

# St John's Church of England (VA) Combined School, Lacey Green

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	110465
<b>Local Authority</b>	Buckinghamshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	310319
<b>Inspection date</b>	7 November 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Alan Jarvis

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	254
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	30
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Robert Healy (acting)
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Paul De Wolf
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	22 February 2005
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Main Road Lacey Green Princes Risborough HP27 0PL
<b>Telephone number</b>	01844 343 521
<b>Fax number</b>	01844 274 043

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. They evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and particularly investigated:

- Are enough pupils reaching the higher levels in mathematics?
- How well do teaching and the curriculum impact on pupils' academic progress and their personal development especially in Years 3 to 6?
- How effective is the Early Years Foundation Stage?

Parts of some lessons were observed, parents' questionnaires and a sample of pupils' work were examined and school information, including self-evaluation and the tracking of pupils' progress, was scrutinised. The inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

## Description of the school

Children are admitted to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) each September. Additional and varying numbers also join the school for the first time in Year 3. Most pupils are of White British origin. A few come from other minority ethnic backgrounds. Fewer pupils than average are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning needs or disabilities is well below average. These needs include moderate learning, dyslexic and speech, language and communication difficulties. The school has the Healthy Schools, Young Environmentalist and Eco-Schools awards.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

St John's is a good school where pupils achieve well. Pupils arrive each morning with smiles on their faces and a spring in their step because they know each day will be interesting, varied and enjoyable. The school excels in ensuring pupils' outstanding personal development through its high quality care, outstanding enrichment of the curriculum and its very caring Christian ethos. Parents rightly hold the school in high regard. 'My daughter is thriving academically', 'Behaviour is excellent' and, 'There is no bullying or nasty behaviour', are typical of parental views.

Good teaching in Years 1 and 2 ensures that all groups of pupils make good progress. They attain high standards at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. In the lower school, teachers spend time consolidating pupils' learning and standards. This pays off because pupils gain confidence and skills to tackle the harder work in Years 3 to 6. Additional pupils join the school in Year 3. Almost an extra class has been added this year. Their standards on entry are also generally high. The school therefore faces the challenge of sustaining and building on these high standards and meets this well. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress and pupils, who did not reach the higher level at Year 2, strive to attain this at Year 6. However, whilst standards are very high the school agrees they could be higher still. Two factors are currently limiting this. First, whilst exceptional numbers of pupils reach the higher level in English and science the proportion doing so in mathematics, whilst still good, is not as high. The school has recognised this by increasing the time allocation for mathematics and targeting pupils' understanding of shape, space and measure. Some improvement is evident this year but there is still a way to go before the proportion reaching the higher level is on a par with English and science. Second, the school's very good tracking of progress shows that those pupils who join in Year 3 do not always make the rapid progress through the school that most pupils who join in Reception do. The school agrees there is scope to use this information to further sharpen pupils' targets, to challenge them more, and allocate additional support where needed to ensure they make the very best progress.

Teaching is consistently good in all years and the key reason why pupils achieve well. Learning intentions are effectively shared with pupils every lesson and as a result they know exactly how to go about their learning. Marking is consistently good, giving pointers on how to improve. Teaching assistants support pupils with additional learning needs very well. Large numbers of parents also provide extra support in lessons which helps boost learning. In the very best teaching, the teachers use sharply focused questions to add extra bite to the challenge and enable pupils to progress at the edge of their capabilities. However, the school has already identified that pupils' achievement over time is limited in some classes because of inconsistencies in this approach across a range of subjects.

The timetable in Years 3 to 6 in each subject is organised differently in order to cater effectively for the additional and varying numbers of pupils who join in Year 3. English, mathematics and science are taught in year groups. Each receives a good time allocation and planning ensures that work is consistently challenging and well matched to pupils' needs. In English, a premium is given to teaching time and the curriculum in English is especially well planned. There are many opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking, listening, reading and writing skills in a variety of stimulating contexts both in English lessons and across the curriculum. This is best seen in the splendid 'presentation books' which pupils produce for their topics and where they use word processing to enhance the quality of their work. Smaller groups operate in mathematics

in Years 5 and 6 and this is starting to raise standards further. The strong emphasis on scientific investigations, particularly related to environmental work, underpins the very good progress pupils make in science.

The very well developed curriculum also ensures pupils achieve well across a wide range of creative subjects. Subjects such as design and technology, history, geography and art are taught in larger mixed age classes. Some parents were anxious about the impact of class sizes on pupils' achievements but observations confirm these arrangements are working well. The school have increased the number of designated 'theme' weeks that help pupils to learn in depth, develop their creativity and learn new things in different ways. Pupils are polled on what they would like to study in order to capitalise on their interests. For example, topics such as 'Whipsnade Zoo' have helped to capture pupils' concerns about the natural world and environment, and the topic 'Countries of the World' broadens their knowledge of how other people live. Impressive 'Action' stories have been written to a very high standard and are enhanced by pupils' very good computer skills.

