

St John's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Ipswich

Victory Road, Ipswich, Suffolk IP4 4LE

Inspection dates

24– 25 April 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher and other leaders, including governors, have established a safe, caring, happy and purposeful school community in which all feel valued. Pupils enjoy learning, exploring ideas and expressing their creativity.
- Pupils behave exceptionally well. Relationships are positive. Pupils are resilient, curious and keen to improve their work. These attitudes towards their learning have a powerful impact on their progress.
- Pupils attend well and rarely miss a day of school. They are punctual and arrive at lessons eager to engage and get to work.
- The school promotes pupils' personal development very well. Many take on positions of responsibility and develop leadership skills. Pupils are encouraged to think deeply, to discuss and to debate. They develop confidence, maturity and respect for others.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is provided for exceptionally well. Pupils develop a sophisticated understanding of the wider world as a result.
- Parents and carers, pupils and staff are overwhelmingly supportive of the work of the school.
- The early years provision is very well led. Children make rapid progress, and their achievement is consistently high. They make a very strong start to key stage 1.
- Teachers plan activities that enable pupils to make at least good progress in most subject areas. They make particularly rapid progress and achieve very high standards in reading, writing, French and religious studies by the end of key stage 2.
- Provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is well led. Pupils make strong progress socially and academically as a result.
- Pupils typically make very strong progress in mathematics by the end of key stage 2, and their attainment is high. Some teachers do not ensure that pupils apply their mathematics skills to solving real-world problems often enough.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in subjects other than English and mathematics is too variable. Pupils do not always develop their subject-specific skills well. Leaders do not check pupils' progress in these subjects carefully enough.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that all pupils fully develop:
 - their subject-specific skills across the foundation subjects by the time that they complete key stage 2
 - their ability to apply their mathematics skills to real-world problems.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - plans for learning across all of the foundation subjects make clear how teaching will support pupils' progressive development of their subject-specific skills as they move through the school
 - leaders, including governors, make regular checks on pupils' progress in the foundation subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher, supported well by her staff, has successfully created a school community in which all care for and support each other. Staff encourage pupils to work hard, to learn from their mistakes, and to respect themselves and others. Pupils respond readily; they grow in resilience, openness and maturity as they progress through the school. They help each other and give as much to their community as they draw from it.
- Parents, pupils and staff are overwhelmingly appreciative of the work taking place in the school. Comments about the 'well-managed, nurturing, warm and welcoming' school environment, the 'strong teaching' and the 'rich variety of extra-curricular opportunities' were typical of the views expressed by parents.
- Leaders, including governors, have an accurate understanding of what the school does well and where it needs to improve further. Staff and governors monitor the quality of education and put forward ideas about how it can be improved further.
- Leaders respond effectively when something is found to be not as good as it should be. For example, leaders were concerned that some pupils' writing skills were not developing quickly enough at the beginning of key stage 1. Leaders improved the way in which these pupils' progress is monitored and reviewed, and they are ensuring that those who need it receive timely and effective help.
- The headteacher is determined to ensure that all pupils are taught well. She challenges staff appropriately when standards are not as high as they should be. Staff appreciate the training they receive and the input from the local authority, which promotes improvement where this is needed. Teaching assistants value the planning time leaders provide them with. They use this to plan with teachers how to help pupils who need extra help or who are ready for the next challenge.
- Leaders monitor the achievement of pupils in English and mathematics accurately. They have a deep understanding of the strengths and areas for development in these subjects. English and mathematics subject leaders frequently check the standard of pupils' work against that in other schools, which assures them that teachers are assessing it accurately. Leaders use the information to plan swift and effective help or extra challenge for pupils who need it. The precision with which pupils' work in the foundation subjects is monitored is more variable.
- The provision for the small number of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is well led. Leaders and governors ensure that additional funding for their needs is used wisely to ensure that pupils make good progress. Leaders identify pupils' individual needs quickly and precisely. Additional support is targeted well, and pupils are provided with a range of strategies to support their academic progress and personal development. As a result, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities typically make good progress and develop greater confidence.
- Pupils are being well prepared for life in modern Britain. They regularly engage in discussions and debates with their teachers about current affairs, and develop respect

and tolerance for the views and opinions of others. Pupils develop understanding and decision-making skills through their work on the school council and the positions of responsibility held by many.

