

# Inspection of St John's CofE (C) Primary School

Quarry Bank Road, Keele, Newcastle, Staffordshire ST5 5AF

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Inspection dates: 6 to 7 June 2023

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Good**

Early years provision

**Requires improvement**

Previous inspection grade

Good

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils and children in the early years are happy at this inclusive school. Warm relationships with staff ensure that children and pupils feel safe and are safe. They know that there is always someone to talk to if they are worried or upset and they are confident that they will be supported. As a result, there is a calm, respectful culture that reflects the school's Christian values of respect and forgiveness.

Pupils are eager to learn. They strive to meet the higher expectations now in place. They enjoy the sense of achievement when they do so, particularly in reading. Pupils' behaviour is good in classrooms and around the school. Pupils know the school rules and are confident that they will be supported and rewarded for good behaviour and challenged for poor behaviour.

Pupils are encouraged to be kind to one another. They are quick to help each other, and they understand when others may need extra help and attention.

There are many clubs and activities available. Pupils say that these match their interests well. They speak with enthusiasm of visits to museums, an airport, a pottery manufacturer and the theatre. Many learn to play a musical instrument.

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

The new headteacher is taking the right actions to improve the quality of education in this school. On her arrival, she rapidly and accurately identified the weaknesses in the curriculum and its delivery. With strong backing from governors, she has set about a root and branch review of how each subject is taught. Together, senior and subject leaders have worked to redesign the curriculum in each subject so that careful account is taken of what all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), need to learn. Subject leaders now have the tools and understanding they need to check that pupils are learning and remembering what they have been taught.

The changes and improvements made to early reading have been quickly established and delivered by well-trained staff. As a result, there has been a significant increase in the proportion of children and pupils learning to read fluently and accurately.

From early years onwards, there is increasingly rapid identification of need for those pupils with SEND. As a result, these pupils are now making much better progress, particularly in reading

Other areas of the newly designed curriculum are less secure at this early stage. Sometimes the sequence of learning in a subject over time is not as clear as it could be. In these cases, how pupils will meet the agreed end points across the curriculum is not always exemplified. Equally, some subject leaders have yet to prioritise the most important learning so that the curriculum does not become overcrowded or

confusing for learners.

Teachers have good subject and teaching knowledge, and they have been well supported by high-quality training. Teachers know pupils very well. They routinely use questioning well to identify and address misconceptions and gaps in learning. However, there is less clarity about how more formal assessment methods, and the subsequent feedback, help pupils to understand their next steps in learning. It is also unclear how assessment strategies help leaders to review what is being taught and how it is being taught.

A legacy of poor presentation and poor handwriting has created a barrier to learning. This is because pupils do not always understand the records they have made of their work. As a result, they cannot go back and check what they have learned to help them to build on that.

There have been historic issues about the quality of provision in the early years which has hindered children's development and learning. However, following the appointment of a temporary early years teacher, the curriculum and care practices have been improved quickly. Children are not where leaders would like them to be with their achievement. However, they are now learning routines to help them develop their knowledge across the curriculum. A sharp focus on early reading and developing vocabulary is supporting children to catch up.

Leaders have ensured that children and pupils have a wide range of activities and opportunities that broaden their understanding of their wider community and how they can be active citizens. Pupils have a good understanding of fundamental British values and can link these to their own lives and experiences. They are respectful and tolerant of the choices and beliefs of others. The belief that everyone should be included is deeply embedded.

The urgent need to secure improvement for pupils has created workload pressures for teachers. Leaders are aware of these and are actively working to reduce the pressure as they maintain the pace of improvement.

The rapid pace of change has been difficult for some parents and staff to accept. Inspectors were told that the pace and nature of the changes had altered the character of the school. Although many agreed that improvements were probably needed, they felt that better communication from leaders would have eased the process.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding pupils is a priority in this school. Leaders have strengthened processes to ensure that all staff are alert to any sign of need and are well equipped to identify and raise concerns. Leaders have made it clear that no concern is too small to raise.

Leaders work effectively with external agencies. As a result, pupils and their families are offered early help if they need it.

All staff and governors have received appropriate and extensive training.

Pupils are taught how to recognise risks and to keep themselves safe. They know what to do if they are worried about anything.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- The new curriculum is not fully developed and embedded. As a result, in some subjects, pupils do not learn and remember as much as they could. Leaders should ensure that the planned learning is fully implemented in all subjects and that impact can be measured in terms of pupils' progress.
- Formal checks on pupils' understanding are not used well enough to shape their learning. As a result, pupils do not always know what to do to improve, and teachers do not always identify where the curriculum and the way it is implemented may need to be reviewed. Leaders should ensure that the purpose of formal assessment is clearly articulated and designed to improve pupils' outcomes.
- The legacy of poor presentation and handwriting is creating an unnecessary barrier to learning for too many pupils. Leaders should make sure that the higher expectations now in place are reinforced and monitored.
- Historically, children in the early years have not made the progress they should. Consequently, some children in reception are not as well prepared for Year 1 as they should be. Leaders should maintain regular oversight of early years provision to ensure that the rapid rate of improvement is sustained.
- Communication has not been effective enough to ensure that all stakeholders have understood the mission of improving outcomes for pupils and their preparedness for their next steps that sit behind the recent changes. As a result, relationships with some staff and parents are strained. Leaders should ensure that they work closely with all stakeholders to improve communication.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	124254
<b>Local authority</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10268897
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	195
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Graham Bibby
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sarita Bailey
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.st-johns-keele.staffs.sch.uk">www.st-johns-keele.staffs.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	30 January 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- St John's Church of England Primary School is a voluntary controlled school with a Christian ethos.
- The school's last section 48 inspection was in May 2018. Section 48 inspections were suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They restarted in September 2021. The next inspection will be within eight years of the last section 48 inspection.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

## 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, the early years leader, the special

educational needs coordinator, subject leaders, the chair and vice-chair of the governing body and other governors, teachers, parents and pupils.

- Deep dives in reading and English, mathematics and history were carried out. These included discussions with subject leaders and teachers, visits to lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with pupils to discuss their learning in these subjects. The lead inspector also listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the personal, social and health education curriculum and relationships education.
- Inspectors spoke to leaders about the wider development of pupils.
- A range of documentation was reviewed, including leaders' curriculum implementation plans, their self-evaluation of the school's effectiveness, reports and audits of the school, minutes of governors' meetings and the school's website.
- Inspectors also discussed records of attendance and behaviour logs.
- As part of the inspection of safeguarding, inspectors considered the school's procedures for keeping pupils safe, the checks made to ensure safer recruitment and staff training.
- Inspectors spoke to parents at the end of the first day of inspection and on the morning of the second day. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments, and responses to the staff and pupil surveys.

### **Inspection team**

Mel Ford, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Antony Bradshaw

His Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

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