

# St John's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Infant School, Chatham

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118640
<b>Local Authority</b>	Medway
<b>Inspection number</b>	291196
<b>Inspection date</b>	1 February 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Selwyn Ward

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	70
School	
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	James Wyper
<b>Headteacher</b>	Diana Keating
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	29 January 2001
<b>School address</b>	4 New Street Chatham ME4 6RH
<b>Telephone number</b>	01634 844135
<b>Fax number</b>	01634 819732

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<b>Age group</b>	4–7
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

This small school caters for pupils with a cosmopolitan mix of backgrounds. Around a third are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. Another third have learning difficulties. The school has benefited from remarkably stable staffing. All of the teachers have been at the school for at least six years.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school. It describes as its aim that 'all children will be encouraged to develop at their own rate and achieve their full potential, regardless of race, gender, physical or educational needs'. The school achieves its aim with considerable success. Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and staff team have established a family atmosphere where pupils feel safe and want to learn because, as a parent put it, 'The teachers know all the pupils and all the pupils know each other'. Pupils' personal development is good. Though pupils come from a very wide range of backgrounds, they get on very well with each other. Pupils value each other's contributions and help each other in lessons. Behaviour is very good and pupils are exceptionally enthusiastic about school. Children get off to a good start in the Reception Year. They do well because they are each set challenging work and given the support they need to succeed. As a result, children grow steadily in confidence. Standards are still below average at the start of Year 1, but this represents good achievement in relation to children's well-below-average starting point. Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 1 and 2, so that standards at the end of Year 2 are average. This good achievement has been a consistent feature of the school for the past five years. It is due to consistently good teaching. Teachers have high expectations of what their pupils can do. They manage their classes well and encourage pupils to do their best. Though pupils are usually set challenging work, often pupils of widely differing abilities are set work that is similar, with the difference mainly being in the amount of support offered. The curriculum is good because it is made interesting to the pupils. It makes good use of visits and visitors to the school. Provision is particularly good for pupils with learning difficulties, as well as for those who have additional learning needs because they are at an early stage of learning English. Care, guidance and support are good. Pupils benefit from very good care and support that helps them feel secure and ensures their welfare. Pupils have individual targets in English and mathematics. These are displayed in their exercise books, but pupils think of them as something used by the teacher rather than themselves. As a result, many pupils are unaware of what their targets are or of what they need to focus on in order to improve their work. The school has come a long way since its last inspection. This, and the accuracy of its self-evaluation, shows that it has good capacity for continued improvement.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils are more aware of what they need to do to do better.
- More closely match work in lessons to pupils' different abilities.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Standards by the end of Year 2 are average. That has been the case consistently over the past five years. It represents very significant and sustained improvement since the last inspection, where standards had previously been consistently very low. It represents good achievement in relation to pupils' starting point, which is below average at the start of Year 1 and well below at the start of the Reception Year. Throughout the school, pupils of all abilities, including those at an early stage of learning English, make good progress. This is because they benefit from very good support that helps them tackle challenging work that helps each child to build steadily on what they have learnt before.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Children love school and are especially enthusiastic about what they are learning. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. This is shown clearly in their very good behaviour in lessons and around the school. They learn to care for each other and there are excellent relationships between pupils of different ages and diverse cultures. Pupils get on very well with all the adults in the school and are confident that they will be helped if they have a problem. Consequently, they feel very safe, not least because they recognise the security of this small school community where they are well known and valued by everyone. Attendance has improved as a result of the efforts made by the school in working with families and in collaboration with other agencies, although it is still a little below average. Pupils have a good understanding of what will keep them healthy. Many use this knowledge in making their own choices, for example, urging a friend at lunchtime to 'eat the sandwich first – it's good for you!' The school council takes its responsibilities very seriously and older pupils are very proud of having been elected 'not just by our friends'. They explain confidently the changes in lunch arrangements that they have brought about. Pupils are aware of the school's role in the wider community through its many fundraising activities. Along with their key skills in literacy and numeracy, their growing ability to make decisions and reflect on their actions is a good preparation for their future life.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Teachers have high expectations and pupils are keen to rise to the challenge. Teachers manage their classes well, so that pupils are attentive and keen to join in. Questioning is used very effectively to check pupils' understanding and to keep them on their toes. Even those pupils who are more reluctant to volunteer answers are fully involved because teachers are careful to direct questions to them. Relationships are very good and teachers know their pupils very well. Some of their lesson planning is quite informal but lessons are nonetheless effective because teachers have an accurate picture of how well each pupil is doing. They do not, however, always match work as closely as they could to pupils' abilities. This means that often pupils of widely different ability are set similar work, although those who most need it are given extra support. Though pupils of all abilities make good progress, some could be capable of doing even better if work in every class were more closely tailored to aptitude and ability, as it generally is in the Reception Year. Pupils with learning difficulties, together with those at an early stage of learning English, make particularly good progress because their needs are identified early and they are given well-targeted support.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

