

St John's Church of England Primary School

St John's Place, Northgate, Canterbury CT1 1BD

Inspection dates

21–22 March 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Require improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The changes introduced by the headteacher have not had time to impact fully on the quality of teaching and the progress pupils make.
- Pupils' progress has improved since the last inspection but remains too variable across the school. Pupils have also not consistently caught up on previous underachievement. As a result, the attainment of pupils is lower than is expected for their age, particularly in writing.
- Some teaching does not provide sufficient challenge for pupils. As a result, pupils do not reach the levels of which they are capable, especially the most-able pupils.
- On occasions, teachers' advice to pupils does not help pupils understand what they need to do next to improve their work.
- In lessons, teachers do not give pupils enough opportunities to practise and consolidate their skills.
- Pupils' behaviour is not consistently good and some lose concentration in lessons.
- Leaders have yet to ensure that the quality of teaching is good. Leaders' checks on the quality of teaching are not sufficiently focused on ensuring that pupils' progress increases.
- Middle leaders do not have a secure grasp of the quality of teaching and achievement in their areas of responsibility. Consequently, the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection have not been fully addressed.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher, despite significant staffing difficulties, has focused well on the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement, which have improved since the last inspection.
- Pupils' personal development is good because pupils are reflective, considerate and polite.
- The early years provides a good start to school with effective teaching and good outcomes for children.
- Attendance has significantly improved and is now in line with the national average.

Full report

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and raise achievement, especially in writing, by:
 - making sure teachers' advice to pupils clearly shows them how to improve their work, in line with the school's expectations
 - ensuring that work is challenging enough for pupils, and adjusting tasks and questions during lessons so that pupils have to think hard
 - making sure that teaching consistently enables pupils to consolidate and deepen their skills and knowledge
 - ensuring pupils can tackle longer pieces of writing effectively and write well in different subjects.

- Improve the impact of leadership by:
 - making sure that leaders conduct rigorous checks on teaching which concentrates on its impact on pupils' progress
 - increasing the involvement of middle leaders in carrying out more regular checks on the quality of teaching in their areas of responsibility
 - ensuring that follow-up to identified weaknesses in teaching is quick and planned in greater depth.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

