

Inspection of St John the Baptist Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School

Hillside Lane, Great Amwell, Ware, Hertfordshire SG12 9SE

Inspection dates:	17 and 18 December 2024
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming here. They take pride in their work and know adults want them to succeed. Pupils are benefiting from recent changes to the curriculum. As a result, most pupils across the school can recall key knowledge they have learned. Pupils of all ages enjoy reading, including book club. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive the support they need to access the full curriculum.

Pupils follow routines well. In early years, staff teach children how to share and be independent. Pupils trust staff and respect each other. They refer to school as a safe space. Pupils are motivated to be 'learner of the week'. Through 'values awards', pupils understand how to demonstrate trust, courage and truthfulness. As a result, the school is a harmonious place to learn and play in.

Older pupils take on leadership roles such as sports ambassadors, librarians, or organising collective worship. In every class, pupils have responsibilities to carry out. Pupils raise money for new equipment, thereby making a positive contribution to school life. There are a range of sports clubs and experiences offered. Pupils learn to play the guitar and take part in choir and orchestra events. There are regular trips, visits to church and residential. All this broadens pupils' horizons.

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

The school is successfully steering itself through a period of change. New subject leaders have recently updated the curriculum, including in early years. This has ensured the curriculum logically builds pupils' knowledge over time. Staff have welcomed training on this new curriculum content and approach. In subjects such as mathematics and history, pupils use their prior learning well to help understand new knowledge. Staff address any misconceptions that pupils have before teaching something new.

Pupils secure the skills they need to read. In early years and key stage 1, most pupils know the sounds they should do for their age. They develop reading fluency with books well matched to their ability. Staff keep a close eye on pupils of all ages who find reading tricky. Due to timely interventions, these pupils catch up quickly. Pupils have opportunities to read a range of texts and widen their vocabulary. This is evident in how pupils are starting to use more ambitious language in their writing.

The school has increased the numbers of pupils achieving the expected standard in Year 6 national assessments. In early years, the school has designed the curriculum to meet the needs of the specific children in that class. Pupils throughout the school with SEND benefit from adjustments made so that they can access the curriculum successfully.

However, several pupils across the school are capable of learning in more depth. At present, it is not sufficiently clear to staff the level of detailed knowledge they need to teach within certain subjects. This limits how well pupils deepen and make connections in their knowledge. In addition, some staff are still getting to grips with using checks on learning to adapt their teaching or questioning. There are instances when pupils are set

work they can do already. Opportunities for pupils to extend their knowledge are not always maximised. This also includes in early years and for some pupils with SEND.

Pupils understand what bullying is. On the rare occasions bullying or discriminatory behaviour may occur, pupils know the school will address it. In lessons, pupils are engaged and learning is not disrupted. Pupils who need additional support with their emotions are skilfully managed. More pupils are now attending school regularly. The school continues to work with families where pupils' attendance is still low.

The school's vision is about pupils having the skills and knowledge to 'run the race' of life and help others do the same. This thread runs through the school's personal development programme. Pupils respect different cultures and viewpoints. Through learning about justice and service, for example, they appreciate the British values of rule of law and democracy. They understand how to have a healthy mind and body. They know how to stay safe, including when online, when crossing the road or near water.

Staff are positive about working here. They appreciate how leaders consider their workload and well-being.

Governors know the school well and fulfil their statutory duties. They provide challenge and support. However, the school is still refining how it checks on how well pupils are learning across the curriculum. In some instances, these checks are not yet sufficiently robust. Work on this has started but is still at the early stages. Many parents are positive about the school. However, some parents feel the school could improve its communication.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some aspects of the curriculum, the detail and depth of knowledge the school expects pupils to know is not explicit enough. This means that some pupils do not deepen their knowledge across subject areas and so are not achieving as highly as they could. The school needs to ensure that staff across the whole school understand exactly what in-depth knowledge they need to teach and how best to support pupils to acquire it.
- In some areas, the checking of how well pupils learn the curriculum is not as consistent or robust as it could be. As a result, the school is not providing some pupils sufficient opportunity to extend their learning. The school needs to ensure that checks on learning are consistently rigorous so that pupils achieve what they are fully capable of in a timely manner.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	117432
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10345205
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	169
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair of governing body	Ed Delasalle
Headteacher	Lydia Hunt
Website	www.sjbaptist.herts.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	11 and 12 June 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school is a Church of England school and of a religious character and so is subject to a Section 48 inspection. A Section 48 inspection was last carried out in October 2023. The school will be due its next Section 48 inspection within approximately five years.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school’s education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator, subject leaders, teachers and support staff.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, history, and design and technology. For each deep dive, the inspectors spoke to leaders, visited lessons, spoke with pupils, look at pupils’ work and spoke with teachers and support staff.
- The inspectors also looked at pupils’ work from other subjects.
- The lead inspector met with six members of the governing body for the school, including the chair of the governing body.
- The inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school’s own self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, governing body minutes and school improvement adviser visit notes.
- The lead inspector spoke with the school’s improvement adviser from the local authority.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record, took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils’ interests first.
- The inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted’s online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, which included 44 free-text comments. There were seven responses to the staff survey. All inspectors spoke to several pupils from different year groups during the inspection, along with a range of staff.

Inspection team

Sara Boyce, lead inspector

His Majesty’s Inspector

Nerrissa Bear

His Majesty’s Inspector

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