

Watford St John's Church of England Primary School

32 Clarendon Road, Watford WD17 1JJ

Inspection dates

5–6 June 2019

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	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Watford St John's Church of England Primary is a happy and welcoming school where pupils develop as confident and caring young people. Staff teach pupils to demonstrate the school's values, which include love and respect.
- Leaders and governors share a clear vision and determination to promote pupils' personal development. They are equally committed to ensuring that pupils achieve highly.
- The headteacher's strong leadership has established a popular 'family feel' to the school, alongside a high level of professionalism. Staff are committed and hard-working. Teaching across the school is consistently good.
- The broad curriculum provides opportunities for learning in a range of subjects. Trips, clubs and other memorable experiences both motivate pupils and develop their positive attitudes to learning.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and during social times. They behave respectfully towards each other and staff.
- Parents and carers are very positive about the school. They appreciate the care, attention and good teaching their children receive.
- Children make good progress in the early years. Precise assessment and good teaching mean children are well prepared for Year 1.
- Leaders and governors have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. However, this information is not used to develop precise strategic plans, with clear checking points, to make sure the changing needs of this growing school are managed effectively.
- Leaders for subjects other than English and mathematics are new to their roles. Consequently, the processes for checking the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement across the wider curriculum are not established.
- Teachers' careful planning and high expectations mean that pupils learn well. As a result, most pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. However, the standards pupils reach in writing are not as high as in reading and mathematics.
- Some pupils' work in books is untidy. This is because not all teachers are consistent in their expectations of the presentation of pupils' work.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the effectiveness of leadership and governance, by:
 - ensuring that strategic plans are focused and monitoring is rigorous, so leaders can maintain the school's strengths and its successful expansion effectively
 - developing the skills of new subject leaders so that they can improve the quality of teaching and raise standards in their areas of responsibility.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning further, by:
 - raising pupils' achievement in writing to match standards in reading and mathematics
 - ensuring that teachers' expectations for the presentation of pupils' work are consistently high across the school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Watford St John's Church of England Primary School is a welcoming and inclusive community where everyone is valued. Staff morale is high, and pupils are keen to learn and do their best.
- The headteacher, leaders and governors have established the school's caring ethos while focusing on developing good-quality teaching and learning. Staff work together well as a team. Staff who spoke with the inspector and those who completed Ofsted's online survey spoke positively about the training and guidance they receive that helps them to improve their practice.
- Leaders and governors have a clear vision for pupils' learning and development. They are committed to ensuring that strong moral values permeate every aspect of school life. Leaders are passionate about providing pupils with a well-rounded education which develops their well-being as well as their academic capabilities.
- The broad and balanced curriculum is organised to support pupils' academic and emotional development. Leaders ensure that the curriculum provides pupils with a wide range of opportunities to increase their experiences beyond their local community. Pupils visit many places of interest, such as the National History Museum and the London Aquarium, to enhance their understanding of the topics they learn about in their lessons. In addition, close links with the local churches and community and a wide range of after-school clubs provide further interest to pupils' learning experiences at the school.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well supported through carefully planned assemblies, lessons and events. Pupils learn to respect each other and celebrate differences through a range of activities that teach them about people in the wider world. Pupils understand the school's values and fundamental British values which are successfully woven throughout the curriculum. For example, strong links with local organisations such as the Watford Blind Centre and the Electric Umbrella charity teach pupils how to apply principles such as empathy and equality in their everyday lives. This prepares pupils well for both the next stage of their education and their happy and successful development outside of school.
- The additional funding for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is used effectively. The experienced special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) works closely with families and staff to identify pupils' needs and provide the right support. The impact of this support is carefully monitored to ensure that it is effective. Consequently, pupils with SEND make good progress from their different starting points.
- Leaders and governors monitor how they spend the pupil premium funding and evaluate the impact of their spending decisions. Leaders ensure that a range of bespoke support is given to disadvantaged pupils according to their different needs. There is a strong sense of teamwork between leaders, teachers and teaching assistants. The effective support provided is improving the achievement and attendance of disadvantaged pupils.

