

# St John Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School Danbury

Little Baddow Road, Danbury, Chelmsford, Essex CM3 4NS

## Inspection dates

30–31 January 2018

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Leadership is effective and the school is improving as a result. The school is a happy place where pupils work hard and behave well.
- The school has a very caring ethos. All pupils are valued as individuals. This helps them to learn to care for and about other people.
- Governance is strong. Governors support the school well and ensure that leaders carry out their roles effectively.
- The quality of teaching is good and improving. Teachers plan learning carefully to ensure that they meet the needs of all learners.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare needs are met particularly well. Pupils feel very safe at school and know that they can rely on staff to help and support them.
- Pupils behave extremely well throughout the school day. It is very rare for learning time to be lost as a result of low-level disruption.
- Pupils make good progress in reading, writing, mathematics and a wide range of other subjects. Pupils' excellent attitudes to learning help them to do well.
- Children get off to a good start in the early years. Sometimes from low starting points, a higher than average proportion of children achieve a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year.
- Leaders' approach to school improvement is not systematic enough. This slows the pace towards making this an outstanding school.
- Progress in writing is weaker than in other subjects. Spelling and punctuation errors are common in pupils' work. Pupils' handwriting is often underdeveloped.

## Full report

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

- Improve the teaching of writing, so that more pupils make rapid progress, by:
  - ensuring that pupils apply their phonics, grammar, punctuation and spelling skills in their independent writing
  - teaching handwriting explicitly and systematically throughout the school.
- Further improve the effectiveness of leaders and governors, so that their actions have a greater impact on improving the school, by:
  - developing systematic and strategic approaches to school improvement
  - ensuring that self-evaluation is analytical and appropriately self-critical
  - linking self-evaluation and school improvement planning closely.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The headteacher is an effective leader. He keeps the needs and best interests of his pupils at the forefront of every decision he makes. The headteacher has ensured that the quality of teaching is good and improving, and that pupils behave well and do their best. He has gained the confidence and affection of the entire school community.
- The headteacher and his team have created a very caring school where pupils are valued as individuals. Leaders and staff go 'above and beyond' to support pupils and their families. Inspectors were given several examples of occasions when the headteacher had done more than could reasonably be expected in order to support families during times of greatest need.
- The headteacher is supported very well by the deputy headteacher. They have different skills and experiences which complement each other well. The headteacher and deputy headteacher share a common vision to make the school the best that it can be by meeting the individual needs of all the school's pupils.
- Other leaders are also effective in their roles. Leaders are good ambassadors for the areas they are responsible for. They ensure that there is good coverage of each subject in the curriculum. Leaders are developing assessment practices well in their subjects. This is enabling them to have a clearer idea of how well pupils are doing in subjects such as history and music.
- The school's curriculum is appropriately broad and balanced. The school uses a mixture of topic work and teaching individual subjects separately. Leaders have found that this approach captures and maintains pupils' interest. The curriculum is enhanced by a range of educational visits to places of interest. Visitors to the school, such as historical re-enactors, also help to bring the curriculum to life.
- Parents and carers are extremely positive about the school. Virtually all of the parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, said that they would recommend the school to others. Many parents chose to leave additional free-text comments, none of which were negative. Comments such as 'St John's is a lovely caring school' and 'I am delighted we chose this school' were typical.
- The school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a particular strength. The school has a kind and caring ethos. Pupils are taught to care for and respect all people, whatever their beliefs and backgrounds. As a result, pupils show excellent attitudes to equality and diversity. Pupils are taught to make good choices, even when the right path is not necessarily the easiest one.
- Provision for disadvantaged pupils is led very well. The deputy headteacher knows this group of pupils well as individuals. She takes the time to research which methods have been found to be effective before deciding to implement them. The deputy headteacher recognises that the most able pupils might also need support and challenge, as well as those who require help to reach the expected level for their age. Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are good and improving as a result of effective leadership.