- Funding to support disadvantaged pupils is used effectively. Leaders ensure that these pupils attend well, make good progress in their learning and engage fully in sporting, cultural and other activities.
- The physical education (PE) and sport premium funding is used to provide pupils with access to a wide range of sporting activities. The school's monitoring information indicates that a large and growing number of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, engage in these regularly. Pupils told inspectors that they particularly enjoy PE.
- The curriculum is broad and engaging. Pupils are encouraged to see the links between the different subjects that they study, and are often asked 'big questions', such as 'when is a planet not a planet?' that prompt them to think deeply. Their very well-developed writing skills often enable them to express their ideas in a detailed and thoughtful manner, for example in French and religious studies. However, standards in subjects other than English and mathematics are variable, particularly in history and geography.

Governance of the school

- Governance is effective.
- Members of the governing body are ambitious for the school and have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They provide challenge to leaders about standards in many aspects of the school's work; they regularly check how far pupils are making the progress that they should in English and mathematics, for example. This provides them with an accurate view of strengths in these and many other key areas.
- Extensive training, for example in safeguarding, enables governors to meet their statutory responsibilities well. They supplement information from senior leaders with external reviews of aspects of the school's work. These provide governors with independent views about the quality of education at the school.
- Governors track progress towards school improvement plan priorities carefully and help senior leaders to make necessary changes. For example, sufficient funds are made available to enable all staff to access appropriate training and to commission external experts to help subject leaders plan curriculum improvements.
- Governors do not systematically challenge leaders about pupils' progress across the full range of subjects within the curriculum. As a result, they do not have a detailed enough understanding of how well pupils are doing in subjects other than English, mathematics and science.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's pre-employment checks meet all statutory requirements. Visitors to the school are checked carefully, and receive helpful guidance on what to do if they are concerned about a pupil. Staff are vigilant. In the words of one teacher, 'We work on the basis that safeguarding is everybody's responsibility.'
- Almost all parents, pupils and staff agree that pupils are safe at school. Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe at school because they are well cared for. Pupils also explained how they would keep themselves safe in a range of situations, including when using the internet. This reflects the considerable efforts that leaders have made to inform pupils and their parents about e-safety issues, including the recent 'Safe internet day'.
- The designated safeguarding leader is well trained and expert, as are other senior staff with safeguarding responsibilities. Leaders have a secure understanding of local risks. They also analyse carefully the information that staff pass on about safeguarding concerns. This helps leaders to know the most significant risks that pupils might face, and to target staff training to raise awareness about these.
- All staff receive appropriate training and regular updates in safeguarding. Leaders check carefully that staff's understanding of these updates is secure.
- As a result of this work, adults in school are alert to any signs that might indicate a pupil may be at risk or vulnerable. Staff know how to refer any concerns that they have, and expressed confidence that these would be dealt with well. The school's well-kept records demonstrate that pupils receive timely and appropriate support when it is required.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers make effective use of their good subject knowledge to plan learning that is well matched to the interests and abilities of pupils in the majority of subjects. They also give pupils the confidence to try alternative techniques, to explain when they get stuck and to keep trying when they encounter difficulty.
- Typically, when starting a lesson or a new topic, teachers check carefully what it is that pupils already know and can do. Teachers then plan activities to build quickly on that understanding or to close any gaps in pupils' knowledge before moving forward.
- Pupils benefit from teachers' precise and clear explanations about how to approach tasks or solve problems on a step-by-step basis. For example, these techniques enabled pupils of all abilities in an upper key stage 2 class to solve problems when working with mixed fractions, despite the fact that some had initially found this difficult.
- Teachers often use questioning very effectively in order to establish what pupils know, and at what stage their thinking might have become confused. Pupils are happy to explain their thinking, or their answer, even if they are not sure about it, because

teachers praise this attitude to learning.