- The primary physical education (PE) and sport premium funding is used well to enable sports coaches to develop teachers' expertise and pupils' skills across a wide range of sports. The funding has also been used to provide increased opportunities for pupils to participate in competitive, inter-school sports activities and a variety of after-school clubs.
- Outdoor space is limited on the school's urban site; however, this has not prevented leaders from thinking creatively to enhance pupils' physical experiences. For example, the whole-school focus on skipping has encouraged pupils to increase their physical activity at school and at home, without requiring too much space. Many pupils demonstrate impressive skipping skills. The local park is used frequently for a range of PE and sport experiences and pupils are rightly proud of the school's roof-top playground where they can participate in a variety of physical games.
- Developments since the opening of the school in September 2016 have been rapid, including the move to the school's purpose-built site in September 2018. To date, leaders have managed the pace of change effectively. However, improvement plans lack detail and enough rigour. Consequently, leaders do not have enough of a comprehensive strategic oversight to enable them to plan and fully evaluate their actions effectively in order to maintain the school's strengths and support its successful expansion.
- The English leader, and the mathematics leader, who is also the headteacher, are experienced and confident and have a good understanding of their subjects. They regularly check the quality of teaching and learning in lessons to identify and spread good practice throughout the school in reading, writing and mathematics. Although there are many strengths in the wider curriculum, leadership of other subjects is not fully in place. New subject leaders for history, geography, art and PE are keen to begin their roles in September 2019. Senior leaders have plans to support and develop these leaders to ensure that they increase their leadership skills and confidence quickly. However, the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and pupils' achievements in these subjects are not yet established.
- The school's partnership with parents and carers is a strength. Parents and carers are unanimously positive about the school. Almost all who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, would recommend the school to other parents. They consider that the school is led effectively and the staff are friendly and easy to approach. Many describe the school as a nurturing and caring place for their children to begin their education. One parent, summing up the views of many, commented, 'The staff and governors are completely dedicated to the children and to making the school a success.' Another stated, 'The headteacher and staff work hard to create a safe inclusive environment and support the children to be the best versions of themselves.'
- The school uses external improvement partners who provide regular support for leaders and governors. This has helped leaders to develop the new school effectively. The school works well with other schools to support teachers' professional development and to check the accuracy of teachers' assessments.

Governance of the school

- Governors speak with pride about the school and share leaders' enthusiasm and desire to improve it further. For example, governors have carried out a skills audit to make

sure that they have the right breadth of skills, knowledge and experience to meet their responsibilities.

- Governors fulfil their legal duties effectively, for example by ensuring the appropriate use of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and checking that the school's procedures for safeguarding pupils are rigorous.
- Governors are committed to knowing the school's strengths and weaknesses through frequent visits to the school, and discussions with pupils, parents and staff. However, current improvement plans do not have a clear strategy that enables governors to develop structures and review systems so that this growing school continues to expand successfully.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Leaders, staff and governors ensure that pupils are safe and happy in school by applying their agreed approach: 'Anything can happen, and it can happen here.'
- All pre-employment checks are carried out diligently and record-keeping is systematic and rigorous. Good-quality training means that staff are knowledgeable about their responsibilities. They are alert to any concerns about pupils and follow these up promptly. The designated safeguarding leaders make sure that referrals are carried out swiftly and leaders work closely with parents and other professionals, so pupils are kept safe.
- Pupils have a good understanding of keeping safe online, for example by not sharing personal information. Staff also teach pupils how to keep themselves safe in the wider community, including teaching road safety.
- Pupils know that it is important to report anything that upsets them to a member of staff at school. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and that everyone is kind and helpful. All parents and carers who responded to Parent View agree that their children are happy, safe and well looked after.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Staff are good role models for pupils and establish positive relationships with them. Teachers have increasingly high expectations for pupils to achieve as well as they can. In lessons, teachers use their strong subject knowledge and detailed assessment of pupils' prior learning to plan effectively to meet pupils' needs.
- Teachers give clear explanations and model what they expect from pupils. For example, in a Year 1 mathematics lesson the teacher explained clearly how to weigh different objects. Pupils worked diligently in pairs, sharing ideas and supporting each other. Later observations of the pupils' work and their explanations to the inspector showed how they had successfully increased their skills in measuring mass as a result of the teacher's precise guidance.
- Teaching assistants are deployed well by the school. They have received training and apply it skilfully to work with small groups and individual pupils, including those with

SEND. Teaching assistants have good subject knowledge and they plan closely with teachers. As a result, teaching assistants' work contributes effectively to the increasing progress that pupils make when in their care.

