

St John's Church of England Primary School

St John's Place, Northgate, Canterbury, Kent CT1 1BD

Inspection dates

18–19 September 2018

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	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Since the last inspection, leaders have driven improvement relentlessly. Their determination, and the highly positive ethos they have created, is helping to promote further improvement.
- Leaders show a clear and uncompromising vision that promotes the achievement of every child within a caring, Christian community. This vision is shared by staff.
- Governance is highly effective. Governors use their experience and expertise to the best advantage of the school. They monitor the school closely and provide effective challenge and support for school leaders.
- Children make an excellent start in the Nursery and Reception Years. They settle into school quickly and make outstanding progress due to the high expectations of their behaviour and achievement.
- Leaders have improved the quality of teaching, which is now good. However, there are some inconsistencies in teaching, and not all pupils are supported or challenged enough to do their best, particularly the most able pupils.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. A purposeful calmness permeates the school. Strong relationships between staff and pupils help pupils feel secure and promote their learning and personal development well.
- The school's unremitting work to ensure that pupils attend school regularly has led to improved attendance for all groups of pupils.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is highly successful.
- The school provides effective support for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. The very high number of pupils who join the school part way through their schooling are integrated well.
- Leaders ensure that pupils enjoy a wide curriculum that stimulates their interest, particularly through enrichment activities. However, pupils' achievement in a range of subjects is not as strong as in English and mathematics.
- Outcomes at the end of early years and key stage 1 have improved considerably to be in line with national levels. However, outcomes at the end of key stage 2 remain well below national levels. Current pupils in key stage 2 are making better progress, but previous cohorts have not made up the gaps in their learning.
- Throughout the school, restricted vocabulary is limiting pupils' achievements across the curriculum. Outcomes require improvement.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve progress in reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 2, so that a higher proportion of pupils reach the age-related expectations, and the most able pupils reach the higher standards.
- Strengthen the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that:
 - teachers challenge pupils, particularly the most able pupils, to think deeply and learn more
 - teaching strengthens pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills effectively in all subjects in addition to English and mathematics
 - teaching develops pupils' vocabulary across the curriculum, so that they can express what they know and understand accurately.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The senior leadership team's collective determination has successfully raised standards since the last inspection, particularly in early years and key stage 1. Senior and middle leaders, governors and staff share the ambition to provide the best possible learning and personal experiences for the pupils. Hard-working leaders at all levels demonstrate passion and resilience.
- Despite the growing strengths in the school, leaders are not complacent. They know that pupils could make even better progress, and that some still have some catching up to do, so that they achieve as well as they should by the end of Year 6. Improvements since the last inspection have been slower to make an impact on outcomes at the end of key stage 2 than leaders would have liked.
- Senior leaders hold teachers firmly to account for pupils' progress. Any weaknesses in the quality of teaching and learning are picked up quickly through leaders' checks on pupils' progress. Leaders give appropriate support and training to staff when needed, and rapid improvement is expected from staff to meet leaders' high expectations.
- Leaders keep a regular check on the progress of every pupil in the school. They are aware that many pupils have gaps in their previous learning and are determined that these pupils are offered every opportunity to catch up. Current disadvantaged pupils are making good progress, overall.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language receive effective support. Many arrive at the school with very little understanding of English. Leaders ensure that swift assessment identifies any needs they may have, and appropriate targeted support is put in place. The school recently achieved a local literacy award for engaging pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The leadership of provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities has strengthened since the last inspection. The senior leader for inclusion and the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) understand pupils' different needs very well and use additional funds to cater for them in a highly nurturing way.
- Leaders ensure that pupils have a range of rich experiences across the curriculum. Exciting trips, regular visitors and film-making play an important role in hooking and maintaining pupils' interest in their termly topics. Visitors include authors, musicians and science experts. An increasing number of pupils take part in extra-curricular clubs after school, especially sports clubs. These activities combine to make a significant contribution to pupils' personal and academic achievement. However, in some subjects, particularly humanities, pupils are not learning deeply and widely enough.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development threads its way through the curriculum and is reinforced by the school's 'living and learning' values. Pupils' achievements are regularly celebrated in assemblies. Weekly collective worship further supports pupils' understanding of Christian and British values. Pupils show tolerance and respect for one another and warmly welcome pupils who join the school mid-year, sometimes speaking little English. The inspector who attended assembly could not distinguish the thirty or so pupils who had joined Years 1 to 6 during the previous fortnight, as they

were so well integrated.

