

St John’s Church of England Primary School

121–147 Orts Road, Reading, Berkshire RG1 3JN

Inspection dates

4–5 December 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Over recent years, inconsistencies in the quality of leadership and shortcomings in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment have caused standards to decline.
- Subject leaders are still developing the skills required to enable them to have an influence on teaching and learning across the curriculum.
- Systems to hold middle leaders to account for the progress that pupils make have not been sufficiently robust.
- Leaders’ recently refined tracking systems are too new to provide reliable and accurate information about pupils’ progress.
- The quality of teaching and assessment is not consistently good across the school. Standards in writing, although improving, are not yet high enough across the school.
- Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) do not make sufficient progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils’ progress information is not used sufficiently well to inform the next steps of their learning. Consequently, pupils with low prior attainment can struggle to keep up, or the most able are not sufficiently challenged.
- Weak planning in science, humanities and technology means that pupils do not develop a deep enough knowledge or necessary skills in these subjects. Consequently, they are not sufficiently well prepared for secondary school.
- Some parents and carers of older pupils feel that their concerns about their children’s progress have not been listened to.

The school has the following strengths

- The new interim headteacher is already making significant improvements. Her leadership has given clearer vision, improved behaviour and motivated staff. She has instilled a sense of raised expectations and common purpose.
- The school offers a warm and nurturing environment. Pupils are happy and feel safe.
- High standards in the Nursery and Reception classes ensure that children make strong progress from their starting points.
- Pupils behave well in and around school. They are polite, respectful and kind to one another.
- Attendance is consistently in line with, or above, the national average for primary schools.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - embedding recently refined performance management systems to enable governors to measure the effectiveness of middle leaders and hold them to account for continued improvements
 - reviewing systems for the identification of pupils with SEND and ensuring more consistent and effective deployment of teaching assistants
 - improving the quality of planning and challenge in science and the foundation subjects
 - continuing to refine and enhance communication to parents.
- Continue to improve teaching and learning so that they are consistently good across the school by:
 - ensuring that teachers make effective use of assessment information to pitch work at the right level, particularly for pupils of lower prior attainment and the most able, so that no time is wasted
 - improving adults' questioning skills in line with the strongest examples in the school
 - ensuring that teachers have consistently high expectations across the curriculum.
- Enhance pupils' outcomes by:
 - refining provision for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND so that these groups make accelerated progress from their starting points
 - raising the level of challenge so that more pupils achieve the higher standards in writing by the end of Year 6 than in the past
 - ensuring that the curriculum sequentially develops pupils' depth of knowledge and breadth of skills in science and the wider curriculum.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how the school may improve this aspect of its work.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since her arrival in September, the interim headteacher has brought much-needed clarity and vision and has reinvigorated staff. She swiftly identified the school's shortcomings and is systematically reviewing and improving the school's systems. She has an accurate understanding of the strengths and the weaknesses of the school, the experience of working with the local community and a passion to improve standards. In the short time she has been in post, she has already boosted staff morale. Staff and governors commented on the impact she has had on whole-school procedures to improve pupils' behaviour and standards of writing.
- Until recently, leaders' and governors' checks on the quality of teaching and learning have been ineffective. In the past, the school's monitoring systems have not ensured that all teachers have had sufficiently high expectations in English and mathematics. Consequently, standards in key stages 1 and 2 declined. Assessment and tracking systems have not been sufficiently robust or accurate enough to ensure that teachers can make immediate changes to their teaching so that all groups of pupils make good progress. This has been a significant barrier to school improvement.
- The curriculum lacks breadth and depth in science and some foundation subjects, such as humanities and technology. Currently, pupils do not achieve consistently well across all year groups and in different areas of the curriculum. Training is required to improve teachers' subject knowledge and enable better planning which sequences the key knowledge, vocabulary and skills pupils need in each of these subject areas.
- Recognising the decline in standards, trustees from the Berkshire Schools Trust (BST) took decisive action over the past year. They made changes to governance, appointed the new interim headteacher, restructured senior leadership and implemented a raft of appropriate training and support for teachers. There are pockets of very strong teaching and learning, most notably in early years. However, it is too soon for new leaders' improved systems to have rooted consistently good teaching, learning and assessment across the school.
- In the past, not all middle leaders have been given sufficient time or training to carry out their roles effectively. Aspects of middle leadership have been shared between two or three members of staff. Consequently, some middle leaders are unclear about the lines of accountability for subject standards or the deployment of teaching assistants. Subject leaders and the special educational needs coordinators know that changes are required. They are determined to do their jobs well and are stepping up to the challenge.
- Over time, teachers' assessments have been inaccurate. Responding to this, BST supported training, improved moderation and better collaboration with other schools last year. This ensured a better fit than previously between teachers' assessment and the published outcomes at key stages 1 and 2 in 2018. However, current pupils' books evidence that in-school assessments and tracking systems are not yet accurate enough to reliably track the ongoing progress of different groups of pupils.
- Some aspects of the pupil premium funding are used effectively. For example, funding allocated for family liaison and improving language skills has a positive impact on

