

St John's Church of England Primary School

Goodwyns Road, Dorking, Surrey RH4 2LR

Inspection dates

20–21 September 2016

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

- The new headteacher, who joined the school in April 2015, has taken rapid action to tackle the failings of the predecessor school, which failed to provide a good standard of education for many years. Since his arrival, there has been a significant turnaround in the school's effectiveness. Consequently, teaching and outcomes have improved and are now good.
- Governors carry out their roles effectively by asking challenging questions of the headteacher and other leaders. They hold the staff to account for how well pupils are doing.
- Subject leaders are developing in their roles but they are in the early stages. Consequently, work to develop the teaching of subject-specific skills is in the early stages.
- Almost all pupils are making more than expected progress to catch up to where they should be. This is particularly the case for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are effective in their roles. They ensure that the majority of lessons are interesting, well organised, calm and purposeful so pupils can learn.
- Behaviour is almost always good and sometimes better.
- Leaders have successfully improved attendance, which was well below that of other schools nationally. It is now broadly average.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare are promoted well. The nurture room, play therapist and individually planned support enable pupils who have previously found school difficult, to thrive.
- The focus on improving teaching and learning in reading, writing and mathematics has ensured that many more pupils are now well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- The school provides a wide range of additional opportunities, including cooking and swimming.
- Staff at the school make sure that pupils are safe. They undertake their responsibilities well to ensure that concerns are acted upon.
- Learning about British values and other cultures is not embedded within the curriculum.
- Some pupils, including the most able, are not yet achieving as much as they could in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The academy trust supports the school effectively and oversees governance and leadership appropriately.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Enable pupils to make the same strong progress in all classes and subjects and achieve their potential by ensuring that:
 - all teachers are as effective as the best practitioners
 - teachers meet the differing needs of pupils, particularly the most able
 - pupils who are not yet working at the expected standards catch up in reading, writing and mathematics
 - pupils develop skills in other subjects, such history and geography.
- Develop leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - pupils' opportunities to understand British values and other cultures are fully embedded
 - subject leaders have the skills and understanding to drive improvements in their subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The current headteacher joined St John's in April 2015. His determination, high standards and commitment to pupils' success have brought about significant improvements in teaching, learning and progress. He, along with his deputy headteacher, has nurtured staff confidence and expertise so that they are much better equipped to meet pupils' needs and help them reach their potential.
- Leaders, teachers, support staff, governors and parents speak overwhelmingly positively about the improvements the headteacher has brought in expectations, opportunities and outcomes. Staff are whole-heartedly signed up to his vision and are just as committed as he is for the school to be the very best it can be.
- Leaders have ensured consistency in teaching approaches, expectations and management of behaviour. Checks on teaching are accurate and result in useful feedback for teachers to help them improve. Coaching and mentoring support provided by senior leaders is helping to drive improvements. This has resulted in almost all teachers remaining at the school, feeling positive about the changes and becoming more effective.
- The newly appointed subject leaders are benefiting from the same approach, although they are still developing their roles and skills.
- Pupils' progress has increased significantly and resulted in more than half the pupils catching up to the expected standard. Although there is more to do, the work pupils have produced so far this year indicates that they are making the same rapid progress.
- Leaders have understandably prioritised lessons in reading, writing and mathematics to enable pupils to catch up to at least the expected standard. To provide breadth and balance of other subjects, many are taught in subject-specific days during the year, so pupils cover the expected learning in a short time. Senior leaders rightly recognise that this approach has not resulted in pupils developing subject-specific skills, for example in history and geography. Senior leaders are working with subject leaders to drive these improvements but it is too soon to see the results of this.
- British values and other cultures are taught across the school. Years 5 and 6 visited the Houses of Parliament and all at the school vote for their own representatives on the pupil parliament. Plans are in place for pupils to visit places of worship and learn about the corresponding faiths. However, these aspects are not yet embedded within the curriculum and pupils do not have as much awareness of these as they should.
- Spiritual, moral and social development is closely linked to the faith of the school. At the time of the inspection, pupils were learning about, and reflecting on, the ways in which they demonstrate love.
- The pupils' personal, social and health development is promoted well through specific lessons and assemblies. Pupils learn about being healthy and working as part of a community; the on-site farm has provided a useful and enjoyable mechanism for developing these important skills.

