

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

## Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117435
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	326608
<b>Inspection dates</b>	4–5 June 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	David Speakman

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.

---

<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)	104
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	10
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Rev Edward Cardale
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Christine Hall
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	17 May 2006
<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>	Lemsford Village Welwyn Garden City Hertfordshire AL8 7TR
<b>Telephone number</b>	01707322589
<b>Fax number</b>	01707325757

---

<b>Age group</b>	4–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	4–5 June 2009
<b>Inspection number</b>	326608

---

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an additional inspector.

## Description of the school

St John's Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School is smaller than most primary schools. Children start in the Early Years Foundation Stage at the beginning of their Reception year with attainment on entry that is typical for children of this age. Occasionally, though, their attainment is slightly lower than expected. The number identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is greater than that found in other schools. Most of these pupils have specific or moderate learning difficulties or behavioural issues. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage, although there are a small number from minority ethnic backgrounds. The school has a number of prestigious awards including, the Healthy Schools Award, Basic Skills Awards, Sing Up Gold Award and the Bronze Sustainable Schools Award. The School Travel Plan received a Gold Standard Award.

After school care is provided through 'After School Klub' each day during term time between 15.15 and 18.00. The governing body manages this provision.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

St John's is an outstanding school. It continues to provide an excellent quality education, which enables pupils to achieve exceptionally well. Its main strengths lie in its recognition of individual's strengths, both staff and pupils, and building on these so that all perform at their very best levels.

After the previous inspection, standards fell due to a number of circumstances that occurred simultaneously but were beyond the school's control. The school responded quickly and effectively. Through the implementation of robust systems to monitor carefully the progress of each pupil and to set challenging targets for their academic performance, standards rose and are once again well above average. Standards in science fell but they are now broadly average. This is because the school focused mainly on improving attainment in English and mathematics. Standards in other subjects are high in relation to those nationally expected for pupils of this age. By the end of Year 6, standards in French are much higher than expected for this age group. In music, attainment in both instrumental playing and singing is exceptionally high. Attainment in physical education (PE) is well above expectations and for such a small school pupils do exceptionally well in competitive sports. Pupils use their good quality information and communication technology (ICT) skills to support learning across a range of subjects. Pupils' ability in using their skills in writing in subjects other than English is particularly good.

As well as academic attainment which is well above average, pupils' personal development is outstanding. Pupils develop very mature attitudes to learning and to school life in general. Because this is a small school, pupils of all ages know each other well and mix freely. The family atmosphere is one of the aspects of the school that pupils like most. The high quality curriculum is full of interesting learning opportunities that constantly stimulate pupils' enjoyment in learning and is another key feature to the school's success. Teaching is excellent. Pupils like their teachers and say they are extremely helpful in supporting learning. Pupils are particularly confident in the support they receive from adults, both in terms of academic guidance and pastoral support. The level of care shown by adults in the school for pupils' welfare is outstanding.

Leadership and management are outstanding because the headteacher recognises the strengths, skills and passions of adults working in or linked with the school. She capitalises on these strengths so that staff provide pupils with accurate knowledge and high expectations for learning. Staff are supported well to continually raise the level of their own performance. Bearing this in mind and the improvements in the last three years, the school has an excellent capacity to sustain and improve even further on its already excellent quality of education.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 1

Children achieve exceptionally well in their Reception Year. They are very well prepared for their move into Key Stage 1 both academically and in their personal, social and emotional development. Nearly all achieve the goals expected of them at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage and a significant number exceed these. There is a special support programme for any child that does not reach their targets before they move into Year 1. This effectively helps children develop the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding to ensure they are

able to cope confidently with the next steps in their learning. The quality and range of learning opportunities is excellent. There is a strong emphasis on learning through play and children learn just as effectively in the very well equipped outdoor area as they do inside. Both areas are set up with exciting role play activities that support the main curriculum themes. Children are currently greatly enjoying booking their holidays in the travel agents set up to support the topic linked to transport. The balance between teacher-led activities and those that children choose is carefully managed so all children experience all areas of learning. Even though there is a strong emphasis on developing communication and numeracy skills, other important areas feature strongly in the curriculum. Expectations are high and children benefit just as much from specialist teaching in PE, music, personal, social and health education and citizenship and French as pupils in the rest of the school. The Early Years Foundation Stage is exceptionally well led and managed and the staff team works extremely well together. Teaching assistants provide quality support, both in teaching and in assessing children's progress. Detailed assessments are used very well in planning the next steps in individual's learning.

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

- Improve standards in science so that the previous high level of attainment is regained.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' attainment has improved in recent years and they leave the school with standards, which are well above average. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 2 show that standards are above average. There was a slight dip in 2008 when attainment was broadly average. However, this was related to the profile of the cohort and this group still made very good progress against their starting points. Current attainment for Year 2 is above average overall. It is above average in reading and mathematics and exceptionally high in writing, which demonstrates outstanding progress for these pupils.

At Key Stage 2, attainment has been steadily improving in English and mathematics since the dip in 2006. Current attainment is well above average in English and mathematics demonstrating outstanding progress. Standards remain broadly average in science. A similar picture emerges for Year 5, with comparable projections for 2010 test results. Very high standards in core skills, including those in ICT prepare pupils exceptionally well for the next steps in their education. Pupils at all levels of attainment achieve equally well. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who receive effective support achieve excellently. Higher attaining pupils receive suitable extension activities and also make excellent progress.