pupils' self-esteem and communication skills. However, weaknesses in teaching and a limited range of interventions for disadvantaged pupils mean that they do not achieve as well as they should.

- Leaders rightly identify that low-prior-attaining pupils and those with SEND frequently have complex and multiple needs. Leaders ensure that funding is used to provide a range of useful individual support for those identified with SEND. However, variations in the quality of teaching and the deployment of teaching assistants mean that these two groups do not make strong progress over time, particularly in key stage 2.
- The school offers a welcoming and friendly place for parents and visitors and sends regular newsletters home. However, a minority of parents commented to inspectors that communication is not as good as it could be. Some parents expressed concerns related to how quickly staff have responded to their concerns regarding the progress that their children have made over time.
- Assemblies are used effectively to celebrate achievements and promote opportunities for reflection. Leaders promote an awareness of the wider world beyond school and encourage pupils to engage in a range of community activities, such as charity fundraising or presenting their work to the mayor. This, combined with a well-planned religious education programme, promotes good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. As a result, pupils can confidently discuss different faiths and cultures and they appreciate and value diversity and equality.

Governance of the school

- The role of chair of governors is currently undertaken by a trustee of BST as an interim measure while a new chair is sought. Members of the local governing body are a committed team who share their open and clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses with leaders and the school community. Recognising the decline in standards over recent years, last summer they wrote to parents informing them that they no longer believed that the school was outstanding.
- There are currently vacancies on the local governing body and further training is required to support current members with aspects of their roles. BST have plans in place to secure a full complement of governors and deliver this training.
- Governors share the new interim headteacher's determination and ambition to improve teaching and learning so that all pupils, particularly the most able, achieve well across the curriculum.
- The governing body has successfully challenged leaders to respond to the past decline in outcomes and begin to raise the quality of teaching and learning. Governors scrutinise performance information effectively to assess the success of the school against its own targets, and the standards achieved by similar schools. They are aware that more needs to be done to improve the progress made by disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND.
- Governors acknowledge that, currently, the school's website does not include all the required information about the curriculum or the most up-to-date policies and are taking steps to address this.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All parents and pupils who spoke with inspectors stated clearly that the school is safe. Pupils feel confident that staff can resolve any concerns that they may have.
- During the inspection, a range of teaching and support staff confirmed that they receive regular safeguarding training at an appropriate level. Appropriate risk assessments are carried out where necessary. Staff are knowledgeable about the school's procedures for raising any welfare or child protection concerns.
- Clear and comprehensive record-keeping supports work with external agencies where appropriate. Well-managed systems and an effective team approach involving teachers, leaders and office staff ensure that all pupils are kept safe.
- All the school's employment checks are in place, in line with statutory requirements.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The standard of teaching in key stages 1 and 2 is inconsistent and not as strong as it is in early years. Sometimes teachers do not offer sufficient challenge, particularly for the most able. Often, pupils of different abilities complete the same work and some, especially the most able, complete tasks which are too easy. This limits their progress. Consequently, too few pupils reach the higher standards in writing at the end of Year 6 and outcomes across the wider curriculum are poor.
- Occasionally, teachers' expectations of what pupils know, can do and understand are not high enough. Some teachers accept poorly presented work and do not ensure that pupils refine and improve their work when they have made errors. As a result, some pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- The teaching of phonics is a strength of the school and most pupils reach the level required by the end of Year 1. Positive relationships and high expectations ensure that pupils develop the skills of segmenting and blending. This ensures that most pupils in key stage 1 can read unknown words accurately and quickly become fluent and keen readers.
- Last year, the teaching of reading in key stage 2 was rightly identified as a school priority. A school-wide focus on improving reading skills has clearly had an impact and pupils' inference and comprehension skills have improved. Pupils are encouraged to read regularly and from a wide range of material.
- Following recent staff training, pupils' writing is improving across the school. Engaging contexts now stimulate extended writing opportunities and displays exemplify how pupils can achieve the higher standards expected of them. For example, in Year 6 pupils were inspired by reading the book 'I am Malala' and enthusiastically engaged in writing a formal letter. However, in some areas, boys' writing is noticeably weaker than that of the girls. In addition, some pupils' knowledge and use of grammar, punctuation and spelling are not secure. This reduces the quality and coherence of their writing.
- Typically, the teaching of mathematics is good. However, a small minority of teachers accept work that is poorly presented and/or lacks precision. In addition, some teachers' feedback does not sufficiently challenge pupils to develop their reasoning skills or

correct their errors.

