

Inspection of a good school: St John's Church of England Primary School

Cunningham Road, St John's Cep, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN4 9EW

Inspection dates:

21 and 22 March 2023

Outcome

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

What is it like to attend this school?

The school values of honesty, respect, empathy, courage and inclusivity are woven through the fabric of daily life in St John's. Everyone is welcome in this friendly and nurturing school. Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and achievement, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Behaviour throughout the school is calm and settled. Pupils are polite and considerate of each other. They work hard and enjoy their learning, often feeling inspired by their teachers.

There are many opportunities for pupils to develop their interests and talents. Pupils are proud to represent their school in local sports tournaments. They enjoy taking on important responsibilities such as the roles of play leaders and house captains. The school magazine, 'The Eagle', is written and produced by pupils. It captures the flavour of school life vividly and professionally.

Pupils feel safe here. Bullying is very rare, although occasionally pupils can be unkind. Pupils trust that adults will help them if they have a problem. Their mental health and well-being are high priorities for school leaders. Pupils, particularly those with SEND, receive high levels of pastoral care. Inclusion forms the backbone of the school. Leaders are determined to provide the best support for all pupils.

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

Leaders have developed a broad and ambitious curriculum across all subjects, including in the early years. It is well planned and sets out what pupils should know and learn clearly. Leaders expect all pupils, including those with SEND, to follow the same curriculum. Teachers choose resources carefully and adapt activities to ensure that all pupils can achieve well. Pupils with SEND flourish in the school's intervention and nurture groups. Skilled staff help them to adopt positive learning habits.

Teachers adeptly check what pupils have learned. Staff are skilful at not making pupils feel that they have 'got it wrong'. Instead, pupils accept that mistakes are part of the learning process. Teachers regularly revisit what has been taught previously so pupils can confidently build on this knowledge and make strong links between topics.

Leaders are aware that while pupils achieve well in mathematics and reading, outcomes in writing have been less strong. As a result, they have put strategies in place that support pupils' writing. Pupils are becoming more confident and accurate writers. Across the full range of subjects, pupils do well because they have secured deep learning. They have a good foundation for secondary school. The same is true of early years where children make a strong start to their education. Children in Reception are settled, enjoy their learning and develop strong communication and mathematical skills.

Reading is a priority for leaders. They have recently introduced a new phonics programme which captures children's interest, right from the start of Reception. Well-trained staff teach phonics consistently. This means that children quickly become independent when reading and writing new sounds and words. Staff quickly spot any pupils who fall behind and give them additional help to catch up. Pupils understand the importance of reading. They choose books that are well matched to their ability, reading regularly and widely.

While pupils' personal development is broadly strong, leaders are working to improve it further. Leaders are starting to monitor pupils' attendance at clubs after school. A high proportion of disadvantaged pupils attend clubs because leaders prioritise these children. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum teaches pupils about growing up, healthy relationships and the wider world. Pupils have a very strong sense of equality and diversity. They understand the importance of these in modern life. However, pupils also recognise that despite the many pupils from different cultures and faiths in the school, more could be done to learn about them and to develop community links.

Behaviour around the school is strong. Routines are well established and staff's expectations of pupils are consistently high. Nevertheless, pupils very occasionally behave unkindly to each other. Leaders are aware of this and have recently introduced a new approach to sorting out behaviour incidents. Leaders have ensured that staff are trained to use this. However, not all pupils understand this approach yet. They think that staff do not always resolve the matter swiftly or appropriately.

Leaders engage with staff very well. They have focused on supporting staff well-being and reducing workload. Staff feel valued and are delighted to be part of the school community. Governors are committed to the school's continuing success. They know the school well and undertake regular training. This allows them to fulfil their statutory duties effectively. Parents and carers also appreciate the positive impact the school has on their child. One parent, typical of many, described St John's as 'the best school'.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have developed a culture where safeguarding is a high priority. They ensure that all staff receive regular safeguarding training and updates. Consequently, staff are clear on how to identify and report any concerns about a child, including abuse, neglect or exploitation. Leaders follow up concerns promptly and work with external partners well. They are determined to organise support for pupils and their families. Safer recruitment processes are thorough and consistently followed. Governors make regular checks on the effectiveness of safeguarding in the school. The PSHE curriculum helps pupils to recognise risks in their daily lives and online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have introduced a new approach to managing behaviour. However, they have not made sure that all pupils understand this approach. Consequently, not all pupils feel that they are treated fairly when they misbehave or experience unkindness from others. Leaders should ensure that the new approach to managing behaviour is embedded fully and that all pupils understand the school's approach to poor or unkind behaviour.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 2017.

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

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| Unique reference number | 118611 |
| Local authority | Kent |
| Inspection number | 10256472 |
| 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 | 632 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Mark Bowring |
| Headteacher | Dan Turvey |
| Website | www.st-johns-school.org.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 8 and 9 November 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- The inspectors carried out this ungraded inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.
- St John's Church of England Primary is a voluntary controlled school within the Diocese of Rochester. The last Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools was in December 2017.
- The headteacher has been in post since the previous inspection.
- The school runs a breakfast club.
- Currently, two registered alternative providers are used by the school.

Information about this inspection

- 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 this into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held a range of meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, including the inclusion leader, teaching and support staff.

- The lead inspector met with eight members of the governing body and a representative from Kent local authority. She also spoke to representative from the Diocese of Rochester.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: reading, mathematics, geography and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and pupils, and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector heard pupils read aloud to a known adult.
- Inspectors checked a range of policies and documents, including the school's single central record. They also reviewed the school's website and other records regarding the welfare of pupils.
- Inspectors gathered evidence to explore the impact of pupils' behaviour and the school's wider curriculum.
- Inspectors talked to pupils and staff throughout the inspection to gain their views about the school. This included the views of pupils and staff submitted via Ofsted's confidential surveys. The lead inspector also considered views sent from individual members of staff.
- Inspectors considered the 282 views of parents submitted via Ofsted's parent survey.

Inspection team

Maria Roberts, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Andrea Carter

Ofsted Inspector

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