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

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' personal development including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils behave exceptionally well in class and at break times. This supports their learning very well and ensures that pupils of all ages feel safe and comfortable in school. They behave very well because they are interested and fully engaged in the learning. Clearly, they enjoy school a great deal. This is reflected in an exceptionally high level of attendance which is consistently well above the national average. Pupils value achievement very highly and are proud to share what they do well. This was clear in the 'achievement assembly' when pupils were delighted to share their successes with other pupils and their parents. Pupils make a significant contribution to making school life comfortable and enjoyable. Jobs such as play

leaders help younger pupils stay calm and occupied at breaktimes. One pupil said 'nothing bad ever happens and if it does we always know who to go to for help. We often sort things out for ourselves.' The school council makes a significant contribution to school life and pupils feel listened to. Pupils have an excellent knowledge and understanding of healthy living and put this into practice in their daily school lives. They make wise choices at mealtimes and eat healthily. They take full advantage of the wide range of opportunities to keep physically fit, both in lessons and in clubs after school.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 1**

The quality of teaching and learning is excellent. Planning is thorough and teachers clearly take very careful account of each pupil's previous learning. Activities meet individual needs particularly well and are very challenging so that pupils progress at an exceptionally quick pace. Resources are very effective in supporting both teaching and learning. Computers are used particularly well by teachers to provide high quality presentations and by pupils to support their learning. Pupils also have considerable opportunities to use other reference materials, such as a thesaurus and high quality work sheets, which they do well. Staff work together in close collaboration, which supports effective learning. Teaching assistants are skilled and provide highly valued and effective support to the pupils in their care. Adults with special skills in subjects such as French, music, PE and personal, social and health education and citizenship provide high quality teaching, resulting in very high standards in these subjects.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

The curriculum is planned exceptionally well to ensure high quality provision for pupils at all ages and all levels of attainment. The school makes sure that pupils identified as needing extra support or in need of further challenges, are given outstanding provision. Consequently, pupils make excellent progress, effectively building on previous learning. The school provides a very well planned programme of work in English and mathematics which supports pupil progress. The well thought out organisation of the other subjects means that pupils continue to receive high quality provision in music, PE, French and personal, social and health education and citizenship. Well-established links between subjects mean that topics are relevant to pupils' experiences, stimulate their interest and enjoyment and help them see the relevance of what they are learning. Curriculum enrichment is excellent. An exciting and extensive range of visits and visitors add greatly to pupils' interest in learning. These help to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding very well including their multicultural awareness. A wide range of extra-curricular provision adds significantly to the quality of education provided. Music and sports feature highly in these but clubs such as the chess club, cater for a wide range of other preferences.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 1**

Pastoral care and academic guidance are both outstanding. All safeguarding procedures, including those for health and safety, risk assessments and child protection are fully in place. After-school care for pupils is very effective. At the after school club pupils receive a healthy

meal and a range of activities to occupy them purposefully. Arrangements are adaptable so pupils are also able to join in the extra-curricular provision. The school goes out of its way to support exceptionally well pupils at all levels of attainment, including those with special talents, and provides opportunities to develop them fully. Assessment procedures and academic guidance are extremely thorough and robust. Pupils understand academic targets very clearly and know how to improve their work. They have a realistic understanding of where they are academically and how they can achieve their targets. They have excellent opportunities to think about their own progress through regular discussions with their teachers and self-assessment. This process helps them to appreciate what they do well and to understand how they can do even better.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

Leadership and management at all levels are excellent. Being a small staff, the leadership has importantly recognised that adults other than teachers have valuable skills and knowledge to offer. Teaching assistants and governors willingly take on leadership roles and teamwork is extremely effective in providing a high quality education. The headteacher works exceptionally well to establish an effective system of leadership across the school that is based on the professional expertise of staff and governors. All adults are highly motivated, skilled and empowered to fulfil their roles extremely well. Subject leaders are involved well in monitoring standards and evaluating the quality of provision within their own areas of responsibility. They contribute very effectively to the whole school's self-evaluation and development planning, both of which are of high quality. Targets set for pupils' achievement and for staff performance are challenging and contribute directly to the school's improving profile. Teachers are held accountable for the performance of pupils in their care through regular pupil performance reviews. The school promotes community cohesion exceptionally well and is aware of its own position in relation to other communities. It uses this evaluation very effectively to ensure the school plays a significant role in different communities and pupils develop a secure appreciation of life beyond their own personal experiences. Governors are extremely effective. They are organised very well and work in close collaboration with the school. They provide high levels of support and challenge.

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**



**Annex A**

## Inspection judgements

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

### 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
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

<b>How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?</b>	1
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?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

### Achievement and standards

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

<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>	1
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?	1

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

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

8 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St John's Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School, Welwyn Garden  
City AL8 7TR

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school recently. I enjoyed the time I spent meeting you, visiting your lessons and speaking to you about the school and how you help to make it a success.

You go to an excellent school and it is impressive that it is still as outstanding as it was at the previous inspection. You play a very important part in this success by behaving really well, taking responsibility seriously and trying hard to do your best. However difficult the task you are presented with, you are always willing to have a go and try your very hardest. This is very impressive! I was very pleased by the sensible way in which you learn, make friends with others and care about each other. You help to make others feel safe in school and enjoy being there. Those of you I spoke to enjoy school very much and find it most interesting. You make excellent progress in lessons and reach well above average standards in your work by the time you leave the school. You are particularly well prepared to go on to the next stages of your education.

A great deal has been done to maintain the high quality of education since your school was last inspected. However, this does not mean that there is nothing left to do. I have asked the headteacher, governors and teachers to look at raising standards in science so that they are once again as good as they were.

I wish you all the best in the future.

Yours faithfully

David Speakman

Lead inspector