



# St John's Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School, Lemsford

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 117435  
**LEA** HERTFORDSHIRE LEA  
**Inspection number** 280077  
**Inspection dates** 17 May 2006 to 18 May 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Mrs. Alison Pangbourne LI

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Lemsford Village
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		AL8 7TR
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01707322589
<b>Number on roll</b>	105	<b>Fax number</b>	01707325757
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Rev.Edward Cardale
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	18 September 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs. Christine Hall

<b>Age group</b> 4 to 11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 17 May 2006 - 18 May 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 280077
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## **Description of the school**

This is a small primary school. Most pupils come from White British families, with a few from minority ethnic backgrounds. None are at an early stage of learning English. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is average. Most of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties or autism. The number of pupils taking a free school meal is well below average. When children start school standards are broadly typical for 4 year olds. A new headteacher has been in post since September 2005. The school has very recently started to provide out of school care for its pupils.

## **Key for inspection grades**

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 1**

This is an outstanding school. In its self-evaluation, it was modest in its judgements, thinking of itself as a good school. However, the position is much improved with a new headteacher who has had a significant impact on all aspects of the school. When children start school, standards are broadly typical for 4 year olds. They get off to a good start and make good progress, so that standards are slightly above expectations by the start of Year 1. By the time they leave at the end of Year 6, standards are well above average. They make excellent progress because the quality of teaching is outstanding and the exciting curriculum gives them plenty of opportunities to develop their skills, both academically and socially. Behaviour is excellent and pupils and parents are very enthusiastic about all the school offers. All staff take excellent care of the pupils, including those with learning difficulties, meeting their individual needs exceptionally well in this small school. The headteacher provides outstanding and clear-sighted leadership, very ably supported by the deputy headteacher. A key factor in the success of the school is the way that the new headteacher has reorganised management and teaching roles, successfully creating an excellent team in which teachers, teaching assistants and governors use their particular expertise to the benefit of the pupils. Very thorough analysis showed that gifted and talented pupils could do even better and a good start has been made in improving provision for them. This has already resulted in an increase in the number of pupils who exceed the level expected for their age. Together with the improvements that have taken place since the previous inspection, this shows that the school has an excellent capacity to improve even further. It provides outstanding value for money.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Continue to improve the provision for gifted and talented pupils to raise standards even further.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

Achievement and standards are outstanding. The youngest children make good progress because the quality of teaching is good and there are plenty of interesting activities. They broaden and consolidate their skills so that, by the beginning of Year 1, standards are slightly above the level expected for their age. Standards vary from year to year in the small year groups and the performance of one pupil can alter test results significantly. Nevertheless, standards for 7 year olds and 11 year olds have been at least above average and sometimes well above recently. In 2005, a broadly average proportion of 7 year olds exceeded the level expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. The 11 year olds did exceptionally well in science, with almost all exceeding the level expected for their age. However, not as many achieved so highly in English and mathematics in 2005. They did so well in science because they were supported by a specialist teaching assistant and because teachers and pupils enjoy

science. The school has already identified that higher attaining pupils could do even better in English and mathematics and put measures in place to address the issue. These include improving provision for gifted and talented pupils. In 2006, standards are above average for 7 year olds and these pupils made good progress from an average starting point. Standards are now well above average for 11 year olds in English, mathematics and science. More pupils are reaching the higher levels in English and mathematics this year in both Year 2 and Year 6 compared to 2005. Pupils are making excellent progress from Year 3 to 6. Challenging targets were met in 2005 and they are on course to meet the challenging targets set for them in 2006. Pupils with learning difficulties make excellent progress because tasks are very closely matched to their needs and they receive first-rate support from teachers and teaching assistants.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is excellent and reflects a very strong Christian ethos. Attendance is above average. Excellent behaviour and a willingness to learn help pupils to enjoy school immensely. They say 'Lessons are fun and we make friends easily.' Pupils are kind and considerate towards others, including pupils of all ages in their playground games. They make an impressive contribution to the community, for example, their involvement in the village fete, where they danced, sang and manned stalls, raised considerable funds for the new building project and church funds. They organise and participate in high-quality musical productions to entertain members of the community. One pupil said 'Music is our school speciality!' They know how to lead safe and healthy lives exceptionally well, with the youngest children donning helmets before riding tricycles. They choose healthy meals at lunchtime and enjoy visits from the 'Cooking bus,' learning how to use knives safely when preparing food. There are excellent opportunities for sport and exercise. Older pupils enjoy their lessons at the secondary school nearby and the exciting activities available at playtime contribute positively to their physical and personal development. Pupils know that their views are taken seriously. The school council asked for a school pet and now they have a hamster. Pupils have an excellent grounding for the world of work through the very strong emphasis on literacy, numeracy and computer skills and the many opportunities to work in pairs.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 1**