- Teachers provide appropriate prompts, reminding pupils to use their previous learning to support their current progress. For example, in a Year 2 mathematics lesson the teacher reminded pupils to use their knowledge of fractions to help solve time problems involving 'quarter to' and 'quarter past'. This approach ensures that pupils' depth of knowledge and understanding increases.
- Good teaching across the school ensures that most pupils, including the most able, disadvantaged pupils, and the many pupils who speak English as an additional language, make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Reading has been a key focus throughout the school. Phonics is taught consistently, and most pupils make strong progress. Teachers use high-quality books to introduce pupils to subject-specific vocabulary which pupils use with increasing confidence. Lessons include frequent opportunities to develop pupils' reading skills. In a Year 2 guided reading lesson pupils thoughtfully considered the meaning of the text and were able to respond with accuracy to the teacher's questions. Pupils are proud of the school's well-stocked library, which displays different types of books attractively, so pupils are keen to spend time there.
- Improved teaching in mathematics results in pupils achieving well. Leaders have introduced a whole-school focus to increase pupils' understanding of basic mathematical concepts. Pupils are also given many opportunities to apply their problem-solving and reasoning skills in lessons. Teachers regularly check pupils' understanding and address any misconceptions.
- Pupils say they enjoy learning across all subjects. The work in pupils' books shows that most make good gains in their learning in a range of subjects, such as science, history and geography.
- Pupils' achievements in writing are improving. Teachers help pupils to extend their vocabulary and use relevant technical language. Lessons focus on how pupils can construct different sentences and improve their spellings and punctuation. Most pupils enjoy writing and, consequently, write with increasing confidence. However, pupils do not reach the same standards in writing as they do in reading and mathematics.
- Teachers' expectations for the presentation of pupils' work are not consistently high across the school. On occasions, pupils do not take enough care when completing their tasks and some work in pupils' books is rushed and untidy.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils feel well cared for because staff have a considerate and nurturing approach. Relationships between staff and pupils are built on trust and mutual respect. Pupils respond by having positive attitudes to their learning.

- Pupils live up to the school's positive ethos and values. They are proud to be part of Watford St John's Church of England Primary, which they describe as being a place where they are encouraged to, 'get better together' and 'grow up to be kind and helpful adults.'
- The school has a strong ethos. Pupils are taught the importance of living a moral life and understand the difference between right and wrong. Pupils have a good understanding of the school's values such as forgiveness, thankfulness and friendship. They told the inspector that everybody 'helps all people and new people in the school'. Pupils comment, 'What matters is what you are like on the inside.'
- Pupils enjoy school. They like their teachers and want to please them. As one pupil stated, 'The teachers are kind and plan fun lessons.' Another pupil told the inspector, 'The teachers explain things in a good way, so we can learn more.' Pupils are generally confident learners who are a credit to themselves, their teachers and the school.
- Pupils are encouraged to play a part in the school's organisation and through the roles of 'Reflective Eagles', 'Eagle Advisors' and the 'Active Eagles' pupils undertake a range of responsibilities and contribute to decision-making.
- Pupils know about bullying and what to do if they see or experience it. Pupils say bullying is rare and if bullying was to happen then pupils are confident that adults would sort it out quickly.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Good behaviour is evident throughout the school due to the consistent implementation of the school's behaviour policy.
- Pupils are friendly and considerate, often displaying a helpful attitude towards each other. For example, pupils often work happily together, asking for and giving each other support to complete their tasks. One pupil told the inspector, 'It's good to try and be a friend to everyone.'
- Pupils' conduct throughout the school day is commendable. Lunchtime in the dining hall is a pleasant social time when pupils show good manners and chat politely with each other. Outside, playtime is enjoyable for all and no one is left out. Supervised activities ensure that pupils are well occupied and physically active. Generally, pupils use the wide range of equipment available sensibly. Pupils can be trusted to follow the rules and behave well when moving around the school or in the outdoor areas.
- Leaders analyse the number and nature of behavioural issues and put appropriate support in place. Consequently, the number of recorded incidents of poor behaviour are low and reducing further.
- Pupils want to come to school. Attendance is monitored stringently, and staff provide good support to help overcome any barriers to pupils' good attendance. As a result, overall attendance is above the national average and fewer pupils are persistently absent.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- This new school has limited historical published assessment information and no results for the end of key stage 1. There are currently no key stage 2 classes. During the inspection, observations of teaching and learning and careful examination of pupils' work in books over time demonstrated that throughout the current year groups most pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics from their different starting points.
- In 2018, the first year the school had a Year 1 class, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check was in line with the national average. This is because the teaching of phonics is effective. Younger pupils learn to use phonics confidently to help them learn to read and spell new words. Pupils generally read widely, with levels of fluency and comprehension that are appropriate to their age.
- Pupils with SEND receive effective and timely support, enabling them to acquire new skills and knowledge quickly. As a result, these pupils make strong progress from their individual starting points.
- The achievement of disadvantaged pupils is positive. Leaders make precise and effective use of the additional funding for these pupils. As a result, the difference in attainment between these pupils and other pupils nationally is diminishing.
- In all year groups, teachers successfully meet the needs of pupils who speak English as an additional language. Pupils receive targeted support to help them to improve their speaking skills quickly, for example by checking that they understand new vocabulary as soon as it is introduced. Consequently, these pupils make at least similar progress to their English-speaking peers.
- Pupils have many opportunities to practise literacy and mathematical skills through their topic work. Pupils' work on display and in their books shows that most groups are making good progress in a wide range of subjects, including science, history, geography and art. However, new leaders for subjects other than English and mathematics do not monitor or evaluate pupils' achievement in all subjects to be able to identify and address any underachievement.
- Pupils' outcomes across the school are positive. However, published assessment information and the school's own records show that pupils do not reach the same standards in writing as they do in reading and mathematics.