- The impact of teachers' questioning is too variable, particularly in subjects other than English and mathematics. Some teachers use their well-developed subject knowledge to design engaging learning tasks, and then use probing questions to challenge pupils' understanding. As a result, pupils make strong progress in lessons and over time. However, some teachers' subject knowledge is insecure and so their questioning is less effective. Where this is the case, too few pupils are challenged sufficiently.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils say that they feel safe and secure in school, and they are. They can confidently recall how to keep themselves safe, including when accessing the internet.
- Pupils show respect for one another and for adults in the school. They are aware of the need for rules and consequences. Pupils say that there is very little teasing or bullying of any kind, and that they are confident that adults will always listen and intervene to put a stop to any unkind behaviour.
- Pupils speak with confidence about different faiths and cultures. They have a keen sense of equalities and have regular opportunities to learn about British values. Consequently, pupils develop self-confidence, a sense of community and are well prepared for life in diverse modern Britain.
- Sports funding is used appropriately to improve pupils' engagement and participation in sporting activities. The school hires specialist teachers and coaches to deliver lessons as well as offer guidance for staff. Through the curriculum and clubs, St John's provides opportunities for pupils to engage in a range of sports, including gymnastics, various team sports and athletics. As a result, pupils develop a sense of teamwork and learn how to keep themselves fit and healthy.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The interim headteacher has swiftly established clear expectations, and by changing teaching groups, has improved behaviour in key stage 2. Throughout the school, pupils know what is expected of them and behave well in lessons and around school. They are polite, respectful and display good manners.
- Pupils and their parents are positive about behaviour at the school and agree that it is typically good.
- Leaders' records show that there are very few serious incidents. Where incidents occur, they are recorded fully, and action taken to prevent any reoccurrence.
- Pupils socialise well together and look after each other. They are proud of their school and respectful of others' beliefs. There is little disruption to learning in lessons, although at times pupils lose attentiveness when the work is not suitable for their needs. When this happens, some chatter can slow the pace of learning.
- Overall attendance and that of different groups is in line with, or above, the national

average.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- In 2018, provisional information at the end of key stage 2 shows that pupils' rates of progress in reading and mathematics were in line with national averages. However, a lower proportion of pupils than in most schools made the expected progress in writing. Consequently, only half of the cohort achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In 2018, provisional data indicates that key stage 1 pupils' attainment was above the national average in reading and mathematics, but that writing attainment was below average.
- Training for teachers and better planning have improved standards in writing since September. Attainment and rates of progress are improving in most year groups. Lesson observations, pupils' work and assessment information provide strong evidence that the best teaching is helping pupils to make good progress. In some classes, pupils are making up lost ground, but this is not consistently so across the school.
- Over the last three years, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year has been in line with or above the national average. Consequently, most children are well prepared for Year 1.
- Results for the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 and in the Year 2 recheck are above the national average. Pupils are well equipped to develop good early reading skills.
- The rates of progress of disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND are variable across the school. Good relationships and targeted support enable some to make the progress that is expected of them from their varying starting points. However, few exceed that or are supported to make the accelerated progress needed to catch up and achieve age-related expectations.
- Teachers have outline curriculum planning for science, technology, the arts and humanities. However, these plans do not sequence the depth of knowledge and skills pupils need to understand within each of these subjects sufficiently well. Consequently, pupils' achievement in science and the wider curriculum is too variable across the school. Practical skills and thinking skills across the wider curriculum are not sufficiently well developed to prepare pupils for secondary school.

Early years provision

Good

- Leadership is more effective in early years and ensures that the achievement of children in Nursery and Reception classes is a strength of the school. Leaders have high aspirations and are determined that all children should make good or better progress. Staff work well as a team to create bright and stimulating learning environments which offer a rich range of learning experiences for the children.
- Parents particularly value the nurturing ethos at St John's and are very complimentary about the transition arrangements for starting early years. They reported to inspectors

that their children had settled in very quickly, making friends and quickly progressing with their reading and other skills.

