

Inspection of a good school: St John's Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School, Lemsford

Lemsford Village, St John's C of E Primary School, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire AL8 7TR

Inspection date:

4 May 2023

Outcome

St John's Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School, Lemsford continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils like attending this happy and friendly school. Staff and pupils have secure and warm relationships and they show respect for one another. Pupils learn to be considerate of others. Some older pupils explained that at St John's 'we accept everyone'. Pupils have a self-confidence that comes from feeling valued. Pupils feel safe at this school.

Leaders and teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and attitudes. Most pupils behave well. They understand that this is important as it helps everyone to learn. Occasionally, a few pupils lack full engagement in some of their lessons. Bullying is infrequent and if it does occur, pupils know that staff will help them stop it.

Pupils enjoy all aspects of learning and they learn a broad range of subjects. Although a few subjects are still in the stages of being changed and fully implemented.

Older pupils have developed a sense of their worth and the value of their opinions, such as when talking about what is right and wrong. Pupils take part in jobs that help them to develop their understanding of British values, for instance being part of the school council and eco-council. Pupils are well-prepared for the next stage of their education.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have planned a logical curriculum in all subjects, from Reception to year 6. Generally, teachers have secure subject knowledge and can explain tasks well to pupils. Pupils understand what to do and try their hardest. Teachers check pupils' understanding during lessons and address any misconceptions immediately. In most subjects, pupils remember well what they have learned and can make connections with other subjects. However, in a few subjects, pupils do not develop their skills and deepen their learning as

much as they might. For instance, teachers do not make sure pupils link what they are learning now with what they have learned in the past, or the curriculum is not challenging enough to ensure pupils learn as much as they could.

Children in the early years get off to a good start. Staff are ambitious and understand well what children need to learn to be prepared for key stage 1. Children's language is developed well through carefully thought-out activities and purposeful interactions with well-trained staff. They enjoy and are highly engaged in learning activities that help to develop their independence and social skills.

Pupils enjoy reading a wide variety of books from different genres and cultures. They are able to explain what they like to read and why. Younger children learn to read and write as soon as they start in Reception. Pupils learn to recall past learning, learn new sounds, and blend these sounds to read unfamiliar words. Some of these approaches need further embedding to make sure that reading is taught the same way across all classes. Pupils in key stage 2 who are not yet fluent readers have catch-up sessions. Pupils read books that match their phonics knowledge. This is important as it means pupils can read fluently, independently and confidently. When pupils can read books by themselves, they look proud and happy.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported. Adults who work one-to-one with pupils are skilled and well trained. This means that pupils' barriers to learning are reduced and they can learn the same curriculum as their peers. Most pupils with SEND achieve well.

Pupils are calm and well behaved. They show a kind and caring attitude to all others and are a credit to the school. A few pupils occasionally show less focus during whole class learning times. These pupils do not disrupt others and they are quickly refocused.

Pupils enjoy all their learning and particularly enjoy all the clubs and wider development opportunities on offer. These help to develop their interests and talents. Pupils with school jobs take these seriously. They diligently carry out their roles with and without adult guidance.

The school has a new leadership team and they have worked hard to develop positive relationships with all stakeholders. Leaders and governors work closely together. They share the same vision for the school and are already having a positive impact on the areas they feel need to be developed. Staff feel that leaders and governors are considerate of their well-being and workload, including enabling leaders to plan subjects together, as teachers have many roles in this small school. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Governors and leaders make sure that all safer recruitment procedures are completed.

Some leaders, who are new to the school, have made a concerted effort to build close relationships with the pupils and their families. This helps leaders to consider the whole family when keeping pupils safe.

Staff have been trained to recognise signs of harm and specifically to help all pupils to communicate how they are feeling and any worries they have.

Pupils learn about how to keep safe in the community and online. They have lessons that help them decide what to do in difficult situations.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, the curriculum is not developed enough to enable teachers to make secure links with past knowledge and skills or to consistently provide pupils with opportunities to challenge themselves. This means that sometimes pupils are not sure how their current learning links to past learning, and, occasionally, they practise skills they are already proficient in. Leaders need to ensure that subject plans are carefully constructed to make connections with past learning and to help teachers make adaptations to planning so pupils can deepen their knowledge in every lesson.
- In reading, not all teachers use the same consistent approaches. This means that some pupils do not embed the knowledge they need as well as others. Leaders need to ensure that all teachers use the programme in the same way, to make sure all pupils learn the same content.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in March 2018.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	117435
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10286250
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	100
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Carrie Shannon
Headteacher	Michelle Boylan
Website	www.stjohns561.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	1 March 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has a Christian religious character. The school's most recent section 48 inspection took place in May 2019. The school's next section 48 inspection will be within eight school years.
- Leaders do not currently use any alternative provision.
- Other than Reception class, the pupils in the school learn in mixed-age classes. The published admission number for each year group is 15.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, who is also the designated safeguarding leader. The lead inspector spoke with some members of the governing body. The inspectors met with a range of staff.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in three subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject

leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- The inspectors spoke to leaders, viewed a range of documents and information, including minutes of governing body meetings, school policies, and documentation and records relating to safeguarding.
- The 84 responses and 62 free-text responses made by parents to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, were considered. The inspector also considered the 17 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Jessie Linsley, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Michele Geddes

Ofsted Inspector

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