- Teachers use pupils' responses to questions and their regular checks on pupils' work during lessons to work out who is ready to move on to harder work and who needs more help. Adults provide that support or challenge in a timely manner.
- Pupils engage in discussion about why they have chosen a particular method to solve a problem, describe a character or structure a piece of written work, for example. This helps them to understand different ways of working and to use the most suitable method.
- Teachers often ask searching questions that help pupils to clarify their thinking, consider the perspective of others and make connections between different things that they know. Pupils engage keenly and demonstrate resilience when these questions are difficult.
- The teaching of phonics is effective. In key stage 1, pupils make good progress with reading because teachers plan lessons well. Pupils read widely, both at school and at home. They develop the skills required to extract meaning and inferences from what they read, and often consult the dictionary if they are not sure of a word's meaning. They develop a rich vocabulary and an ability to use complex language to convey meaning in a sophisticated manner.
- Teachers provide feedback in line with school leaders' expectations. Pupils told inspectors that they appreciate the precise feedback they often receive during lessons while they are completing a task, because this enables them to improve it before it is finished.
- Often when producing written work, pupils are encouraged to plan and draft it carefully. Teachers encourage pupils to review their work, edit and redraft it before it is finally completed. Teachers use memorable examples to show pupils what a difference punctuation makes to meaning, such as the difference the addition of a comma makes to the sentence 'Stop eating, grandma.'
- Pupils use spelling, punctuation and grammar accurately. Older pupils produce extended creative writing that conveys place, atmosphere and character with vividness and subtlety. Sentences such as 'Gracefully drifting cirrus clouds lay high above in the tiffany blue skies' abound in older pupils' writing.
- In mathematics, teachers set challenging, complex problems that enable pupils to make good progress and develop a deeper understanding of mathematical reasoning. Leaders explained the steps that they have taken to ensure that pupils can apply their well-developed skills to real-world problems. Pupils told inspectors that they appreciate this because it 'helps you to understand the point of mathematics and how adults use it'. However, some teachers do not provide pupils with sufficient opportunities to work in this way.
- The teaching of subjects other than English and mathematics is more variable. In French, pupils develop the ability to write at some length with impressive accuracy and fluency. In religious studies, pupils can compare and contrast the basic tenets of different faiths and offer opinions about moral issues because teaching is well planned and engaging.
- In history and geography, pupils engage enthusiastically with appropriate subject

content but do not always develop their subject-specific skills as securely as they should. In science, pupils gain good understanding, particularly in biology, but have limited opportunities during key stage 2 to test hypotheses through carrying out experiments and considering their results.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Staff know pupils well. They use this information to provide appropriate support, care and guidance to those who need it. Pupils appreciate this and the calm ethos of the school, but know that they are expected to work hard and do well. They respond to the faith that staff have in their capacity to grow and develop. As one pupil put it, 'Teachers tell us that the more you think and work, the more you grow your brain, and then you make yourself more clever.'
- Pupils know what bullying is. They told inspectors that it happens rarely and that they are confident that adults deal with it quickly and effectively. Pupils challenge it themselves if they encounter it, and engage actively in initiatives such as 'anti-bullying week'. Pupils made clear that there is always an adult who they can talk to if they have a concern about something or feel unhappy.
- The curriculum supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well. Moral values are embedded in all aspects of the school's life. Pupils gain a detailed understanding of the main religious faiths, their similarities and the differences between them. They are taught to value diversity and they respect those with beliefs or with lifestyles that are different from their own. Pupils make a positive difference to the school community, for example through the school council's input into the revised behaviour policy.
- Pupils experience a wide variety of different cultures and traditions. Activities such as the French residential trip and the popular rhythm, dance and music workshops led by a visiting musician are very popular. Pupils gain an understanding about world affairs because teachers regularly discuss contemporary issues with them. Older pupils were able to talk thoughtfully with inspectors about whether science can answer moral questions, for example.
- All pupils in Year 6, and many others, are expected to serve the school community in some capacity, including as prefects, head pupils, eco-monitors or learning mentors. Work of this nature helps pupils to develop their self-confidence and leadership skills.
- Pupils often speak in front of an audience during assemblies, for example, or act as 'greeters' when visitors observe learning. These activities develop pupils' ability to speak to an audience, or with someone they do not know, in a confident and articulate manner.
- In conversations with inspectors, pupils could talk about how some of these skills would benefit them when they start secondary school and, ultimately, when they enter the world of work. They talked about their long-term career ambitions and showed a

