

Maidstone, St John's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118753
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	339292
Inspection dates	22–23 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Alison Cartlidge

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	222
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gill Munson
Headteacher	Tim Harrington
Date of previous school inspection	23 March 2010
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Almost half the inspection time was spent observing learning. The inspectors saw seven teachers at work in 13 lessons. They held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at pupils' books, information on pupils' progress, safeguarding arrangements and other documents. Questionnaires from 129 parents and carers and from 106 pupils were scrutinised.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- Learning and progress of more able pupils in mathematics and science.
- The impact of marking and the involvement of pupils in assessing their learning.
- The impact of all leaders, including the governors, on provision and progress.
- The extent to which pupils are encouraged to take on responsibility.

Information about the school

This is an average-sized primary school. The school has an average proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Most, but not all, of these pupils have emotional and behavioural difficulties or speech, communication and language difficulties. Most pupils come from White British backgrounds. A few are from a variety of minority ethnic groups

The school has received several awards, including a Healthy Schools award and the silver Artsmark.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Pupils become well-rounded citizens at this successful and caring school. They were right when they told us, 'We do loads of brilliant activities' and 'We have teachers who listen and explain well.' Outstanding care, guidance and support, and extremely strong links with parents and external agencies, ensure that pupils learn quickly and are happy, helpful and confident. As one parent said: 'Our children have flourished both academically and emotionally. Without exception, members of staff have always been supportive to our children and to us!'

Children make a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Good teaching between Years 1 and 6 enables pupils to build on what they have already learnt in most lessons. Teachers plan interesting activities that help pupils to enjoy learning. Occasionally they do not provide tasks that match the needs of all pupils accurately, or involve them fully in class discussions. When this happens, learning slows for a minority of pupils. Work is marked regularly but marking does not always show pupils what they need to do next to improve.

Pupils' progress is good, leading to above average attainment in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils are kind and appreciative of the wonders of the world. They enjoy taking part in the wide range of physical activities provided and consequently are helped to adopt exceptionally healthy lifestyles. Pupils tell us that they feel 'really, really, really safe at school' and almost all parents agree. Pupils' keenness to learn is evident in their outstanding attendance.

Good procedures for self-evaluation enable senior leaders to know what needs to be done next to improve the school further. Leaders are successfully increasing the rate of progress of more able pupils in science and mathematics across the year groups, demonstrating the school's good capacity to improve further. Subject leaders are developing their roles well, but have insufficient opportunity to find out for themselves how well teaching and learning are improving so that they can make more specific plans for the subjects they manage.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that in all lessons:
 - all pupils are involved in whole class discussions
 - work meets the range of all learners' need
- Enable subject leaders to gain a better understanding of teaching and learning

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across the school so that they can contribute effectively to school development.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress and learn well in most lessons. This was very evident in a Year 6 lesson where pupils quickly developed a good understanding of how to write persuasively by preparing challenging debates. In a mathematics lesson in Year 5, pupils were given work that matched their abilities closely. This meant that all made good progress in understanding how to subtract various numbers, extending, for the more able to calculations with decimals.

Pupils feel very safe at school and behave well. They have good attitudes towards learning, although occasionally they do not persevere by doing their best writing. Pupils' keenness to learn and the school's firm stance on discouraging term-time holidays ensure outstanding attendance. Pupils are quick to take responsibility for tasks around the school and raise considerable funds for charity. They enjoy being involved in assessing how well they understand the work that they are given in lessons. Pupils cooperate with each other well when working in small groups or pairs and listen and respond sensibly in most lessons. For example, in a science lesson in Year 4, pupils worked together well when finding out why some materials are attracted to magnets. Pupils' good literacy, numeracy and personal skills prepare them well for the next stage of education and later life. They enjoy school and are eager to learn more.

Pupils respect one another and show a high level of appreciation of the world around them. They meet people from differing ethnic backgrounds and have an excellent understanding of a variety of traditions and lifestyles. Pupils thoroughly enjoy taking part in sport and compete successfully in local competitive games. They understand what they should eat and drink to stay healthy, and feel emotionally supported when they are going through tough times. They grow their own vegetables and understand that food packaging may give misleading information about its healthy properties.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is particularly effective in Years 5 and 6. In these year groups, planning is exceptionally thorough and ensures that work is matched very closely to the pupils' needs. Not a minute is wasted, ensuring that all pupils are gaining the most out of lessons. Across the school, teachers form good relationships with their pupils and, as a result, pupils feel that they need not be afraid of making mistakes. Behaviour is managed well and pupils appreciate the fun activities that teachers provide. Teachers use information and communication technology judiciously to support teaching points and to enrich learning. They ask searching questions, but occasionally they do not ensure that all pupils are involved in discussions and when this happens some become quietly inattentive. Teachers explain to pupils the purpose of each lesson, although at times they are not precise enough to help pupils know exactly what they are expected to achieve. Assessment procedures are firmly in place and are used well to set targets for pupils' attainment at the end of each year. Assessment information is not consistently used when teachers are setting work and as a result tasks are not always well matched to pupils' differing levels of understanding.

