils to catch up. For example, there is a group of pupils presently being effectively supported through a specifically designed speech and language programme.
- Reading and writing are at the heart of the school's curriculum. High-quality phonics teaching in the early years and consistent approaches to acquiring skills for writing ensure that pupils are confident writers. Older pupils can clearly describe how their confidence stems from learning how to use the effective writing strategies suggested by their teachers. They recognise that they are now independent writers because of the effective teaching. They readily describe how to redraft their work to make it better. They are proud of their own abilities and say they are excited by what they may learn next.
- The teaching of mathematics is good. The school's calculation policy clearly sets out developmental expectations for each year group. The work in pupils' books shows that they are able to set out and record written calculations with confidence. However, pupils have not had the same opportunities, compared to those given in writing, to develop a love of mathematics through creative exploration and investigation. The mathematics leader identified this as an area for development and has planned opportunities for this to happen.
- The school promotes cultural development well through the meticulously planned termly enrichment weeks. Music is also a strength of the school. All pupils in Key Stage 2 are learning to play an instrument. Throughout the inspection there were opportunities to hear the lunchtime choir rehearsal, recorder and trumpet sessions. One child asked specially to show the inspector how he could already play chords on the recorder.
- Marking is consistent across the school. It is sufficiently detailed to give helpful feedback to pupils about their learning. Pupils say they use the marking comments and the school's writing checklists to help them understand how to improve their work.
- Presentation in all books is of the highest standard and pupils are rightly proud to share their work. Teachers have high expectations of presentation. Handwriting practice is evident in books from an early age. As a result, older pupils write longer, sustained pieces of writing in a clear, legible, joined handwriting style.
- The inclusion and support of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is a strength of teaching. The care and encouragement given to these pupils builds their confidence and helps them to progress alongside their peers. Parents of pupils with additional needs are appreciative of all that the school does to include their children fully.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are self-assured and keen to talk to adults about their school. Even the very youngest pupils could initiate and hold interesting conversations about their learning and lives. One Year 1 child confidently asked if the inspector would like to see how he could do his own tie.
- Older pupils can talk with clarity about how to be successful learners and the relevance of knowing how to learn in order to do well in secondary school. Pupils have strong attitudes to learning. They 'have a go' and persevere to complete their best work. These skills, attitudes and aptitudes are established in the early years and continue to develop well as pupils move through the school.

- The well-established nurture group ensures that vulnerable pupils have a place of safety to go to. Trained staff offer effective support to develop social confidence and coping strategies. The welfare of pupils is a priority for all within the school community and pupils say they would know where to go if they felt upset. A Year 1 pupil explained that if you are upset then any teacher would be kind to you.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school and that all teachers care about them. They are aware of, and could describe, many forms of bullying, including cyber bullying. Pupils have a very well thought out understanding of bullying and its effects. Pupils, including the very young, can explain what to do if it happens. Pupils say that if it did happen in school it would be tackled immediately by teachers and the headteacher.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development provides opportunities for them to be reflective about society. They can articulate how to be a good friend, what it means to do the right thing and how to be a good citizen. Pupils know about discrimination and can clearly describe why any form is unacceptable. Year 6 pupils were able to illustrate their views by using learning about the life of Nelson Mandela. However, pupils do not have such a secure knowledge or understanding of radicalisation or extremism.

Behaviour

The behaviour of pupils is good.

- Pupils are warm, friendly and enthusiastic. The school is calm and orderly, and there is an industrious feeling during lesson time in every classroom. Children are polite, courteous and well-mannered.
- Leaders are working hard to improve attendance, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. The free breakfast club entitlement has improved attendance for a number of disadvantaged pupils who had previously been persistently absent.
- Teachers and other adults promote clear messages about the importance of behaving respectfully and conducting themselves well at all times. All teachers take responsibility for tackling poor behaviour. The behaviour log indicates that behaviour has improved significantly and incidents of poor behaviour and low-level disruption to learning are rare.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Leaders have successfully improved outcomes for all pupils since the last inspection.
- Children receive a good start to their education. Transition arrangements from pre-school settings to school are well developed. The early targeted help and support given by an additional teacher means that children progress well. Historically, by the time they reach the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development is above average. Children are well prepared for Year 1. Present children have settled into school well and are showing strengths in personal, social and emotional development.
- Pupils achieve well in Year 1 as a result of high-quality phonics teaching and well-planned activities. Pupils identified as not achieving a good level of development in early years are provided with immediate, daily support and individually focused activities. Work in their books indicates that they are already making securely good progress. For a number of years a high proportion of pupils met the national level in the phonics screening check. Present indications point to further improvement.
- Current pupils are making consistent progress from their starting points in a range of subjects including English and mathematics. Historically, progress rates have indicated that the proportions of pupils in the school making expected progress are above national averages. Current standards indicate that pupils are continuing to make better progress.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making good progress and the proportions making expected progress exceed the national average. The gap in school between disadvantaged pupils and non-disadvantaged pupils in reading, writing and mathematics is closing. The gap is closing more rapidly in reading and writing than in mathematics. The gap has closed in writing by just over one term in one year. The gap between disadvantaged pupils in the school and non-disadvantaged pupils nationally has closed rapidly over two years. Pupils are now a term behind in all subjects.
- School information from detailed, rigorous tracking shows that, from different starting points, the proportions of prior lower attaining and middle attaining pupils are exceeding expected progress rates in reading, writing and mathematics. The most-able pupils are exceeding expected progress rates in writing and are close to expected progress in reading and mathematics.
- The school's use of pupil premium funding and the actions taken by the school have ensured that

disadvantaged pupils exceed expected progress rates for disadvantaged pupils nationally in writing. The school is swiftly closing the gap with non-disadvantaged pupils nationally in all subjects.

