

Inspection of a good school: St John's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Colchester

Clay Lane Grove, Colchester, Essex CO4 0HH

Inspection dates:

4 and 5 October 2022

Outcome

St John's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a welcoming school. Pupils are proud to be part of the St John's community, and their behaviour is good. They are conscious of the school's values of courage, peace, hope, faith, respect and compassion in all that they do. Parents are positive about the school.

Staff have high expectations of what pupils can and should achieve. Pupils respond with positivity to the work that their teachers prepare for them. In the main, they achieve well. Children in the early years also make the most of their time in school, learning new knowledge and skills.

Pupils make a full contribution to school life. They enjoy the many jobs that they have in school, such as being members of the Green Team.

At breaktime and lunchtime, pupils play sensibly together. Older pupils are proud of the work that they do to help pupils to feel welcomed and make friends. Year 6 play leaders organise games for younger pupils to play. They are positive role models. Pupils are confident that when rare incidents of bullying occur, adults take quick and effective action to sort them out.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have put in place an ambitious and well-designed curriculum. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, have the support they need to achieve well. In most subjects, leaders have given careful thought to the small steps in learning that pupils should make as they progress through the curriculum. For example, in geography, pupils learn map skills and develop new knowledge every year, building on from previous work. However, in some subjects such as physical education (PE) and

design and technology (DT), work to reshape the curriculum is relatively new. In these subjects, pupils do not always learn the key knowledge required at the right time.

Subject leaders are given time to check on the impact of the school's curriculum plans. This has led to improvements and good levels of understanding about most subjects. However, for a few subjects, leaders do not have a thorough understanding of how well pupils are learning the curriculum content. This is because they do not routinely visit lessons to see how effectively their subjects are being taught.

Pupils read widely and often. In each class, staff make sure that the books that pupils read match their reading knowledge. Children get off to a good start with learning to read when they enter the Reception class. Leaders have made sure that teachers are well trained to teach phonics. This helps pupils to read fluently. Staff have a strong focus on making sure that anyone who finds reading difficult receives effective support to read well. The library is an inviting and attractive space. Pupils recommend books for others to read.

In mathematics, the needs of all pupils are carefully considered. Teachers regularly recap what pupils have been taught before. This helps pupils remember previous learning and make links to what they are learning now. Teachers make regular checks on what pupils have learned. This information is used to plan what pupils will learn next.

Pupils and children in the early years enjoy their learning. They concentrate well in lessons. Learning is very rarely disrupted. Pupils who sometimes find it difficult to concentrate receive effective support from staff to help them to focus on their learning. Adults have positive relationships with pupils that are based on mutual respect. Children in the early years play together well. They take turns and share equipment with each other. Children are excited to talk about their learning with adults and their friends.

Leaders and teachers support pupils' wider personal development well, both through the curriculum and through the wide range of extra opportunities on offer. These activities include football, choir, drama and art club. Leaders make sure that clubs are welcoming to all pupils.

The majority of parents are positive, particularly about the school's caring ethos.

The governing body holds leaders to account. Governors ask probing questions and offer appropriate challenge to leaders. Governors take steps to assure themselves that what leaders tell them in meetings is happening in practice. Leaders, including governors, are considerate of staff's workload and well-being. Staff across the school feel well supported.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils learn about staying safe, both in the real world and online. They know who they can speak to if they feel worried or have concerns. Staff and governors ensure that the safety and well-being of pupils are a priority. Staff receive appropriate information and

training on safeguarding. They use the school's systems to raise and follow up on concerns. Pupils who may be vulnerable are identified and supported promptly. Leaders work closely with external partners to ensure that pupils are kept safe. The designated safeguarding lead and deputies follow up on support provided by other professionals to ensure that it is the most appropriate and effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, such as PE and DT, the precise skills and knowledge that pupils learn do not always build on their previous learning. Therefore, pupils do not always make strong progress in these subjects. Leaders should revisit planning in these curriculum areas to ensure that pupils' knowledge and skills are carefully sequenced and that pupils acquire the skills required in a logical and sequential manner.
- Some subject leaders have not had the opportunity to regularly visit lessons to make sure that the revised curriculum plans are being consistently well implemented. This means they cannot be certain how effectively the curriculum is being taught. Leaders should ensure that clear systems are in place to enable subject leaders to check how well the curriculum is helping pupils to remember what they have been taught.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in May 2013.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	115065
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10241650
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	212
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Helen Wilson
Headteacher	Craig Twin
Website	www.stjohnscofe.com
Date of previous inspection	3 May 2017

Information about this school

- The school provides a daily breakfast club and an after-school club.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The last section 48 inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools took place in June 2018. This is an inspection of the school's religious character.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, PE and mathematics. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector also spoke with leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects and looked at pupils' work.
- The inspector looked at how the school checks adults' clearance to work with children and pupils. He looked at other records relating to safeguarding. The inspector looked at

some records of pupils' behaviour.

- The inspector visited breaktimes and met with groups of pupils. He spoke with the headteacher, a representative from the local authority and the members of the school's local governing body.
- The inspector spoke with school staff and with groups of pupils to find out what it is like to be a pupil, or to work, in this school.
- The inspector considered responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff and Ofsted's online survey for pupils.
- The inspector also considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses.

Inspection team

Joseph Figg, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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