requires improvement

- There have been improvements since the last inspection but significant changes in staffing mean much has rested on the shoulders of the headteacher. As a result, leaders have not fully addressed the areas for improvement since the last inspection. Changes in staffing and leadership in September 2015 have led to recent improvements, particularly at key stage 1 and in Reception. However, standards, though improving, are still not high enough, especially in writing. Too few pupils attain average standards across the curriculum and the quality of teaching remains inconsistent.
- Leaders have established a suitable method for checking teachers' effectiveness. However, leaders are not making effective use of the information they gather from these checks. Their evaluations of the quality of teaching do not pinpoint what teachers need to do in order to improve pupils' learning. Leaders' plans for improvement for individual teachers pay too little attention to pupils' achievement as the key means to evaluate success.
- Leaders' monitoring of pupils' progress is not detailed enough to gain a secure view of the progress pupils are making from their individual starting points. Consequently, some pupils are not doing as well as they should.
- Middle leaders are not involved in checking and evaluating the quality of teaching in the areas they are responsible for. As a result, they do not have a firm grasp of the impact of their leadership and are not well placed to drive rapid improvement.
- The priorities in the school's monitoring records are appropriate and a revised assessment system has been introduced in line with changes to the national curriculum. However, checks on previously identified weaknesses in teaching are not followed up sufficiently quickly and as a result there is limited clarity about when they will be checked in the future.
- Leaders have taken action to bolster the teaching of reading in the early years and key stage 1. Consequently, there have been improvements in pupils' outcomes in reading. Attainment in reading at the end of key stage 1 in 2015 showed good improvement and was the highest for many years and much closer to the national average.
- Leaders make effective use of the additional primary sports funding. The use of expert coaches is having a positive effect in engaging pupils in sport, raising their confidence and building their self-esteem. Pupils appreciate the increase in the number of sporting competitions. There is a clear system for assessing pupils' sports-related skills and this is being used well to plan lessons that challenge pupils physically.
- Funding provided to the school to support disadvantaged pupils, pupils with disability and those who have special educational needs is used effectively and the gap between their achievement and that of others is narrowing.
- Following the previous inspection, the local authority put in place good support, including training and coaching for staff and leaders. This has had a positive effect on helping leaders to understand how they can improve. However, leaders have not always capitalised on the support provided so the impact has been somewhat limited.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Members of the interim executive board have visited the school to check on the progress of aspects of the school improvement plan, to look at work in pupils' books and to talk to pupils about their learning. They have worked closely with the headteacher to introduce a more robust system of performance management. Teachers are now set clear targets to improve the quality of teaching and to impact on the progress that the pupils make.
 - The board challenge the headteacher and hold her to account for school improvement. Members manage the school finances well and check that the funding for disadvantaged pupils is used effectively to support their progress. They understand that the performance of pupils should inform any decisions they make about pay awards for leaders and teachers.
 - Board members understand their roles and responsibilities. They have provided effective support for the headteacher during the staffing turbulence experienced by the school.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Safeguarding has a high priority in the school. Adults know the children well and cater for their individual needs with care. They ensure that children are safe and behave well. Staff child protection training is regularly updated and staff have up-to-date knowledge of protecting pupils from the dangers of radicalisation and extremism.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is not yet consistently good. Teaching in key stages 1 and 2 requires improvement because the progress that the pupils are making is variable. Although teaching has improved, inconsistencies remain across the year groups and for different groups of pupils.
- The teaching of writing is not good. Not enough attention has been paid to ensuring that pupils developed the stamina needed to write well at length. Teachers' expectations of pupils' writing in subjects other than English are not consistently high. As a result, pupils' skills in writing in different contexts are somewhat limited. Sometimes the information teachers have about pupils' differing levels of ability is not used when planning lessons. Consequently, in some lessons the work is too easy for some of the pupils and too hard for others.
- Teachers' advice to pupils about how to improve is at times too general to support good progress. Teachers set expectations for what pupils should achieve but are not making sure that these expectations have been met. Too much time is spent on what pupils already know and can do and learning does not move on quickly enough once pupils have shown that they understand what is being taught. When they are challenged appropriately by their work, pupils usually respond well and display good attitudes to learning. However, when work is too easy or learning does not move on quickly enough, pupils can sometimes become restless and they do not concentrate.
- The teaching of mathematics is improving and pupils now have more opportunities for practical work in lessons. There is a good use of resources and pupils are using their skills in an increasing number of real-life problems that deepen their understanding.
- Pupils' reading skills are improving as a result of increasingly effective teaching, including of phonics (letters and the sounds that they make). This is helping pupils to gain confidence and fluency in reading.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are strong. Teachers encourage pupils to participate in and contribute to lessons and pupils are comfortable in doing so. This practice is also effective in the 'Rainbow' room that provides for pupils who have lower self-esteem or who lack confidence.
- Teachers' work is valued by most parents. Many said that they appreciate the teachers' efforts to know their child and support their learning. One parent said, 'All staff at the school are helpful and informative and do a great job.'

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils enjoy taking responsibility for organising starts to assembly, providing peer support in English and mathematics and working as playground leaders.
- The popular breakfast club is helping pupils to make a good start to the day. Pupils enjoy their dinner times, relate well with each other and are well looked after by staff in a family atmosphere.
- Pupils are given effective support to improve their skills and self-awareness in conducting their relationships with other pupils.
- Pupils develop their awareness of e-safety through the programme of personal, social and health education. Pupils said they feel safe in school and are well looked after by the adults.
- Parents spoken to at the school gate were happy with the care and welcome provided by adults in school. One parent commented, 'The school has a friendly and welcoming feel. We feel happy that the staff do everything they can do for our child.'
- Pupils demonstrate the values of tolerance, compassion and thoughtfulness promoted in classroom displays.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Pupils say that behaviour is much better now than at times in the past and this is borne out by the school's records. However, there remain a number of pupils who do not behave well enough.
- The majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View, felt that pupils were well behaved in school.
- Most pupils listen attentively to their teachers and respond well to questioning in class. They are keen to succeed but at times the quality of their work in books, especially handwriting, shows that some could

take greater pride in their work. There are occasions when lessons are not interesting enough to hold and sustain the pupils' engagement in their work.

