

Inspection of St John's CofE (A) Primary School

Wheatly Avenue, Trent Vale, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST4 6SB

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 April 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders are ambitious: they have high aspirations for all pupils. They have made recent improvements to the curriculum. Leaders are aware there is more work to do to develop this, so that all pupils achieve as highly as they could, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

There have been considerable changes in leadership since the last inspection, which has slowed the rate of improvement. Confidence in the school is improving. Parents and carers say that communication is better. Many parents say the new senior leadership team is a force for good.

Pupils behave well in lessons. There is a calm and purposeful working environment in classrooms. However, at other times of the day, a number of pupils are more boisterous, and at times their behaviour goes unchecked. Some in the school community have concerns about the behaviour of pupils. Pupils know what bullying is. They say that teachers take it seriously.

Pupils enjoy whole-school events and celebrations. The Alice in Wonderland theatre trip was a recent highlight. Pupils enjoy taking part in clubs, sports activities and forest school. The wider curriculum broadens pupils' experiences and teamwork.

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

The school has been through a period of leadership and staffing turbulence. The headteacher is working with determination to rapidly improve the quality of education. However, leaders and governors know that the many changes in leadership have slowed effective curriculum development. Leaders are working closely with support from the English hub and through an association with a multi-academy trust to bring about improvements to the curriculum.

Leaders' recent changes in English, mathematics and foundation subjects are resulting in pupils accessing a broad curriculum offer. Pupils are benefiting from this ambitious curriculum. Leaders know what knowledge they want pupils to learn. For example, in mathematics clear plans are in place. Pupils are enthusiastic when talking about their mathematical learning. Staff teach new mathematical vocabulary and check that pupils understand how to use it. Pupils enjoy mathematics.

Subject leaders are checking that the new curriculum is being followed. However, foundation subject leaders are not yet guiding teachers' practice. For example, leaders are not always evaluating how well teachers check the intended curriculum is being remembered over time. Sometimes, teachers do not address children's misconceptions. This results in some pupils not achieving as well as they should, including some pupils with SEND.

Pupils are developing a love of reading. Staff are all well trained in the teaching of phonics. Children in Reception are getting off to a rapid start in phonics. Teachers regularly read to pupils. Staff are confident teaching phonics. Pupils who fall behind in phonics receive extra help to keep up. Leaders work closely with the English Hub to review the teaching of early reading. Pupils enjoy the books teachers read to them. Leaders are prioritising reading opportunities across the curriculum.

Work to develop the curriculum in the early years is in its early stages. The new early years leader has a clear vision. Recent changes to the early years environment are improving children's access to all areas of learning. Children settle quickly into school routines. Children learn to take turns and care for others. Children learn about keeping safe. For example, children on balance bicycles take care to put their helmets on before enjoying cycling on the bike circuit. Children sustain their interest in play. Role play areas encourage children to develop their imaginative play.

Leaders have not made sure that the support for pupils with SEND is effective. Leaders have not checked that information in health and care plans and from professional agencies is always used effectively in target-setting for individual pupils. As a result, targets set for pupils with SEND lack the rigour to help them be successful in all aspects of their learning.

Leaders' recent work to update and raise expectations for pupils' behaviour is having a positive impact in lessons. However, there is more work to do to make sure all staff receive training on managing pupils' behaviour. There is variation in how some staff manage pupils' behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtimes. This results in some pupils struggling to regulate their behaviour.

Pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities, including school councillors and playleaders. They are proud of fundraising achievements. Pupils access enrichment through the curriculum and extra-curricular activities, including sports and the arts. Assemblies help pupils learn about religion and the school's 'STAR' values of safe, team, achieve, respect and smile. Leaders prioritise pupils' personal, social and cultural development. Pupils enjoy school; they show pride in their school.

Teachers appreciate that leaders are mindful of their workload. Most staff say that leaders do all they can to motivate staff and are proud to work at St John's CofE School.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders promote a culture of safeguarding; staff know the pupils and families well. Staff training is up to date. Staff know how to report concerns. They are confident with school systems. However, there are some areas of safeguarding that could be further strengthened, including leaders' oversight and record-keeping for pupils with medical needs. Leaders work with a range of external agencies to support pupils and their families.

The recently introduced curricular programmes teach pupils about healthy relationships and online safety.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders do not always check how well teachers are implementing the new curriculum in the foundation subjects. This means that leaders do not know what is working well and what needs more work. Senior leaders should develop the skills of subject leaders to check the effectiveness of the curriculum. This will enable subject leaders to identify where teachers need more guidance.
- The targets set for pupils with SEND on their individual plans, known in school as pupil passports, are not precise enough. Education, health and care (EHC) plans are not being used adequately to set in-year targets for pupils. This means that the curriculum for pupils with SEND, including those with EHC plans, is not matched appropriately to their specific needs. Leaders should ensure that the plans for pupils with SEND include precise targets to enable them to make progress over time.
- Pupils' behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtimes is not managed consistently by all staff. Pupils, parents and staff report that pupils' behaviour is a concern. Leaders should make sure that all staff are supported to manage behaviour consistently. This is so that all pupils feel safe.
- Leaders and governors do not make sure that all school policies are implemented effectively. This includes leaders' oversight of record-keeping for pupils with medical needs. As a result, some pupils do not have the correct medicines available to them in school. Leaders must ensure that staff apply school policies consistently.

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	124309
Local authority	Stoke-on-Trent
Inspection number	10268798
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	335
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Laraine Jones
Headteacher	Susan Bowyer
Website	www.stjohns.stoke.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	17 January 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This church of England school is part of the Diocese of Lichfield. The most recent section 48 inspection of the school's religious character took place in March 2020.
- The school manages a before-school provision.
- The school uses one registered alternative provision provider.
- The school is an associate member of the Orchard Community Trust.

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 met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, the special needs coordinator, subject leaders, early years leader, staff and governors.

- During the inspection, inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: reading, mathematics, English, art and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors looked at school documents, including information about the school's curriculum, behaviour, attendance and governors' meetings. Inspectors also observed some pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- To check the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the school's policies, procedures and records. Inspectors met with safeguarding leaders and spoke to pupils, staff, parents and governors.
- The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer and the school improvement officer of the Orchard Community Trust.
- Inspectors reviewed information published on the school's website.
- Pupils' behaviour was observed around school, in classes and at social times.
- Inspectors reviewed and discussed records of pupils' attendance.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's surveys for parents, staff and pupils. Inspectors spoke to parents.

Inspection team

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