- Additional sports funding is used well. Pupils' participation in sporting and physical activities has increased due to an investment in equipment and specialist coaching. Pupils increasingly take part in competitive sports and tournaments with other schools and are enthusiastic about the increased range of sports activities and opportunities. Last year, the school achieved the national School Games Bronze Mark Award in recognition of the development of competition across the school.
- Leaders offer parents and carers many opportunities to find out how they can help with their child's learning. Parents who spoke to inspectors or completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. One parent said: 'From the moment I entered the school, I was amazed by the friendly, accepting and truly inclusive atmosphere from everyone. We were treated with respect and dignity from the beginning.' The approachability and support of staff is widely praised.

Governance of the school

- The governing body makes a highly effective contribution to the overall leadership of the school. Governors are aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors work effectively as a team. Their professional experience and expertise are particular strengths of the school.
- Governors discharge their statutory duties well. Minutes from governing body meetings show that governors ask appropriate questions. They strike the right balance between supporting leaders and being appropriately challenging.
- Governors regularly visit the school to see for themselves how staff are implementing changes.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school. Governors and staff are appropriately trained and know their responsibilities well. Staff are vigilant and promote an environment where pupils trust and can talk to adults.
- Leaders ensure that the school's safeguarding work is supported effectively by the systems and structures that are in place. Staff keep careful records of any concerns they may have about a pupil. Leaders take prompt action to follow these up in an appropriate way.
- Leaders show an impressive knowledge and understanding of the individual needs of vulnerable pupils and their home circumstances. They are alert to local and national risks and ensure that staff are trained accordingly. The school works successfully with external agencies for the benefit of vulnerable pupils, and leaders are tenacious in ensuring that pupils receive the support they need. The family liaison officer offers welcome support for pupils and families who may be facing difficulties.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe online. This is because e-safety is an integral part of the school's curriculum. The school recently achieved an award for e-safety

videos produced by the pupils.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. As a result, pupils' attainment and progress have improved, particularly through key stage 1.
- Strong relationships between staff and pupils mean that pupils work hard and want to do well. They are beginning to become resilient learners, and work well together.
- Effective phonics teaching in early years and key stage 1 contributes well to pupils' improved progress in reading and writing. Teachers match reading books well to pupils' abilities, and pupils are becoming confident readers as a result. The excellent library is used successfully to promote a love of reading.
- The quality of teaching shows some inconsistency across the school. It varies between year groups, between classes within year groups and between subjects. However, improvements made through new initiatives are raising outcomes for pupils in key stage 1, although these are not yet embedded. Current pupils in key stage 2 are also benefiting from improved teaching, but have more lost ground to make up.
- Where teaching leads to good progress, it takes close account of pupils' individual starting points and uses a range of strategies to meet their needs. However, where teaching is less effective, teachers do not consistently set work at an appropriate level. Sometimes, the most able pupils are not given challenging tasks and do not make the progress they are capable of. At other times, pupils are presented with tasks that they are not equipped to tackle.
- Teaching assistants provide a good balance of support and challenge for pupils who need extra help in intervention sessions. During lessons, teaching assistants offer skilful questioning to help pupils who require additional support to work things out for themselves. This is promoting better progress for some pupils who need to catch up or who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- The teaching of writing has been a focus for improvement. Leaders have introduced higher-quality texts, which are having a beneficial effect on the quality of writing. Pupils also have more opportunities to strengthen their knowledge of grammar, punctuation and spelling. Nevertheless, teachers do not consistently ensure that pupils' vocabulary is sufficiently ambitious.
- Teaching in mathematics is also improving. The subject leader is clear about what needs to be done to raise pupils' achievement, for example by promoting more problem solving and expecting pupils to explain their thinking. These developments are at an early stage and pupils' reasoning skills are not yet embedded. In some classes, pupils' work shows that more rapid progress is being made.
- Teaching in Year 6 shows more consistency than other years. Teaching in these classes, as well as in some classes in other years, promotes discussion and developing independence. However, throughout the school, some pupils carry the legacy of misconceptions and gaps in their knowledge.
- Pupils enjoy the stimulating enrichment opportunities they experience across the wider