- Pupils are generally proud of their school and positive about it. They move around the school sensibly and use resources, such as computers, respectfully and appreciatively.
- The headteacher leads a rigorous drive to improve attendance and works very supportively with families. As a result, pupils' attendance rates have improved and now broadly match other schools nationally.
- Pupils behave well most of the time in lessons and around the school. However, occasionally when pupils' interest is not sustained in lessons, some can become distracted and lose their focus on learning.
- There are few incidents of bullying. When they have occurred, they have been resolved successfully by staff. Pupils are confident that adults will help sort out any incidents of name-calling.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- In the national tests and assessments in 2015, standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6, though improving at key stage 1, were well below average in reading, writing and mathematics overall. As a result, pupils were not well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Outcomes require improvement because although the progress of pupils in key stages 1 and 2 is now improving it is not consistently good. Instability in staffing has contributed to inconsistency in the quality of teaching. Though this has been addressed by the improvements introduced by the headteacher and the appointment of new teachers, five of whom joined in September 2015, there has not yet been enough time for these changes to impact fully on the progress that pupils are making.
- The proportion of pupils who reach the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check was below average in 2015. Reading skills are improving because of improving knowledge of teachers and teaching assistants to successfully teach phonics.
- The progress of pupils who receive support for their learning is slower than it should be. However, the knowledgeable team which supports pupils with disability and those who have special educational needs is ensuring that information about pupils' progress and attainment is shared with class teachers. This is enabling some pupils from this group to make good gains academically and personally.
- Disadvantaged pupils benefit from additional support in lessons and most make good progress. The gaps between their attainment in reading, writing and mathematics compared to other pupils nationally are closing.
- The most-able pupils receive an appropriate level of challenge in most lessons. Currently across the school, evidence in books shows that the quality of the most-able pupils' work is improving. However, not a high enough proportion are beyond the level normally expected for their age.
- Too many pupils are trailing behind in their writing and not catching up. This is because their needs are not being effectively met during lessons.

Early years provision

is good

- Children enter Nursery with skills which are below those typical for their age. They make good progress and are well prepared to enter Year 1. In 2015, the proportion of children attaining a good level of development at the end of their Reception Year improved on previous years and was in line with the national average.
- Teaching is effective because there are many opportunities for children to practise their writing, number and reading skills. Phonics activities are well matched to children's stages of development and this ensures they quickly learn and sustain early reading skills.
- Children are frequently encouraged to develop their understanding further by applying their knowledge to different or unseen words when they learn through play. They learn new skills quickly both inside and outside because activities are closely linked to each other and are at the correct level of difficulty.
- Children behave well, work together very cooperatively and take turns without being prompted by staff. This creates an atmosphere where pupils learn well from each other and develop good personal skills.
- Leadership in the early years has been effective in securing good teaching and providing an exciting, safe and secure environment. Assessments are thorough and detailed.
- Good links with parents exist and they are encouraged to share their children's achievements at home with staff in the school.

School details

Unique reference number	137071
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10008170

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	304
Appropriate authority	The interim executive board
Chair	David Milham
Headteacher	Joanne Warnock
Telephone number	01227 462 360
Website	www.stjohns-canterbury.kent.sch.uk
Email address	office@stjohns-canterbury.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	27–28 February 2014

Information about this school

- This is a larger-than-average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is average, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is much higher than average. This is additional government funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after children.
- The proportion of pupils with disability and those who have special educational needs is a little higher than average.
- The school does not meet the government’s current floor standards. These are the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- There have been many new and temporary staff in the last two years, including senior leaders.
- There is a breakfast club, managed by the school.
- There is an interim executive board set up after the previous inspection. The chair started in the autumn term.

Information about this inspection

- All classes were visited at least once, to observe teaching. Some of these visits took place with the headteacher.
- Pupils were questioned about their learning and asked what it is like to be a pupil at St John's. Pupils' workbooks were scrutinised. Pupils' conduct was observed around the school.
- Discussions were held with senior and middle leaders, five members of the interim executive board and two representatives from the local authority.
- Account was taken of the 30 responses to the online parents' questionnaire (Parent View) and information from a telephone call from a parent to Ofsted.
- The inspectors received and analysed 19 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Documents were analysed, including the school's self-evaluation statement, school development plans, the interim executive board's minutes of meetings and information about pupils' achievement.
- Safeguarding records were scrutinised.

Inspection team

Richard Blackmore, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Clementina Aina	Ofsted Inspector
Florence Olajide	Ofsted Inspector

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