- The headteacher has maximised the facilities on site to enhance provision. Consequently, all pupils are taught swimming each week and have cooking on a rota basis. They also grow vegetables and use the multi-use games area regularly. Parents are very appreciative of these opportunities for their children.
- Leaders ensure that the pupil premium funding is used very effectively to support disadvantaged pupils to manage school life and achieve as well as their peers. Teachers and parents are involved in deciding what would provide the most support, and this is kept under careful review. Consequently, there is very little difference between the achievements of disadvantaged pupils and those of others.
- The physical education and sport premium funding is used effectively to develop pupils' skills and increase teachers' expertise. Specialist coaches model lessons to the staff and build their understanding over time.
- The Good Shepherd Trust, from the diocese of Guildford, provides useful and appropriate support. An example of this is the increased focus on self-evaluation following its assessment that the school is doing well.

Governance of the school

- Governors have been through a period of change, with several new governors joining in the last two years. They have a good understanding of their roles and carry them out with rigour and commitment. At all times they are focused on achieving the best for pupils and the school.
- Governors have a thorough understanding of the progress pupils have made this year. They ask challenging questions of leaders and do not readily accept the answers they are given. This means that leaders are held to account effectively.
- Governors' visits are useful in helping them to check how well the school is doing. They are aware of school issues and review aspects of school life and provide useful feedback to the headteacher and the governing body.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All staff and governors are vigilant in carrying out their responsibilities for keeping pupils safe and reporting concerns. Training is timely and useful in ensuring that new and existing staff are confident about current practice and requirements. The weekly safeguarding meeting ensures that all concerns are shared appropriately and acted upon.
- The central staff record is detailed so that information and systems followed ensure that staff are safe to work with pupils. The school makes good use of support from outside agencies, seeking advice when appropriate.
- The trust carries out an annual audit of processes and arrangements. Although safeguarding responsibilities are clear between the trust and governing body, communication between the two is currently carried out by the headteacher.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers create a calm and purposeful learning environment and plan lessons which are interesting and appropriate for pupils.

- All teachers plan and share the intended learning for each lesson and what they aim to be achieved by the end of the lesson. This helps pupils to be clear about why they are doing the activity.
- Teaching assistants provide effective support by asking useful questions and supporting pupils to answer. However, at times, some lower ability pupils are too reliant on this support.
- Reading, including phonics, is taught well. Teachers plan lessons carefully so that pupils read letters, words and books at the right level for them. They read with an adult or carry out activities related to their book. Pupils discuss their answers and record them with care. These lessons, along with the school's work to promote reading outside the classroom, have resulted in significant improvements in pupils' phonics and reading skills.
- Writing is embedded in all subjects. Pupils are provided with plentiful opportunities to write in other subjects, as well as the explicit teaching they receive in grammar, punctuation and spelling. In pupils' books last year, the increased expectations were clear to see as standards improved over the year.
- The teaching of mathematics is slightly more variable. Work is set at different levels to meet pupils' needs and, in the best lessons, is appropriately challenging for all pupils. However, in some lessons, pupils are not moved on quite as quickly as they could be. This is particularly the case for the most able pupils.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are taught very well and make even more progress than their peers. They receive carefully tailored support to enable them to develop the specific skills they require. An example of this is the speech and language specialist, who develops a programme for each pupil, then models it to teaching assistants so they can provide daily support. Play therapy and the nurture room also meet the needs of vulnerable pupils very well. Consequently, pupils who have struggled to cope with learning and social situations have been taught to manage their emotions and behaviour successfully, so they are able to work and play alongside their peers.
- All teachers provide some challenging activities for the most able pupils, but tasks are not always sufficiently challenging or appropriately structured within the lesson. This means that these pupils do not achieve as much as they should. This is also the case for the disadvantaged most able pupils.
- There is variability in the teaching of other subjects, with some teachers meeting pupils' needs better than others. This reflects teachers' subject knowledge of the specific skills required in each area. On occasions, skills in other subjects, such as science, history and geography, are overlooked in favour of developing writing.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are proud of their school, their work and their appearance.

- Pupils learn about being healthy, and much of their work on the farm involves growing vegetables and learning how to cook them. They participate in regular exercise and the weekly swimming lessons contribute towards pupils' well-being.
- Pupils learn a great deal about keeping themselves safe. In addition to internet safety and crossing the road, the pupils have watched a series of short films in which personal safety and identity security are taught. Pupils were keen to explain in detail to inspectors how to keep safe.
- Breaktimes and lunchtimes are well organised and appropriately supervised. Pupils are encouraged to play games and develop physical skills, such as skipping and tennis.
- Pupils say that bullying rarely occurs 'because we are a caring school.' However, all pupils we spoke to felt that they could approach staff and leaders if they were worried about anything.
- Pupils enjoy winning the attendance and punctuality bears: Sam (School Attendance Matters) and Pam (Punctuality Also Matters), which have proved very successful in encouraging pupils to be in school on time. As a result of these, and rigorous tracking and follow up of absence, attendance has improved significantly and is now in line with that of other schools nationally.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils conduct themselves well in lessons and around the school. Occasionally, pupils behave less well when lessons do not meet their needs well enough.
- Pupils are well mannered and polite, holding doors open for each other and for adults.
- Pupils show respect towards, and support for, each other. They work well with their peers and take turns, whether in play or work activities.
- Records of incidents are checked regularly and analysed so that leaders know where further improvements can be made. This has resulted in a reduction in the number of behavioural incidents.
- The percentage of fixed-term exclusions has reduced this year and no pupils were excluded more than once. This reflects the improved consistency in managing behaviour.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Almost all pupils are making more progress than expected and are catching up rapidly to where they should be.
- The percentage of children who reached a good level of development in the early years was much higher than in previous years and is well above the national percentage last year. Improvements in the teaching of phonics have resulted in similarly positive results.