curriculum, including the forest school. A highly practical scheme for science teaching is engaging pupils well and building their confidence. Leaders recognise that in some areas of the curriculum, including history and geography, their planning for pupils' progression of knowledge, skills and understanding is not as clearly established as it is in English and mathematics.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Adults care for pupils very well, giving careful thought to changing routines and circumstances, to ensure that they are managed effectively. Their success in this work is evident around the school, with children settling very quickly into their new classes at the start of the year, including those who have just started in the early years foundation stage.
- There are excellent relationships between teachers and pupils. Staff know the pupils well, and pupils' individual needs are supported effectively.
- Pupils are confident to confide in adults in school if they have any problems. They say that bullying is rare but that teachers are good at resolving any issues should they arise.
- The school is highly adept at supporting pupils who join the school after the beginning of the school year. Many arrive speaking little or no English and are welcomed by the whole school community. Skilled staff ease their transition effectively.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The atmosphere around the school is calm and purposeful, with pupils settling quickly into their routines at the start of the academic year. Pupils understand what adults expect of them, and respond appropriately to any reminders they may need, so that high standards are maintained.
- Pupils conduct themselves well around the school and in lessons, and respond positively to teachers' high expectations for behaviour and learning. Occasionally in lessons, where teaching lacks challenge or slows in pace, some pupils lose concentration.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. Overall attendance has improved when compared with the same period last year and is in line with national levels. Attendance for disadvantaged pupils shows a marked improvement. The school provides highly individualised and intensive support for those pupils whose attendance is low. Parents increasingly trust the school to care for their children. The school rightly takes a firm line where necessary. Nevertheless, there is a small group of pupils who show persistent absence, despite the best efforts of school leaders.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' outcomes require improvement because the progress that they make is not

consistently good enough, despite good teaching. Published information about pupils' outcomes at the end of key stage 2 shows that attainment and progress in both reading and mathematics were in the bottom 20% nationally for 2016 and 2017. Provisional results for this year show that outcomes at the end of Year 6 remain well below national levels. For the last few years, pupils have reached the end of key stage 2 with gaps in their learning due to the legacy of weaker teaching in the past. This has slowed their progress and contributed to lower than national outcomes. Also, some pupils who join the school into classes other than Reception arrive with low starting points. A varied array of interventions and additional opportunities for their learning take place. These are increasingly successful lower down the school, but outcomes by the end of key stage 2 have remained stubbornly low.