Early years provision

Good

- Children join the early years with knowledge and skills that are below those typical for their age, particularly in the areas of communication and language. A large proportion speak English as an additional language. Through good provision in the Reception class, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development has been in line with the national average in the two years since the school opened. Consequently, most children are well prepared for moving on to Year 1.
- The early years provision is well led and managed by the enthusiastic early years

leader. Staff quickly form warm and positive relationships with children. The environment, both inside and outside, is bright and engaging, offering children a good range of experiences in all areas of learning.

- Staff in the Reception classes work together well. They have a good understanding of the early years curriculum. They plan activities that engage children and motivate them to learn. Children's knowledge and skills are assessed regularly. Activities are then provided that capture children's interests and build on what they already know.
- Teachers ensure that children have opportunities to develop their independence, for example by preparing and clearing away their own snacks. The well-organised resources are accessible so that children can investigate and explore their own ideas. Whether making police badges, writing cards to celebrate Eid, or sorting toy dinosaurs into pairs, children make good use of the skills they have learned.
- Staff model skills clearly and interact well with children. They encourage conversation and ask questions that make children think hard and explain more. As a result, children grow in self-confidence and develop their communication skills well, particularly the children who speak English as an additional language.
- The teaching of phonics is effective. Teachers model the links between letters and sounds well and encourage children to learn these. Children use their knowledge to read simple words and form sentences when writing.
- Children enjoy their learning in Reception and behave well. Classroom routines are quickly learned, and children cooperate well with one another, for example in learning how to take turns. Adults ensure that children are safe and that safeguarding arrangements are secure.
- Parents are positive about the early years provision and leaders provide a range of events to encourage parents to understand how they can support their children's learning at home.

School details

Unique reference number	142221
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10088626

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	120
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Janet MacKenzie
Headteacher	Helen Langeveld
Telephone number	01923 255017
Website	www.watfordstjohns.org
Email address	office@watfordstjohns.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Watford St John's Church of England Primary School opened in September 2016 and this is its first inspection. The school was temporarily located in the local church hall. In September 2018 the school moved onto its new purpose-built site.
- Since the school opened, pupil and staff numbers have been growing. The school is currently smaller than the average-sized primary school although its capacity is larger. Pupils come from a diverse range of educational experiences and backgrounds.
- In September 2019 the school will include a Year 3 class. The school is set to expand and include further key stage 2 year groups up to Year 6 by 2022.
- The school is the single academy of the Diocese of St Albans Educational Trust. The trust delegates governance to the governing body. The board of trustees is the accountable body.
- As a school designated as having a religious character, it was subject to a separate section 48 inspection of its denominational religious education, school ethos and

content of collective worship in May 2019.

- The proportion of pupils who are believed to speak English as an additional language is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for support through the government's pupil premium funding is well below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is well below the national average. The proportion who have an education, health and care plan is well above the national average.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector, together with the headteacher and SENCo, visited all classrooms to observe teaching, pupils' learning and behaviour.
- A wide range of pupils' workbooks were examined by the inspector throughout the inspection.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the school office and business manager, leaders for English and mathematics, the SENCo, and the early years leader.
- The inspector met with four governors, including the chair and vice chair of the governing body. In addition, the inspector met with the school's improvement partner to discuss their work with the school.
- The inspector spoke to pupils informally in class, and around the school at break and lunchtimes, to seek their views about the school. A meeting was also held with a group of pupils more formally to discuss their learning and many aspects of school life. The inspector attended a whole-school assembly.
- Some pupils were heard reading their books. The inspector also talked to pupils about their reading habits and looked at their reading records.
- The school's website and a range of school documents were scrutinised, including assessment information, minutes from the governing body meetings, the school's own evaluation, improvement plans, and records about safeguarding and attendance.
- The inspector considered the 56 responses made by parents to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and the 37 responses to the Ofsted free-text system. The inspector also spoke to some parents at the start of the school day. Additionally, the inspector took account of the 12 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey. There were no responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey.

Inspection team

Fiona Webb, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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