- Historically, results at key stages 1 and 2 have been significantly below those of other schools nationally. In the 2016 national assessments, approximately two thirds of pupils achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics. Due to changes in assessment, the school is not able to compare itself accurately with other schools nationally; however, in comparison with local schools, pupils at St John's have done well.
- Almost all pupils have made excellent progress from the beginning of 2016 in reading, writing and mathematics. Where this was not the case, for example in reading in one key stage 2 class, this was identified quickly and effective action was taken. These pupils are now making the same rapid progress as other pupils did last year.
- Work in books is of a good standard. It is well presented and, in the majority of classes, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve, are high. Mathematics books are particularly well presented and care is taken to ensure that work is organised and clear.
- The most able pupils are making similar progress to other pupils. Leaders recognise that, by meeting these pupils' needs more fully, achievement could be higher.
- Across the school, disadvantaged pupils are making rapid progress. In approximately half the classes, where the teaching is most effective, this group is catching up to the expected standard more rapidly than their peers. In the other classes, they are progressing at the same rate as other pupils. However, as with the other most able pupils, although the disadvantaged most able pupils are making good progress, there is more to do for them to achieve their potential.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making very good progress so that the differential between them and their peers is diminishing. This reflects the high-quality support and well-planned interventions provided.
- In some other areas of the curriculum achievements are not as good as in reading, writing and mathematics. Although other subjects are taught regularly, the reading and writing skills have tended to be prioritised over the specific subject skills. Sensibly, leaders and teachers have already begun work to improve this but it is too early to see the outcome.

Early years provision

Good

- Teaching is effective and enables children to make very good progress from often low starting points. Activities are well organised, interesting and fun for children, so they concentrate well and play for sustained periods of time.
- The staff ask useful questions and help children to develop their thinking and explain their thoughts.
- Children are very well cared for and kept safe. Teachers and teaching assistants get to know the children quickly and use their interests to support learning. The relationships with parents are very positive and parents say that they feel able to raise any concerns.
- Children have opportunities to develop their physical skills but these opportunities are not as readily available as leaders would like. Their plans to extend the area and improve access to equipment are positive.

- Although some of the children had only been in the nursery for three weeks, they demonstrated confidence and independence, both of which are promoted explicitly by the staff.
- The headteacher is currently leading the early years to ensure that provision is good. The Nursery and Reception classes are now set to build on the improvements he has made.

School details

Unique reference number	139721
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10019839

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	206
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Draper
Headteacher	Mark Richards
Telephone number	01306 884506
Website	www.stjohnsdorking.uk
Email address	info@stjohnsdorking.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- St John’s Church of England Primary School became an academy in November 2013, under the Good Shepherd Trust, led by the Diocese of Guildford.
- There is one class in each year group, including a Nursery and a Reception class. Until recently the classes have been very small. As the school is becoming increasingly popular, the younger classes are full.
- Just under half the pupils at the school are eligible for the pupil premium. This is much higher than other schools across the country.
- The percentage of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is also very high at over a third.
- Since the last inspection of the predecessor school, interim headteachers have led the school prior to the appointment of the current headteacher.
- The school provides a breakfast and after-school club.
- The Nursery provides morning or afternoon sessions for 20 children.

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 12 lessons, most of which were with senior leaders. Inspectors also made a number of shorter visits to classes. They looked at pupils' work in books and around the school.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, other senior and middle leaders, a group of staff and members of the governing body, including the chair. The lead inspector also met with the chief executive officer of the academy trust and an adviser.
- Pupils' opinions were gathered through meetings with different groups of pupils and through informal conversations at lunch- and playtime.
- Inspectors took account of parents' views through the 45 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and through the 84 written responses. The 30 staff responses to the Ofsted staff survey were also considered.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of school documentation, including the school's information on pupils' progress, the school improvement plan, minutes of governors' meetings and documents related to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Louise Adams, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Mo Galway

Ofsted Inspector

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Manchester
M1 2WD

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