- Leaders are beginning to tackle this underachievement successfully. The school's own performance information shows that, last year, pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5 made steady and sustained progress and more achieved the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics. The challenges brought by pupils joining in-year remain, but the non-mobile pupils are making better progress than previously. The rate of pupils' mobility into and out of the school is slowing, and the current Year 6 is more stable. Year 6 pupils' work shows they are making good progress.
- Outcomes in phonics have improved and the proportion of Year 1 pupils meeting the expected standard in the phonics screening check was in line with the national average in 2017. Provisional results show this achievement has been maintained in 2018. This is due to a concerted effort to improve the teaching of phonics.
- Pupils make good progress across key stage 1 and attainment is rising as a result. Increasing proportions of pupils are working at a greater depth of learning by the end of Year 2.
- Across the school, the most able pupils do not achieve well enough. Too many do not develop the wide knowledge and deep understanding needed to achieve the higher standards. Teachers' expectations of the most able pupils are too low.
- Disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress over time, because their needs are understood and met by leaders, teachers and the other adults who support them. This prevents them from falling further behind their peers in school and nationally. There is further work to do to secure the very strong progress that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities need for them to consistently improve towards attaining in line with other pupils nationally.
- Pupils' work across the curriculum varies. Rich art displays enhance classrooms and corridors. Pupils clearly enjoy a wide range of experiences, including visits, to help them learn about a range of topics. Pupils benefit from exciting, practical-based science lessons. The school's curriculum has been mapped carefully to provide coverage of the national curriculum, but pupils' work does not always show the same commitment and standards as in English and mathematics. In addition, across all subjects, pupils' limited vocabulary is a barrier to the highest achievement. It restricts pupils' ability to tackle word problems in mathematics, or explain phenomena accurately in science, for example.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- Children in the early years get an excellent start to their schooling. The highly capable senior leader, with oversight for early years, and the dynamic nursery manager bring strong expertise and a clear vision for a stimulating environment which promotes effective learning. There is a strong emphasis on providing care and nurture as well as challenge and ambition. Staff quickly establish consistent routines which enhance all aspects of the children's experiences at school.
- The Nursery and Reception classes provide a safe environment with well-designed, rich provision for two-year-olds. Children settle quickly into early years, because their induction is managed carefully. The success of this preparation was evident during this inspection. Despite it being so early in the academic year, children engaged confidently and happily with a range of activities, playing with and alongside each other, and benefiting from adults' reassurance and encouragement. Children who had recently progressed from Nursery to Reception were particularly composed and focused on their activities. Parents value how well their children are supported during their introduction to the school.
- Children enter the early years provision with abilities that are below, and in some cases well below, those expected for their age. This is particularly evident in communication and language, where many children are monosyllabic in conversation. Effective baseline assessment enables staff to plan with a focus on rapidly closing the gaps in children's abilities.
- Key workers in the Nursery quickly develop warm and caring relationships with the children. Almost all of the children separate easily from their parents, showing confidence in the adults around them. They seek out adults for reassurance when needed, and staff respond quickly to any signs of distress.
- The quality of teaching in the Nursery is a strength of the school. Staff in both Nursery and Reception have consistently high expectations and are determined that all children, regardless of starting points or individual barriers, make strong progress.
- High expectations and precise attention to the developmental stage of every child mean that staff know how to support each child's learning, so that all do well. Staff build up children's learning through highly effective modelling and questioning. In Reception Year, disadvantaged children also benefit from tailored intervention supported by pupil premium funding. Impressive work in books shows children's achievement accelerating through the year.
- The proportion of children that achieve good levels of development, from starting points lower than those expected for their age, is consistently in line with the national average. An increasing proportion are exceeding the early learning goals. Pupils are ready to settle quickly into Year 1.
- Safeguarding is promoted as effectively in the early years foundation stage as it is in the rest of the school. Leaders ensure that staff are suitably trained to recognise potential risks to pupils' welfare, acting on their concerns in an appropriate and proportionate way.

School details

Unique reference number	137071
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10053264

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	316
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Catherine Carden
Headteacher	Joanne Warnock
Telephone number	01227 462 360
Website	www.stjohns-canterbury.kent.sch.uk/
Email address	office@stjohns-canterbury.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	21–22 March 2016

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school. It is a Church of England voluntary aided school. Its last section 48 inspection took place in May 2016.
- It has provision for early years foundation stage children, including two-year-olds, with a Nursery and two Reception classes. There are two classes in each of Years 1 to 6.
- Most pupils come from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is higher than national levels.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is much higher than the national average.
- A higher-than-average proportion of pupils join and leave the school during each school year.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in 25 lessons across all year groups. All lessons were visited jointly with senior leaders. An inspector also visited an assembly. Inspectors listened to pupils read and met with groups of pupils from Years 1 to 6.
- Inspectors looked at a range of pupils' work in lessons, and a further selection of pupils' books was scrutinised. Pupils' behaviour was observed in lessons, around the school and during breaktimes.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders, and a group of teachers. The lead inspector also met with six members of the governing body, including the chair and the vice-chair. The lead inspector also met with representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors met parents at the beginning and end of the days of the inspection. Inspectors took into account the 15 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.
- Inspectors evaluated a wide range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, attendance information, safeguarding records, information on pupils' progress, and minutes of governors' meetings.

Inspection team

Theresa Phillips, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Teresa Davies	Ofsted Inspector
Simon Harbrow	Ofsted Inspector

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