good understanding of the qualifications and personal attributes that would help them to fulfil these.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. The overwhelming majority of parents, pupils and staff believe that pupils behave very well. Inspection evidence supports their views. There is very little serious misconduct, and the school rarely has to use sanctions such as temporary exclusion to deter or deal with it.
- Pupils often take a delight in learning. They listen attentively to their teachers and get down to work quickly; classroom routines are so well- established that teachers rarely need to reinforce their expectations. Learning takes place in a highly purposeful manner that often appears playful but is always serious. No disruption to learning was seen during the inspection, and pupils told inspectors that such a classroom environment is typical of their usual experience.
- Pupils support each other in their learning. They consider others' perspectives carefully and respectfully when discussing things in class, challenge appropriately and often adapt their thinking or way of working. At times of transition, or when pupils play at break or lunchtimes, pupils' behaviour is similarly positive.
- Attendance is well above the national average and has been for a number of years. Most pupils rarely miss a day of school. The proportion of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, who are persistently absent from school fell dramatically in 2017 and is considerably below the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Current pupils at both key stage 1 and key stage 2 are making exceptionally strong progress in reading and writing and very good progress overall in mathematics. The school's assessment information and work in pupils' books show that most pupils are currently making good progress in most, but not all, other subjects.
- In 2017, overall, pupils in key stage 1 achieved well in reading, writing and mathematics compared with pupils nationally. In key stage 2, progress in reading and writing was less strong than in mathematics but most pupils' attainment was high in all three subjects.
- In 2017, most pupils achieved the expected standard in phonics in Year 1. In key stage 2, attainment in English grammar, punctuation and spelling was significantly above the national average, and work in pupils' books indicates that current pupils are performing similarly well in this regard.
- At key stage 2, the proportion of pupils who make good or better progress in mathematics continues to be high, although some pupils have insufficient opportunities to apply their mathematical understanding to real-world problems.
- Attainment in science was in line with the national average at key stage 1 in 2017 and slightly above it at key stage 2. Scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that most develop a good level of understanding but that during key stage 2 pupils complete too little work

involving investigation and experimentation.

- Over time, the very small number of disadvantaged pupils who attend St John's typically make at least similar progress to that of other pupils nationally with the same starting points, and they achieve highly. Currently, these pupils are making particularly strong progress in English.
- The most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, typically make very strong progress in most subjects, particularly in English and mathematics, and achieve very highly because teaching meets their needs well.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, including those who have more complex needs typically make good progress from their individual starting points both academically and in terms of their personal development. This is because they are well cared for. Their needs are accurately assessed, and their progress is tracked carefully. The quality of these pupils' written work by the end of key stage 2 is high.
- In foundation subjects such as French and religious studies pupils are achieving well. Their progress is not as strong in history or geography. In those subjects, pupils, particularly the most able, are not challenged to develop their subject-specific skills as well as in other subjects.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- Typically, children enter the early years with skills and abilities that are broadly in line with those of other children nationally of a similar age. They settle swiftly and respond to adults' high expectations. Children are happy and highly engaged in this exceptionally attractive, safe and well-organised learning environment.
- Behaviour in the early years reflects children's growing sociability and maturity. They listen carefully and follow their teachers' instructions without hesitation, and gain an understanding of how to play and learn safely. Children are eager to join in activities, readily share and wait their turn patiently.
- Children take a delight in their learning and discovering new things. Their social skills are very well developed; children show respect for others and they respond to frustration or to difficulty in a mature, resilient manner.
- The early years leader keeps very detailed records of each child's progress across all areas of learning. Teachers share children's next steps with teaching assistants so that activities are planned very well. This, along with highly effective teaching, ensures that all children are challenged appropriately so that their learning moves forward rapidly.
- Progress records demonstrate that children get the appropriate help that they need, and that those whose starting points are low quickly catch up. In 2016 and 2017, the proportion reaching a good level of development was significantly above national averages, and current children are making very strong progress. This means they are very well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- Children deepen their knowledge, skills and understanding because teaching captivates them. The imaginative activities they engage in are often memorable. For example, during the inspection children excitedly created 'dinosaur land'. As a result of carefully