The school provides a wide range of interesting additional activities and these contribute well to the pupils' enjoyment of learning and their personal development. The Healthy Schools award is a true reflection of pupils' interest in maintaining a healthy lifestyle and they especially enjoy the clubs for gardening, cookery and sport. Work in the creative arts has also prompted an award and well-developed links with pupils from the local secondary schools help to extend learning in art and French. Connections between subjects are being developed, although occasionally opportunities are missed to make links. In science, for example, pupils do not always write up their findings using scientific vocabulary. Excellent care, guidance and support are evident in the exceptional help provided for pupils' personal development. Excellent links with external agencies ensure that pupils with personal or learning difficulties are given very good support. Consequently, pupils are very confident that adults in the school will keep them safe and will care for them.

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These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Self-evaluation is good because senior leaders use information from monitoring provision and checks on pupils' progress effectively to identify areas for development and to drive improvement. The school has a strong commitment to promoting equal opportunities and tackling discrimination. The progress of all pupils is monitored closely so that dips in progress can be tackled as they arise. Monitoring of teaching and learning is mainly carried out by senior leaders, limiting the opportunity for subject leaders to evaluate the impact of teaching on progress in the areas for which they are responsible.

Governance is good. The governing body is supportive and knowledgeable about the school. Governors provide challenge over the school's actions and are increasingly proactive in driving the school forward. At the time of the inspection, the school's safeguarding arrangements were found to be satisfactory. There were a few minor omissions in written records but these have no impact whatsoever on the well-being of the pupils. Leaders have exceptionally strong relationships with external agencies and parents, enabling them to support pupils who are finding life difficult and to extend learning beyond the classroom. The school promotes community cohesion well. Pupils have good opportunities to expand their knowledge of other cultures locally and globally and the school has secure plans to increase links with British schools in contrasting locations.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2

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The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Most children enter the Reception class working within the levels expected for their age. They make good progress, especially in literacy and numeracy, and attainment is slightly above average by the time children start in Year 1. Fun activities such as writing letters in coloured sand and fishing for letter sounds help children to learn to read and write quickly. Children have good opportunities to choose activities for themselves, and speaking and listening are successfully encouraged by adults at these times. For example, children delighted in talking about the water runs they were constructing from guttering. Occasionally, children do not settle to the task they have chosen, because they have not been given enough opportunity to think through or talk about their ideas. The interesting role-play space station, complete with space music, supports learning well. Children enjoy listing large numbers, for example, in the form of future dates. Children behave well, learn to cooperate with each other, and are keen to talk about what they are doing. Provision is led and managed well and assessment information is used to develop the curriculum. Children know that 'learning ladybirds' show them what they are to learn from an activity. Leaders have correctly identified that there is a slightly better curriculum indoors than outside. There are suitable plans to extend the range of activities available outdoors. Good relationships with parents and carers enable children to settle into class routines and to gain confidence. The new learning journals provide a good means of sharing information with parents and carers.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

There was a high response to the questionnaire for parents and carers. The vast majority are happy with their children's experience at the school. Almost all feel that their children are kept safe and healthy. A few parents and carers expressed concerns over the way pupils' behaviour is dealt with and how well the school deals with their

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concerns. The inspection found that the school manages pupils' behaviour well, and there was no unacceptable behaviour observed during the inspection. The school frequently collects and responds to parents' and carers' views through questionnaires, and provides an open invitation to them to discuss any concerns at other times.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St John's Church of England Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 129 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 222 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	85	66	38	29	4	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	85	66	43	33	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	56	43	71	55	2	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	63	49	61	47	4	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	69	53	58	45	2	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	63	49	64	50	2	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	75	58	54	42	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	50	39	50	39	2	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	66	51	58	45	3	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	54	42	59	46	7	5	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	46	36	64	50	9	7	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	73	57	51	40	2	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	79	61	47	36	3	2	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



24 March 2010

Inspection of St John's CE Primary School, Maidstone ME14 5TZ

Thank you for being so helpful during our visit. We are pleased that you enjoy coming to this good school.

These are the best things about your school.

- You enjoy school and we could see that, as you told us, you 'learn lots of things'.
- You behave sensibly and are polite and friendly. We are impressed that you do such a lot to raise funds for charity.
- You are exceptionally well looked after; as you explained, 'the teachers are caring' and 'help you when you are unsure'
- Your headteacher and other leaders know what needs to be done to make the school even better

These are the things we have asked your school to do next.

- These are the things we have asked your school to do next.
- Help teachers who look after different subjects to find out more about how well you are doing so that they can help other teachers to do an even better job.

Thank you once again for talking with us about your school and showing us your work. You could help your teachers by always doing your best work and taking notice of teachers' marking.

Yours sincerely

Alison Cartlidge

Lead inspector

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