- The sport premium is used very effectively. This area of the curriculum is led passionately and enthusiastically, which has led to notable improvements in physical education (PE) and school sports. The funding has been used to greatly enhance the number and range of extra-curricular sports clubs available to pupils. The take-up of clubs, such as archery and dodgeball, is very high.
- Leadership is not sufficiently systematic and strategic. This slows the pace of school improvement. For example, the school's self-evaluation summary is too descriptive, focusing too much on the school's many strengths. Self-evaluation lacks analysis of the school's weaknesses and is not sufficiently self-critical. The school development plan does not have the key features of effective plans, such as measurable success criteria and clear milestones.

### **Governance of the school**

- Members of the governing body have a wide range of experiences and backgrounds. Several governors have worked, or currently work, in education, while others work, for example, in engineering and finance. This broad range of experiences provides the governing body with the skills and knowledge necessary to carry out its corporate role effectively.
- Governors balance the competing responsibilities of their role very well. They get the balance right between supporting leaders and holding them to account. This is reflected clearly in the minutes of governing body meetings.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Minor issues with safeguarding systems were identified and rectified during the inspection. For example, the school's single central record of pre-employment checks did not meet statutory requirements when it was checked initially. The headteacher took immediate and decisive actions to correct these errors as soon as they were identified.
- The designated safeguarding lead understands his role in keeping pupils safe very well. He has ensured that staff are vigilant and notice possible signs of abuse and neglect quickly. The designated safeguarding lead takes prompt and appropriate action when necessary in response to concerns raised.
- The school's ethos plays a huge part in helping to keep pupils safe. Pupils know that staff care about them. In a meeting with the lead inspector, pupils said that staff 'always help you when you need help'. As a result, pupils feel able to share their worries and concerns with staff because 'they all really care'.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Good**

- Throughout the school, classrooms are calm and orderly places. Staff create environments that enable pupils to feel safe and relaxed. Pupils do not worry about getting things wrong because they are taught that 'you learn from your mistakes'. This

has a clear impact on developing pupils' excellent attitudes to learning.

- Teachers select activities carefully. They ensure that the work they give pupils to do is matched to both their ability and their interests. Pupils are always keen to 'have a go' at the tasks they are given because the work catches their attention.
- Lesson are planned well. Teachers think carefully about what pupils already know and what they want them to learn next. Teachers build on pupils' previous learning and make frequent references to things that they have learned in the past. This helps pupils to understand their new knowledge and where it fits with things they already know.
- Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach. This enables them to explain new learning clearly and to answer pupils' questions fully. This clarity means that pupils understand what they are taught and what the teacher expects them to do. As a result, lesson time is used productively.
- Teachers and teaching assistants encourage pupils to be independent and investigative learners. For example, pupils are often given opportunities to work together because the school has found that this encourages pupils to be more inquisitive.
- Mathematics teaching has improved. Teachers and teaching assistants now have higher expectations of what pupils are able to achieve. Teachers ensure that they plan work for pupils that provides the right degree of challenge. Staff also ensure that pupils have access to the right apparatus to enable them to answer problems correctly and calculate sums accurately.
- The needs of disadvantaged pupils are met well. Pupils' individual barriers to learning are identified and measures are put in place to address them. For example, leaders have found that using an internet-based tutoring package, to provide one-to-one teaching for some disadvantaged pupils, has worked particularly well, both to help pupils to catch up and to stretch the most able pupils.
- The needs of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are also met very well. Teachers and teaching assistants work closely together to plan and deliver high-quality teaching and learning. This is very effective and this group of pupils makes good progress as a result.
- Phonics teaching is effective and grammar, punctuation and spelling skills are taught well. Pupils are taught these crucial skills systematically and given opportunities to practise them in a range of exercises. The impact of this good teaching of these technical skills is evident in pupils' recent outcomes in national tests.
- Teachers do not ensure that pupils use their good phonics, spelling, punctuation and grammar skills in their writing. Although pupils show good technical competency with these skills in isolation, they do not routinely transfer these skills to their independent writing. Outcomes in writing are less strong than in other subjects as a result.
- Handwriting skills are not taught systematically enough. Many pupils do not form their letters correctly because they have not been taught explicitly how to do so. As a result, in many cases, pupils' handwriting is poorly formed and they do not develop an efficient, joined handwriting style.

## Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning. They enjoy a wide range of subjects, such as science, mathematics and art, and are keen to learn more. Pupils are inquisitive and curious learners and this helps them to make good progress.
- Pupils are particularly well cared for. Leaders and staff go 'above and beyond' what could reasonably be expected in order to ensure that pupils remain physically and emotionally healthy. A notable number of pupils have significant medical issues or disabilities that affect their daily lives. The school is highly successful in ensuring that the needs of these pupils are met fully.
- Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe in a wide range of situations. For example, pupils recall vividly the important child protection messages presented to them in an assembly provided by a national charity. Pupils learn about issues such as road safety and they take part in regular fire drills.
- Parents display very high levels of satisfaction with the school, particularly about pupils' safety and welfare. All parents that responded to Parent View said that they feel that their children are happy, safe and well looked after.
- Pupils feel safe at school. They say that there is very little bullying and, when it does occur, it is sorted out quickly by staff. Pupils have a good understanding of what bullying is and is not. When discussing bullying with the lead inspector, one pupil spoke for the group to explain why boisterous behaviour is different to bullying. She explained that 'people get over-excited but it's never on purpose'.
- The school has a very strong safeguarding culture. Staff receive regular training about child protection issues and the headteacher provides frequent updates during staff meetings. The school has an open culture and pupils are encouraged to share their worries and concerns with staff.
- Pupils are given plenty of opportunities to take on positions of responsibility and they respond well to these. For example, Year 6 pupils act as 'buddies' to the youngest children, helping them when they first join the school. Pupils happily volunteer to take on jobs, such as being a class ambassador or a school librarian. They show pride in their jobs and enjoy doing things for the good of the school.
- Pupils are also keen to help others beyond the school. Membership of the school's charity committee is highly prized. Pupils in Year 6 carry out their own research to identify a charity that they would like the school to support. A vote is held to decide the school's charity of the year. Leaders have found that this works very well and the school has raised a considerable amount of money for its chosen charities.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils behave impeccably, both in their classrooms and during less structured parts of

the day. Pupils follow adults' instructions quickly and without fuss. Pupils know that staff like them, and they are keen to do the right thing in return. Adults' expectations of how pupils should behave are high and pupils respond accordingly.

- Staff are highly skilled at encouraging pupils to behave well and to make the right choices. St John Primary is not a school where adults shout. Staff take pupils quietly to one side when pupils have difficulty in managing their own behaviour and talk to them about the choices available to them. They talk about the consequences of each option. Pupils invariably make the right choice as a result of this approach.
- Pupils attend school regularly and on time. The school's overall attendance was just below the national average during the last academic year for unavoidable reasons. Leaders monitor attendance closely. They reward regular attendance and tackle absence where appropriate. No groups of pupils are disadvantaged by low attendance.

### Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- In 2017, pupils' attainment in the key stage 2 national tests was above the national average in reading and mathematics. Pupils also made similar progress to other pupils nationally in these subjects from their starting points at the end of key stage 1. In mathematics this represented a big improvement from outcomes in 2016.
- Published data shows that, in 2017, key stage 1 pupils made good progress. The proportion of this group of pupils that reached at least the expected level was higher than it had been at the end of the early years in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils also made good progress in phonics. The proportion of pupils who achieved the expected level in the Year 1 phonics screening check was above the national average for the third year in a row.
- The school's assessment information and the work in pupils' books show that current pupils are making good progress across the curriculum. Pupils' progress speeds up as they move through key stage 2. The longer pupils spend in the school, the better their rate of progress.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress from their individual starting points. In some cases, pupils make very rapid progress. Pupils' progress is tracked and monitored closely, enabling the right support to be put in place to enable pupils to be successful.
- The most able pupils also achieve well. They are provided with work that is suitably challenging and encourages them to think deeply. The most able disadvantaged pupils make similarly good progress from their individual starting points.
- Pupils learn about the full range of national curriculum subjects. They make good progress in a wide range of subjects, including in English and mathematics. For example, pupils make particularly good progress in swimming. Throughout their time at the school they have weekly swimming lessons in the school's indoor heated pool. By the time they leave in Year 6, many pupils can swim a mile without stopping.
- Results of the key stage 2 national tests showed weak progress in writing for the last two years. Inspection evidence shows that these results paint an unrealistically gloomy picture of the progress pupils make in writing. However, attainment and progress in

writing is relatively weaker than in reading and mathematics.

- The work in pupils' exercise books shows that their good knowledge of grammar, punctuation and spelling is not routinely applied to their independent writing. As a result, pupils frequently spell common words incorrectly and do not use punctuation accurately. In many cases, pupils' handwriting is poorly formed and underdeveloped.

## Early years provision

**Good**

- Children join the Reception Year with a wide range of skills and abilities. In some year groups, a large proportion of children join the school with a level of development below what is typical for their age.
- Children make good progress during their time in the early years. The proportion of pupils who achieve a good level of development by the end of Reception has improved steadily in recent years and was above the national average in 2017. This means that children are increasingly well prepared for Year 1.
- Teaching is good overall. Staff work well together as a team. They plan suitable activities across all the areas of learning in the early years curriculum. When teaching is at its best, teachers plan activities that have a very clear purpose in terms of what they want children to learn and achieve.
- The headteacher and Reception teacher lead the early years provision well. Between them they have a good and accurate understanding of the provision's strengths and relative weaknesses. The early years provision is continuing to improve steadily as a result.
- Children behave very well. They know the class rules and expectations and follow them with little fuss. Children cooperate well with each other. They persevere with activities for extended periods of time and this enables them to explore and investigate.
- Staff ensure that the school's youngest pupils are kept safe. They carry out thorough risk assessments to ensure that any necessary additional safety measures are identified and put in place.
- Handwriting is not taught systematically enough. Children are not always given the support they need as they develop their early writing skills. As a result, some children struggle to form letters correctly.



## School details

Unique reference number	115112
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10041788

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	227
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carole Sleightholm
Headteacher	Jona Davies
Telephone number	01245 222173
Website	<a href="http://www.st-johns-danbury.essex.sch.uk">www.st-johns-danbury.essex.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:admin@st-johns-danbury.essex.sch.uk">admin@st-johns-danbury.essex.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	30–31 January 2014

## Information about this school

- The previous headteacher left in December 2014 and the current headteacher joined the school in April 2015. The school was led by the deputy headteacher during the intervening term.
- The school meets current floor standards. These are the minimum standards, set by the government, for pupils' attainment and progress.
- This is a Church of England primary school. It is part of the Diocese of Chelmsford.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching and learning over time. Inspectors observed parts of 15 lessons, some jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors looked closely at the work in pupils' exercise books. They listened to pupils read and talked to them about their work.
- Inspectors looked at a range of the school's documents, including assessment information. They checked the school's single central record of pre-employment checks and other documentation concerned with the safer recruitment of staff and volunteers.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, other leaders, governors, a representative of the local authority and a group of pupils.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils throughout the inspection and with parents as they brought their children to school. They also considered 103 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and 72 additional free-text comments.
- Inspectors took the 19 responses to Ofsted's staff survey into account.

## Inspection team

Wendy Varney, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Gay Whent

Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. [www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings](http://www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings).

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit [www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk), or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted).

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted).

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2018