structured input from the teacher, children were able to understand some complicated concepts such as 'the whole world' and 'habitats'.

- Teachers' questioning and explanation help children to develop and deepen their understanding. During the inspection, as a result of a well-planned activity, the children thought carefully and described a variety of habitats accurately. One described the Antarctic habitat by saying, 'I think it would be icy and slippery.'
- Reading and speaking help develop children's imaginations, so that they have plenty to write about. Teachers also refer to the trips and visits that children have gone on, so that they can talk and write about what they experienced during these. Parents appreciate, as one put it, 'the many additional opportunities for exciting experiences – from musical workshops to visits to our church.'
- Children form letters very well and progress from simple mark making to writing in complete sentences before the end of the early years foundation stage. Mathematics resources are well chosen. They engage children's imagination, making the subject fun, and help them start to master basic mathematical concepts.
- Adults make highly effective use of the large and very well-resourced outdoor area to accelerate pupils' learning. Children take every opportunity to develop their skills. Teachers plan open-ended activities that encourage children to think through how to solve problems by themselves. Children develop resilience and take evident delight in working things out with minimal help from adults.
- Some of the comments on the Parent View free text service demonstrate that parents appreciate how well staff ensure that their children make a strong start. As one put it, 'My child was very quiet to begin with but, due to the teacher, she has grown in confidence and is learning new things every day.'
- Parents engage fully in the teaching of reading and writing because the school encourages this well. One parent commented, 'My daughter plays teacher/pupil games with me at home, centred around phonics and letter formation.' This partnership with parents helps promote children's rapid progress.

School details

Unique reference number	124781
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10052052

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Church of England (Voluntary controlled)
Age range of pupils	4– 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	212
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Roger Clark
Executive Headteacher	Janita Betts
Telephone number	01473 727554
Website	www.st-johns-suffolk.sch.uk
Email address	office@st-johns.suffolk.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	10– 11 October 2007

Information about this school

- This school is a slightly smaller than most primary schools.
- The proportion of children and pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils funded through the pupil premium is well below the national average.
- The percentage of children and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is well below the national average, as is the proportion of pupils who have education, health and care plans.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors made visits to a large number of lessons. Almost all of these visits were undertaken alongside a member of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and when moving around the school site at breaktime and lunchtime.
- Inspectors, together with members of the school's leadership team, evaluated the quality of work in pupils' books.
- Meetings were held with: four groups of pupils; the headteacher; other senior leaders; four subject leaders; one group of teachers; one group of teaching assistants and members of the school's governing body.
- The lead inspector had telephone conversations with two representatives of the local authority.
- Inspectors considered 86 responses to Ofsted's free text service alongside 96 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. Inspectors also evaluated 10 responses from staff to their online questionnaire and 172 responses to the pupil questionnaire.
- Inspectors evaluated the information contained in the school's documentation, including that relating to: safeguarding and child protection; curriculum development; pupils' achievement, attendance and behaviour; school development and improvement plans; leaders' self-evaluation; school leaders' allocating of pupil premium funding and leaders' plans and evaluation of the PE and sport premium funding.
- The inspection was carried out following a complaint made to Ofsted, which raised serious concerns. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector decided that an inspection of the school should take place to follow up the whole-school issues that were raised. Inspectors sought to establish whether leaders' and managers' work was effective, particularly in relation to the promotion of pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare.

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

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