A hallmark of the school is the pupils' impressive personal development. By the time pupils reach Year 6 they have grown into extremely mature and confident individuals for their age. They show high levels of self-esteem, demonstrate excellent attitudes to learning and are keen to do as well as they can. Parents also play their part in this through their high expectations. They rightly recognise that, 'pupils settle in extremely well', and 'staff give wonderful support and encouragement'. Pupils know any member of staff will quickly deal with any worries they have and as a result feel very safe and secure. Pupils' exceptional manners are a delight for visitors. Local festivals, assemblies, school productions and an extremely popular choir provide extensive opportunities for pupils to perform in public. These add greatly to developing pupils' social and team working skills as well as helping to ensure they have an acute understanding of the benefits of healthy lifestyles. An extensive range of extra curricular clubs offers something for everyone and take up rates are very high. Pupils' excellent attendance over many years reflects how well they enjoy school.

Much of the school's success can be put down to an effective team of senior and subject leaders supported by governors who are committed to school improvement. A few parents expressed concerns that the current Year 3 classes were taught last half term for part of their time not by a teacher but by higher level teaching assistants. Parents can be reassured that the school has acted properly and with agility in managing temporary and exceptional staffing difficulties. These are now resolved. Higher level teaching assistants only cover teachers during their preparation and planning time. The impact has been minimal. Year 3 pupils have settled in very well and pupils are mostly making good gains in their learning. As one girl said, 'The work is tougher this year but I am doing well.' There is no complacency. The track record demonstrates a good capacity to improve further.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Children enter Reception with above the expected levels of pre-school skills. They achieve well, particularly in the development of independence and social skills. By the end of Reception most have achieved the goals set out for children of this age and many have exceeded them.

Children enjoy their learning and sustain concentration well when listening to stories. Many are already able to read frequently used words and predict rhymes. They are enthralled by challenges such as that of a 'frozen bear' in the garden. They animatedly discuss what they

have to do to rescue the bear and show good knowledge of concepts such as melting and thawing. Children's personal development is excellent. They behave sensibly and learn to play safely, both indoors and out. They know that to keep healthy they need to eat fruit and vegetables. They are always keen to exercise through play with the wheeled toys, although they do not have enough access to apparatus for developing climbing and balancing. Early literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills develop well as children build on their existing skills such as writing their name.

Adults consider the unique talents of every child when planning activities. They make good use of observations to track their progress. Those who learn more rapidly consolidate their learning in the wider curriculum. Slower learners receive good support. As a result, all children achieve well through planned play and short focused activities. Staff provide high quality care for children in their charge and consideration for their welfare is exemplary. The setting is well-equipped, safe and secure, enabling all children to flourish. The relatively new outdoor area is a particular asset, but there could be more opportunities for creative role play and dressing-up. The EYFS leader has high aspirations, evaluates provision continually and is sharply focused on securing further improvements.

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

- Enable as many pupils as possible to reach the highest level in mathematics.
- Sharpen pupils' already good targets and provide support so that all pupils make the best possible progress, especially those who join the school in Year 3.
- Ensure that all teaching is of the highest quality by sharing good practice and honing teachers' questioning skills.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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### Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

### Achievement and standards

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



## Personal development and well-being

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

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

## 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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	2
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

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

20 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St John's Church of England (VA) Combined School, Lacey Green, Princes Risborough, HP27 0PL

Thank you for making the inspectors feel welcome when we visited your school recently. Many of your parents wrote to say how pleased they are that you attend this school and we can see why. Your school is a good school and some things about it are outstanding. It is a lovely place to be because your teachers ensure each day is interesting, varied and enjoyable and you all get on so very well together.

Here are some of the really good things about your school.

- Your standards are very high and you make good progress through the school.
- You make good progress in all subjects of the National Curriculum.
- Your behaviour is impeccable and there is no bullying or nasty behaviour.
- The adults look after you exceptionally well and quickly deal with your worries.
- Your parents help you a lot and many even help in school!
- You really enjoy the excellent range of clubs and activities on offer.
- You know a great deal about how to be safe, eat healthily and how to keep fit.
- The children in the Reception class make a good start to their education.

To make your progress even better, we have asked your school to do three things:

- Enable as many of you as possible to reach the higher level in mathematics.
- Give you even sharper targets for learning so you make the best possible progress so that all of you reach the highest standards you can.
- Make the good teaching across the school even better.

You can do your bit by continuing to be very positive and by making the most of your time at St John's. Very well done to you all and best wishes for your future lives.

Yours sincerely

Dr. Alan Jarvis

Lead Inspector