- Progress measures for the most-able in writing, including spelling, punctuation and grammar are above the national average. Work is sufficiently challenging and engaging in these subjects. Consequently, their levels of confidence and aspiration are high. However, pupils are offered few opportunities to apply their skills, deepen their understanding and develop reasoning through investigation in mathematics. As a result, progress in this subject is slower.
- Provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is well planned, organised and resourced and pupils make good progress. The special educational needs coordinator keeps meticulous records of interventions and support put in place for individual pupils and tracks the progress they make in order to respond quickly should progress slow.

Early years provision

is good

- The early years provision is well led and managed. Children make good progress and achieve well from their starting points. Teachers and other staff set consistently high expectations and plan lessons that provide well for the full range of pupils' learning needs and interests. Children were observed concentrating hard to develop their fine motor skills. For example, some were threading cereal onto pipe cleaners while others played in water, finding shapes beneath the bubbles and talking about the properties of each. Across the varied learning activities staff gently probe children's understanding and extend their thinking well through careful questioning.
- Current Reception children are displaying skills on entry that are typical for their age. It is clear they have strengths in personal, social and emotional development but are less strong in mathematical understanding. Information for 2014 shows that a higher proportion than average achieved a good level of development from a lower starting point. The early years provision is still improving and all children are prepared well for Year 1.
- All adults are engaged in the effective support and accurate assessment of children's learning. Assessments are carefully collected for each child in a learning journal. Comments record daily learning experiences using photos, written comments by adults on pupils' work and evaluations. The careful recording of pupils' learning is an effective summary of the good progress made by children in the Reception class. These records are then used to plan next steps and match activities to the needs of the child.
- Pupil premium funding is used to employ an additional teacher to support disadvantaged children in the class. This very early intervention enables children to make rapid progress through their Reception year.
- The learning environment, both indoors and outside, is very well organised. For example, there is easy access to the outdoor environment from the indoor classroom. A wide range of good-quality learning activities are provided on a daily basis outside and adults nurture, engage and motivate children effectively in order to sustain concentration.
- Children's behaviour throughout the early years is good. Children are already responding to classroom routines and expectations. Children are polite, kind and helpful. Parents agree that the high-quality care and guidance of staff has enabled their children to settle quickly into school.
- Transition arrangements into school for children with special educational needs are extremely effective. A comprehensive timetable is created in liaison with the early years special educational needs team and parents. This can include home visits, picture books of staff and places around school, additional visits to school and a phased start. One parent said that the support given to his child was 'above and beyond' what any other school would do.
- Safety is taken seriously and all staff monitor the well-being of children. Children are constantly reminded how to behave and look after themselves as they engage in their learning activities. They were able to talk about how to play safely.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 123900 |
| Local authority | Somerset |
| Inspection number | 10002425 |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 168 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Hollie Cashmore |
| Headteacher | Gareth Jones |
| Telephone number | 01823 662541 |
| Website | www.stjohnscofeprimary.co.uk |
| Email address | office@st-johns-pri-somerset.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 10–11 December 2013 |

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well above national average. This is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible to receive free school meals and those in local authority care.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above the national average for pupils without a statement.
- The mobility of pupils in the school is higher than the national average.
- Early years provision is organised into one Reception class.
- The school has worked in partnership with the Wellington Learning Partnership and a National Leader of Education from Preston Church of England Primary School, Yeovil.
- The school meets current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team visited 10 lessons or parts of lessons. Most lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- The quality of work in pupils' books was scrutinised and the inspectors listened to children read.
- Meetings and discussions were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and Vice-chair of the Governing Body, who is also the vicar, senior leaders, and the leader of mathematics. Meetings were also conducted with a representative from the local authority and the national leader in education who has supported the school for two years.
- The inspection team took account of the views of parents through discussions at the beginning and end of the day, through 38 responses to Parent View (the online questionnaire) and by hosting a coffee morning which was attended by 12 parents.
- A wide range of documentation was scrutinised by the inspectors including the school's information on pupils' attainment and progress, self-evaluation records, safeguarding policies, curriculum policies, school special educational needs provision, pupil case studies for special educational needs and early years, minutes of meetings, external moderation reports and documents relating to the management of teachers' performance.
- Inspectors spoke informally with pupils around the school and during breaktimes. Behaviour was observed in the hall and on the playground during lunchtime. The lead inspector met with and obtained the views of pupil representatives on the school council.
- The inspectors considered the responses from 30 staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

Lyn McNamara, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

David Edwards

Her Majesty's Inspector

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