

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

Albion Street, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL52 2SN

Inspection dates:

17 and 18 May 2023

Outcome

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

What is it like to attend this school?

St John's is a place where leaders encourage all to flourish. Pupils are happy. Relationships between staff and pupils are caring and nurturing. Pupils feel safe and well looked after. Parents say they are pleased that staff encourage pupils to blossom at this school.

Pupils find lessons exciting. They talk positively about, and know the importance of, their learning. Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils fulfil these expectations and behaving well is the norm.

This is a diverse school where pupils embrace difference. Pupils have a firm understanding of world religions. They discuss and debate important issues. Pupils accept that others' opinions may be different to their own.

Leaders provide pupils with many opportunities to develop beyond the academic. Pupils enjoy clubs such as cricket, chess and drama. Leaders have made strong community connections, for example, with the nearby college and local literature, science and music festivals. Pupils develop a rich understanding of the world beyond St John's.

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

Leaders have high ambition for all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They have designed a broad and ambitious curriculum that begins in the early years. In the majority of subjects, the curriculum is well sequenced. For example, children in the early years develop a strong understanding of number and different ways to make numbers to 20. Older pupils recall mathematics knowledge with ease. They can solve questions involving decimals and fractions.

Despite the many strengths in the curriculum, in some subjects leaders have not identified the precise knowledge they want pupils to know and the order in which to teach it. In these subjects, pupils do not remember the content of the curriculum long term.

Leaders have placed a sharp focus on early reading. Staff are expertly trained to teach phonics. Pupils learn new sounds well. Right from the early years, children develop a strong understanding of sounds and spelling rules. Pupils read books that match the sounds they have learned. Staff assess pupils regularly so they can put in place extra support to help pupils keep up. Leaders have carefully considered the texts that pupils will read during their time at St John's. As pupils progress through the school, they read widely and with increasing fluency.

Pupils' reading comprehension skills are less established in some year groups. Although leaders expose pupils to a wide variety of skills, they have not specified when particular reading skills, for example inference, will be taught in key stage 2. This means pupils do not deepen their understanding as fully as they could in reading.

Teachers know how to support pupils with SEND. Leaders provide staff with a programme of regular training. Staff quickly identify the needs of individual pupils. Leaders create bespoke targets to ensure that pupils with SEND receive the right help. Teachers use these targets and make adaptations to ensure that pupils learn the curriculum successfully. Consequently, most pupils with SEND achieve well.

Pupils understand the school's expectations of being caring and community minded. There is no disruption in lessons. Pupils take a genuine interest in their learning. They are polite and well-mannered. Pupils cooperate well at breaktimes and lunchtimes. They enjoy the variety of activities on offer. In the early years, children work together on projects such as building tracks. Pupils from different year groups join together to play in harmony.

Leaders have carefully planned a curriculum to nurture pupils' wider development. From early years, staff teach children about healthy relationships. Pupils know how to be a good friend. They learn how to stay physically and mentally well. Pupils say that talking about their feelings helps them feel calm. Staff teach pupils about morals. Because of this, pupils have a strong understanding of right and wrong. The local vicar visits the school regularly to bring the school's values to life through stories. Pupils demonstrate these values in their actions. They say they 'learn it, reflect on it and live it'. Pupils say that this motto guides them on how to live their lives.

Governors are ambitious for the school. They challenge leaders effectively to help improve the school. Staff say that leaders are considerate. They feel respected and part of a team.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff know their role in keeping children safe. Leaders regularly train staff so they recognise pupils who are at risk of harm. Staff and pupils know how to report concerns. Leaders diligently follow these up. They work swiftly with agencies to provide support for vulnerable pupils and their families. Leaders keep thorough records of the actions they have taken to keep pupils safe.

The school's curriculum helps pupils to learn how to keep safe, including online. For example, pupils know not to share personal information.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not specified the important reading skills they want pupils in key stage 2 to learn and in what order. As a result, pupils do not deepen their understanding as fully as they could. Leaders should ensure that the reading curriculum sets out what pupils should know and be able to do at each stage of their education.
- In some wider curriculum subjects, leaders have not identified and sequenced the most essential knowledge they want pupils to learn. Consequently, some pupils struggle to remember the most important concepts long term. Leaders need to identify and sequence important knowledge to ensure that pupils know more and remember more over time.

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 June 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	115669
Local authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	10226940
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	198
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Catherine Simpson
Headteacher	Victoria Beevers
Website	www.st-johns-pri.gloucs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	7 February 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There have been changes in leadership since the previous inspection. The current headteacher took up post in April 2021.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider.
- The school is designated as having a religious character. The last Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools was in 2017, when the school was judged to be outstanding overall.

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 that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator, school staff, pupils, governors, a representative from the diocese and the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, inspectors 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 lead inspector listened to pupils from Years 1, 2 and 3 read to a known adult.
- Inspectors evaluated the effectiveness of safeguarding. They looked at the school's single central record and records of concerns and at how staff work to keep pupils safe. The inspectors spoke to pupils, staff and governors about safeguarding practices.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school, including at lunchtimes and break times. In addition, they met with pupils formally and informally to hear their views.
- Inspectors considered responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses. They also looked at responses to the surveys for pupils and staff.

Inspection team

Lakmini Harkus, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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