

Inspection of a good school: St John's Church of England Voluntary Aided First School, Frome

Christchurch Street East, Frome, Somerset BA11 1QG

Inspection dates:

7 and 8 February 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Staff greet pupils warmly at the start of each day. Pupils feel welcome. Good relationships are prevalent throughout the school. Leaders have created a caring environment that helps pupils feel happy and safe. Pupils have trusted adults whom they can speak to if they are worried. Bullying is dealt with swiftly and effectively on the rare occasions it happens.

Most pupils behave well and focus on their work in lessons. They are respectful towards each other and staff. However, some pupils, who do not behave as well, disrupt the learning of others.

Leaders and governors have high aspirations for pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). However, these aspirations are not fully realised yet. In some subjects, including early reading and mathematics, some pupils do not achieve as well as they should. This is because pupils have not benefited from an ambitious enough curriculum.

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

Leaders' development of the curriculum is not sufficiently rigorous across all subjects. The knowledge and skills leaders want children to learn is not broken down into small enough component parts. Some subject leaders have focused too much on what they want pupils to do rather than what they want them to learn. Leaders have not accurately identified the adaptations to the curriculum that will support all pupils with SEND to achieve their best outcomes. However, in some subjects, including history and art, leaders have identified in detail the knowledge they want pupils to learn and in which order. This

means that pupils, including those with SEND, achieve well. Pupils enjoy learning about local history. Leaders and staff make effective use of the rich neighbourhood to bring history alive.

The work to identify and support the needs of pupils with SEND is in its infancy. Pupils with SEND access the same curriculum as their peers. However, leaders have not ensured that staff have the right information to adapt learning to meet pupils' individual needs. Leaders have not yet implemented an effective system for checking the progress of pupils with SEND.

Assessment is not used as effectively as it should be. Leaders have not ensured that a clear rationale or shared purpose for assessment is understood. In some subjects, teachers do not always know what knowledge they should assess. This means they do not check effectively what pupils have remembered.

Leaders have focused on early reading. Despite this, some staff still require further training to implement the phonics scheme accurately. Staff check pupils' progress at regular intervals. However, children who are at the earliest stages of learning to read do not have books that are precisely matched to the sounds that they know. This prevents them from making strong progress. Staff read regularly to pupils to foster a love of reading.

Most pupils, including children in Reception, behave well. Occasionally, pupils become distracted in lessons when the curriculum does not meet their needs. Pupils are considerate of each other and follow school routines sensibly. In Reception, staff make good use of the indoor and outdoor spaces for learning. Older pupils relish helping younger pupils at breaktimes. They act as play leaders. One pupil proudly told the inspector that this means that they 'look after anyone who is lonely and organise games for the others'.

There is strong provision for the wider development of pupils. The personal, social and health education curriculum is well structured and sequenced. Leaders have thought carefully about what pupils should learn and when. Pupils thrive on the student council and as eco-warriors. They gain experience of being active citizens, who contribute to improving their school environment. Pupils participate in a wide range of after-school clubs and activities.

Leaders', including governors', actions to improve the school are not sufficiently decisive. Governors have not been robust enough in holding leaders to account. Staff are proud to belong to the St John's family. Teachers appreciate their professional development. However, some support staff feel that they do not have the same opportunities to develop. All staff appreciate the way that leaders take their well-being into account when planning improvements.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff work effectively to keep pupils safe. They understand the signs to look out for that may indicate a potential cause for concern. Staff receive regular safeguarding training. However, leaders have not ensured that the school's policy and processes are followed fully. Leaders' recent improvements to improve record-keeping have not been enacted swiftly enough.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. They learn about online safety and the different types of risks they may face.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The support plans for pupils with SEND are not precise enough. Consequently, staff do not have the information they need to provide appropriate support. This means pupils with SEND do not achieve their best possible outcomes. Leaders should ensure that staff have the information they need to adapt the curriculum appropriately for pupils with SEND.
- Leaders have not ensured that the training for all staff who teach phonics equips them with the expertise they need to teach early reading well. This means the approach many staff take is not effective. Leaders need to prioritise staff training in phonics and ensure that phonics is delivered with rigour and consistency.
- The curriculum in some subjects is not sufficiently developed. Leaders have not identified precisely what knowledge and skills they want pupils to learn and in which order. Leaders must ensure that their detailed curriculum thinking is completed across all subjects.
- In some subjects, teachers do not systematically check pupils' understanding of essential content. As a result, teachers do not have an accurate picture of what pupils know and remember from the intended curriculum. Leaders must ensure that all staff use assessment to check pupils' knowledge and identify and address gaps.
- Leaders have not maintained robust enough oversight of the school's safeguarding policy and procedures. This means some processes related to record-keeping are not always as sharp as they should be. Leaders must ensure that agreed safeguarding policies and procedures are followed closely and consistently.

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 September 2012.

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	123843
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10256670
Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	245
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Claire Levene Plumb
Headteacher	Jo Greathead (Interim)
Website	stjohnsfrome.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	19 September 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The current interim headteacher has been in post from January 2023 and will leave in April 2023.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- The most recent section 48 inspection took place in February 2023.

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 their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held meetings with senior leaders of the school, members of staff, pupils and parents.
- The inspector met with representatives of the governing body. She also held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority and the diocese.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. 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 heard pupils read.

- To inspect safeguarding, the inspector reviewed a wide range of safeguarding documents and records, including the school's record of recruitment checks. The inspector also talked to a range of staff and pupils about safeguarding.
- The inspector spoke with staff, pupils and parents to gather their views. She considered 43 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including 26 free-text comments. The inspector also took account of 29 responses to the staff survey and 103 responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Linda Culling, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2023