The overall quality of teaching and learning are outstanding. It is good in the Reception class, where children have a wide range of interesting and exciting activities and their skills are developed well. Where teaching is particularly strong, teachers use every minute to extend learning and use questions very effectively to challenge all pupils. Teachers are skilled in meeting the needs of all pupils in the mixed-age classes. Higher

attaining pupils are well challenged. Very high expectations, thorough assessment and tracking of pupils result in very well planned lessons that captivate the pupils' interest. One of the key features which help pupils learn is the opportunity to share their ideas with a partner. This boosts their self-confidence and contributes to their personal development. For example, the older pupils delighted in compiling mnemonics together to help them remember their spellings. Talented teaching assistants contribute very positively to pupils' learning, including those with learning difficulties. The high ratio of adults to pupils means that all pupils get plenty of individual attention. The school has developed very effective systems for tracking pupils' achievements and this contributes to their excellent progress. Pupils have a very good understanding about what they need to do to improve. They have clear targets to work towards and teachers make helpful comments in their marking.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 1**

The excellent curriculum is very carefully planned to meet the needs of all pupils. There is a strong emphasis on developing basic skills across all aspects of the curriculum. This helps to prepare them very effectively for their future lives. All pupils learn to speak French and the older ones also learn German. The school is currently working to enrich the opportunities for gifted and talented pupils. For example, in Year 6 pupils have started to attend master classes in mathematics at the local secondary school and those in Year 2 have begun to go to a weekly mathematics and creative writing lesson with older pupils. All these initiatives are beginning to contribute very positively to the rising standards for higher attaining pupils. The curriculum is enriched by an outstanding range of after-school activities, such as drama, science club, choir, French, football and netball. A wide range of visits and visitors and residential visits for pupils from Year 3 also enriches the curriculum. Music has a high profile and most pupils learn to sing exceptionally well, guided by a talented governor. All pupils in Years 3 and 4 play the violin. Personal, social and emotional development is a very strong feature and the Christian ethos of care and respect for others permeates the curriculum.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' care, guidance and support are exemplary. Pupils feel safe in school and they know there are adults to turn to if they need help. The school shows an extremely high commitment to the pupils and their families and links between home and school are very strong. After-school provision has been introduced very recently. The school shows exceptional concern for the safety of its pupils, as shown by the fact that all teaching and support staff and some governors have undertaken training for child protection. Risk assessments are very thorough and conscientiously observed. Very good support programmes for pupils with learning difficulties ensure that these pupils make excellent progress towards the targets in their individual education plans. Their progress is regularly reviewed and parents are fully involved.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher provides inspirational leadership, very well supported by the deputy headteacher. She has thoroughly evaluated the work of the school and perceptively identified the strengths of her staff and areas for development. Consequently, there is a tangible sense of teamwork as teachers, teaching assistants and governors work together for the benefit of the pupils. All staff with management roles, including some teaching assistants and governors, lead their subjects extremely well and are committed to raising standards still further. Subjects are managed by the person who is best qualified for the role. For example, the science co-ordinator is a knowledgeable and talented teaching assistant and this contributes to the very high standards. The music co-ordinator is a governor whose talents contribute to the high standards in music. The school has identified the right areas for improvement in the very good school development plan. This shows that its self-evaluation is particularly effective. The school works impressively to include pupils from all backgrounds and this contributes to the warm, family ethos. The views of all members of the community are welcomed and parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. They particularly like the parents' council that has been introduced this year. One parent said 'St John's is a place where my children flourish in both their learning and confidence.' The governors watch over the school extremely well. They are valued members of the team and many are very involved in the school. The constant striving for improvement and the way that the headteacher and governors have successfully restructured the roles of the staff and the resulting rise in standards this year shows that the school has an excellent capacity to improve even further.

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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	1	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	1	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	1	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	1	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1	NA

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

### **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Following my visit to your school, I would like to thank you for helping me. I enjoyed talking to you and watching you learn. I would like to tell you what I liked best. You told me that learning was fun at your school and I agree with you. I enjoyed hearing about all the interesting things you do in lessons and at lunchtime. You are right to be proud of your village fete where you help to raise lots of money for the school and the church. I noticed that you all behave extremely well and your behaviour when you went to church for assembly was excellent. I thought that your singing was outstanding! All the teachers, teaching assistants and governors who help in school look after you extremely well. You always have someone to turn to if you are upset. All the grown-ups help you to do very well in your lessons and you enjoy learning very much. Your families and you are right in thinking that you go to an excellent school. Mrs Hall does an excellent job in running the school. She has found out that some of the teaching assistants and some of the governors like teaching you their favourite subjects and has arranged things so that they can work together with the teachers to help you learn. Some of you, who find it quite easy to learn, have already been to lessons at Stanborough School and some of you have had lessons with older children in your school. I have asked Mrs Hall and your teachers to carry on finding ways to help you to do even better in your work. I hope you carry on enjoying your time at St John's School and do well in your next school.