

Inspection of St John's Primary and Nursery School

French Street, Old Town, Southampton, Hampshire SO14 2AU

Inspection dates:

27 and 28 September 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Early years provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

St John's is a caring school where staff know every pupil well. Pupils are made to feel that they are valued, cherished members of the school community. They feel safe and secure at this welcoming, vibrant school. They enjoy their learning, especially in science which inspires them, and make friends easily.

Pupils can talk about the school's values and how they demonstrate them in their learning and behaviour. They appreciate exploring their talents and interests through a range of clubs and activities, including sports, craft and coding.

Since the last inspection, a new headteacher has joined the school and has improved the educational offer for every pupil. For example, behaviour has been transformed. Classrooms are now more settled, calm places to learn in. Pupils understand the high expectations and take pride in meeting them. Staff are well trained to understand what might be causing some pupils to struggle with their emotions. This means staff can bring about positive behaviour changes and get learning back on track. Pupils do not worry about bullying. They know there are trusted adults to listen and sort any worries out quickly. Leaders have created a compassionate culture for every pupil to be comfortable being themselves and to succeed.

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

Pupils do not learn as much or as securely as they should. Leaders rightly prioritised English and mathematics to begin developing curriculum plans. This learning is now being well taught and helping pupils build their knowledge over time. However, in a number of other subjects, curriculum thinking is still being refined. For example, in science, pupils remember the engaging experiments rather than the intentional learning. This means that teachers are not always clear about the essential knowledge pupils should learn and remember, or the precise order they should learn it in. In addition, teachers do not always check that pupils are secure in their understanding. As a result, misconceptions are not always addressed.

Children in the early years make a good start to their school life. Children benefit from well-planned activities and routines to help them become more confident and independent. However, staff sometimes miss opportunities to check that children are learning enough new words to improve their learning.

The school has a truly inclusive ethos. For example, recent quality work on becoming a School of Sanctuary underpins the school's culture of embracing refugees and asylum seekers. Leaders ensure every pupil is made to feel they belong to the St John's community, no matter for how long. Leaders are skilled in identifying when a pupil might have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff have been supported to understand and meet the wide range of SEND so they can successfully learn alongside their peers.

Pupils achieve well in reading and mathematics. For example, teachers in the early years are adept at making sure children understand numbers and how to use them. As a result, children feel a sense of accomplishment. Effective phonics training ensures consistency from the early years into key stage 1. Pupils have plenty of opportunities to practise their skills using books that carefully match the sounds they are learning. Teachers support older pupils to deepen their understanding of the books they enjoy reading, and to broaden their vocabulary.

Most pupils attend school regularly. There are a small number of pupils who do not attend often enough. However, effective work by leaders to support these pupils and their families means that this number is reducing quickly.

Pupils behave well in class and show positive attitudes. Their conduct around the school is typically of a high standard because they understand what is expected and modelled to them by adults. Children in the early years quickly learn the routines and how to learn cooperatively with others. Pupils play happily with their peers at breaktimes and are kind to others. Leaders have ensured that there is a respectful and optimistic ethos to help pupils focus on learning.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe and healthy. They have a keen sense of tolerance and fairness in society. The curriculum supports pupils to discuss and learn about different religions, cultures or family circumstances. Pupils develop genuine respect and empathy for others.

Staff value the quality professional development opportunities they have to improve their teaching. Leaders are considerate of staff workload and well-being without compromising their determination to make further school improvements. Leaders are supported and challenged in equal measure by the governing body. Governors are knowledgeable and reflective, and help leaders achieve their ambitious goals.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are well trained to recognise potential signs of harm in children. They report any concerns promptly and leaders ensure that these are followed up. Leaders get to know pupils and their families well. They understand the community and whether there are any local risks. The school works effectively with other professionals to reduce harm to children and get them the help they need. Information about child protection is recorded in detail and overseen meticulously to ensure that no concerns are missed. Checks on adults appointed to work in the school are carried out thoroughly and all safeguarding work is monitored by governors.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In subjects such as religious education (RE), science and history, leaders have not precisely laid out what knowledge and skills pupils need to learn. As a result, teachers are unclear about what to teach across a series of lessons. Teachers require further training or support to design and sequence this curriculum content step by step.
- Assessment in wider subjects, and including in the early years, is not yet consistently in place. Teachers are therefore not always confident in knowing how secure pupils are in their understanding of key knowledge. Leaders should improve the effectiveness of assessment to ensure that pupils know and remember more across the school's curriculum.

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	116103
Local authority	Southampton
Inspection number	10227152
Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	435
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Jenny-Marie Court
Headteacher	Kirsten Buist
Website	www.stjohnssouthampton.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	21 March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Southampton Cooperative Learning Trust.
- Nursery provision at the school is for three-year-old children.
- The school currently uses two registered alternative provisions.
- The headteacher started working at the school in 2019.
- Since 2019, the school has experienced significant changes in staffing, including the stability and capacity of leadership. This has impeded some of the planned curriculum development work.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and special educational needs coordinator.
- The lead inspector met with four governors, including the chair of governors. An inspector held a separate telephone call with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, science, RE and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed curriculum planning with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils and looked at some of their work. The lead inspector also heard pupils read to a known adult.
- An inspector also looked at curriculum planning from some other subjects.
- Inspectors checked a wide range of safeguarding documentation and school policies, including the single central record. They also reviewed the school's records of child protection and welfare of pupils.
- The lead inspector reviewed a range of documentation including the school improvement plan and relevant school policies.
- Inspectors took account of parents' responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire, along with their written comments. Inspectors also talked with parents on the morning of the first day of inspection.
- Inspectors gathered pupils' views about their learning, what behaviour is like at the school and whether they felt safe. Inspectors also talked to pupils about their views on personal development and the wider school curriculum.
- Inspectors met with a range of staff to gather their views on how leaders support them and took account of their responses to the confidential staff survey.

Inspection team

Gareth Flemington, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Tracey Bowen	Ofsted Inspector
Cathy Reid	Ofsted Inspector

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