- Good relationships with adults, and each other, ensure that children quickly adapt to school life and are happy, motivated and ready to learn. By the time children leave the Reception Year, the large majority progress well to reach a good level of development. Children are well equipped for key stage 1.
- The indoor and outdoor areas are very well equipped and motivate the children to socialise and play well together. They keenly engage with the variety of equipment available to learn to do things independently and cooperatively. Staff are on hand if a more directed approach is necessary when children are playing. Teachers and teaching assistants skilfully deploy a blend of simple instructions, targeted praise and demonstrations to encourage children to enjoy learning and develop resilience.
- Many children who join either Nursery or Reception classes speak English as an additional language. Staff ensure that language skills, communication and oracy are promoted very well. Children are supported to settle in quickly and they swiftly gain the skills of listening attentively to adults and to each other.
- Behaviour in early years is good, both in the classrooms and in the outside area. Children feel safe and secure, they collaborate well with their peers and make choices about the activities that they want to do.
- Nearly all children make a good start in learning to read because the teaching of phonics in Reception is very effective. Similarly, through careful planning and resourcing, staff ensure that children's number skills are developed well.
- Children confidently engage in a variety of well-planned activities supporting all areas of their learning. Leaders' effective monitoring of their progress supports staff to plan suitable next steps for most children. Leaders are keen to improve outcomes still further by refining and improving assessment and providing more challenging tasks to challenge the most able children.

School details

Unique reference number	142735
Local authority	Reading
Inspection number	10046651

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	458
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of local governing body	Simon Hodgson
Interim headteacher	Martina Parsons
Telephone number	0118 937 5540
Website	www.stjohns.reading.sch.uk
Email address	admin@stjohns.reading.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-sized primary school with a Nursery. It converted to become an academy in June 2016 and is sponsored by the Berkshire Schools Trust (BST), a small multi-academy trust with three primary academies. Its predecessor school, also called St John's Church of England Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted in 2008 and graded outstanding.
- The directors of BST are responsible for, and oversee, the management and administration of its three primary academies. The trust delegates aspects of governance to the local governing body. This local governing body is responsible for taking a strategic overview of the school and monitoring its targets and priorities.
- As a school with a distinctive Christian ethos, the school was last subject to an inspection under section 48 of The Education Act 2005 in February 2014.
- The school serves a diverse local community with a wide range of cultural and ethnic

backgrounds. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well above the national average.

- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium is below the national average.
- Recently, there have been significant changes to the senior leadership of the school. The chair of the local board of governors has left and their role has been taken by one of the trustees of BST. The previous head of school relinquished his responsibility at the end of the last academic year and the new interim headteacher took up post in September 2018. In addition, the acting headteacher of another of BST's primary schools now serves on the senior leadership team here in a new role as assessment leader.
- The school runs a breakfast and an after-school club.
- The school has received support from BST to support teaching, learning and assessment as well as leadership and management.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out as a result of Ofsted’s risk assessment procedures for exempt schools. This process identified that standards since the previous inspection had declined, so the school was selected for inspection under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was subsequently deemed to be a section 5 inspection under the same Act by Her Majesty’s Inspector, and a full section 5 inspection was then carried out.
- Inspectors visited each of the classrooms to gather evidence to contribute to the evaluation of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Many of these observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders. In addition, inspectors heard pupils read and visited assemblies.
- Meetings were held with the interim headteacher, senior and middle leaders, members of the local governing body and representatives from BST.
- Inspectors talked to pupils about their learning and looked at their work across a range of subjects. They spoke to pupils on the playground and during lessons. An inspector met with a group of pupils to gather their views.
- There were too few views expressed in response to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Parent View, to enable valid analysis. However, conversations were held with several parents at the beginning of the second day of the inspection to gather their views. Inspectors also considered the views represented in the school’s parental surveys and those expressed in a letter received from a member of staff.
- A wide range of school documentation was scrutinised, including that relating to policies, self-evaluation, improvement planning, safeguarding, pupils’ achievement, behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors reviewed the record of leaders’ vetting and checks on the suitability of adults to work with pupils and spoke to staff and governors about safeguarding procedures in the school.

Inspection team

Matthew Newberry, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Deirdre Crutchley	Ofsted Inspector
Christopher Crouch	Ofsted Inspector

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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.

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