Staff make the very best use of the tight space available to create a stimulating environment for the pupils. The curriculum is made interesting and exciting and so helps pupils to make good progress in their learning. The headteacher and staff are very conscious of the fact that, while the school's small size gives it many advantages, it imposes some limitations too. Being small helps in building the family atmosphere that pupils and parents particularly admire, but it makes it difficult for a small staff to cover the full range of activities that is expected. The school has responded to this challenge by bringing in some specialist teaching in music and

dance. This extends the opportunities offered to pupils while satisfying legal requirements to give class teachers some time for planning, preparation and assessment. Pupils' experience is enhanced through an exciting range of visits and visitors, including a poet and several theatre companies. Pupils' enthusiasm illustrates just how much these activities have captured their imagination.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

This is a caring and supportive school where all the staff know all the pupils very well and where the standard of care is high. The school fulfils all requirements for safeguarding and protection of children. Children are made to feel secure and this helps them to grow in confidence. Those with learning difficulties, and those who need extra help because they are still at an early stage of learning English as an additional language, have their needs carefully assessed. They are given very clear targets which help them to know what they need to do to improve. Other pupils have targets in English and mathematics, and these are pasted into their exercise books. However, these are less effective in guiding pupils' progress because they are seen by pupils as for use by the teachers rather than themselves. As a consequence, pupils do not routinely refer to their targets and many are unaware of what they are.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher and staff work together very effectively as a team. They have been successful in establishing a school where pupils are happy and want to do well. Many of the pupils describe the best thing about the school is how 'the teachers help you learn'. When asked if there was anything they did not like about school, pupils were initially stumped. Their only complaint was that 'sometimes they give you green pasta'. School leaders can take some pride in this. By working as a team, the staff manage the curriculum well. Their monitoring of pupils' work is especially effective as it identifies any pupils who may be at risk of underachieving and arranges for them to be given targeted support. This has helped to drive the marked and sustained improvement in standards since the last inspection. Teaching is monitored through lesson observations, although these are not always as sharp as the monitoring of work because they are not so keenly focused on pupils' learning. Governors are supportive but, in a recent self-evaluation of their own effectiveness, they have recognised that they have not always done enough to question and challenge staff. They are currently in the process of changing the way they work to increase the contribution they can make to the leadership of the school.

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**Annex A**

## 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>
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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>	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

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



**Annex A**

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

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**Annex B**

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

- I am writing to let you know how much we enjoyed our visit to your school. Thank you all for making us so welcome and helping us. You are proud of your school and you have every right to be. St John's is a good school. It is well run and teachers are helping you all to do well. Here are the things that we think are best about your school:
- We were delighted to see how well behaved you are and how much you enjoy school and are so keen to learn.
- The teaching is good and that means you are doing well in all three classes.
- Staff take good care of you.
- You really enjoy the visits and visitors that help make lessons interesting.
- Those of you who need it get extra support that helps you to do well. These are the things that we think could be better:
- If you all knew your targets, it would help you because you would know exactly what you needed to do to improve your work.
- Some of you could make even better progress if you were not all set similar work. Thank you again for being so helpful and friendly when we came to see you.