

St John's Catholic Primary School

Blackbridge Lane, Horsham, West Sussex RH12 1RR

Inspection dates

7–8 March 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher joined the school at the end of an unsettled period, during which outcomes dipped sharply. Her determined leadership and commitment to raise standards have resulted in substantial improvements across the school. Senior leaders are a strong and effective team.
- St John's is a school founded on caring, respectful relationships. The well-being of pupils is at the heart of the school's work. All staff embrace their responsibility to ensure that pupils are safe and well cared for.
- Pupils' behaviour around school and in lessons is impeccable. Pupils are thoughtful, kind and friendly to adults and to each other.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved considerably and is now good. Staff have strong subject knowledge which enables pupils to learn well.
- Governors provide strong leadership for the school. They provide the right balance of support and challenge for leaders.
- Morale among staff is very high. People enjoy working at the school and are proud to be part of the team.
- Children get off to a good start in the early years. Most are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- This is a highly inclusive school where cultural diversity is celebrated. Pupils have a clear appreciation of other cultures and issues such as fair trade.
- Pupils currently in the school are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are mostly making good progress. Staff understand the challenges they face and provide suitable support.
- Senior leaders do not have a readily accessible way of tracking the progress of groups of pupils across the school. This prevents them from quickly identifying groups who are achieving well, or who are at risk of falling behind.
- Too few most-able children achieve the higher standards at the end of early years, especially in writing.
- Pupils in Years 5 and 6 take great pride in the presentation of their work. However, further down the school pupils' handwriting is inconsistent, and this results in some untidy presentation.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen leadership and management by sharpening systems for tracking the progress of groups of pupils, so that leaders and governors have a detailed understanding of how well different groups of pupils are progressing across the school.
- Improve outcomes in the early years so that a greater proportion of children achieve the higher standards of which they are capable, by:
 - ensuring that adults regularly challenge the children during independent play and exploration to make greater demands on them and accelerate their progress
 - providing more opportunities for children to write, especially the most able.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - developing a whole-school, consistent approach to teaching handwriting
 - ensuring that all adults have consistently high expectations about the way pupils present their work.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher joined the school when it was at a low ebb, after a long, unsettled period during which outcomes for pupils had fallen. She wasted no time in successfully tackling weaknesses in the quality of teaching and learning. As a result, the school has flourished under her leadership. Parents and carers, staff and pupils all agree that this is true. One parent said that the headteacher has 'motivated both staff and students to make the school a really positive, safe learning environment'.
- Leaders, staff and governors are united in their ambition for the school. All strive to provide an education that enables pupils to achieve the very best of which they are capable. Leaders regularly seek external support and validation for their work, because the school is outward-looking and on a continual drive for improvement.
- Morale among staff is very high. People enjoy working at the school and are proud to be part of the team. All who inspectors spoke to and those who completed the staff questionnaire agreed that this was true. One commented, 'I wouldn't work anywhere else.'
- Senior leaders place a strong emphasis on communicating with parents so that all know what is happening in the school. Leaders have used social media to good effect to share pupils' successes and keep parents up to date with news and forthcoming events. The overwhelming majority of parents are extremely positive about the school and the way that leaders keep them informed.
- Middle leaders are clear about their roles and responsibilities within the school. The leaders of mathematics and English have successfully introduced new approaches to raise standards in their subjects. They check regularly to ensure that these changes are having the desired effect on improving outcomes for pupils, and make adjustments when needed.
- The deputy headteacher recently took over responsibility as the SEN coordinator. She has raised expectations of what pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities can achieve. All staff now embrace their responsibility to ensure that these pupils make good progress from their starting points. Leaders regularly enlist the support of external agencies where needed.
- Staff benefit from a range of professional development opportunities that allow them to develop their skills to develop professionally, including as leaders of subjects. Leaders provide effective support for newly qualified teachers, who get off to a strong start in their career.
- The curriculum provides pupils with a range of interesting and engaging learning opportunities. Inspectors particularly admired pupils' work to do with fair trade and the social and cultural issues raised by this topic. Attractive, meticulously presented displays around the school showcase work from across the wider curriculum, including art, history and religious education. The curriculum caters well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

- The sport premium is put to good use. The 'daily mile' encourages the habit of daily exercise and some pupils now take part in a local park run at the weekend. Training for staff has improved their confidence in teaching gymnastics and football.
- Leaders ensure that the pupil premium is spent effectively. Disadvantaged pupils in the school are mostly making more rapid progress than their classmates, except where they have more complex needs. This is diminishing the difference between their attainment and that of other pupils in the school.
- Diversity is celebrated and embraced and, as a result, this is a highly inclusive school. Pupils from all backgrounds and cultures are treated equally, with kindness and respect. Some pupils who speak English as an additional language have been trained as 'young interpreters' so that they can support younger pupils who speak the same language. One pupil recently conducted a tour of the school in Greek for prospective parents.
- The local authority and diocese have supported the school effectively, including during the unsettled period in 2016. They know the school well, and have played an important role in enabling leaders to bring about much-needed improvements.
- Senior leaders understand the strengths of the school and are clear about the areas that they are targeting for improvement. They draw their knowledge of the school from a range of sources to ensure that they have an accurate view. However, the system for tracking pupils' progress does not allow leaders to have a readily available, comprehensive view of the progress that different groups of pupils are making across the school. This restricts their ability to evaluate the impact of their actions in detail, and make any necessary adjustments to accelerate improvements further.

Governance of the school

- The strong leadership by governors has steered the school through an unsettled time when the school was without a permanent headteacher. Governors showed courage and determination to appoint the right person, even when it meant waiting when they were unable to find a suitable candidate.
- Governors have an accurate understanding of the main strengths and areas for improvement for the school. They draw from a range of sources of information when reaching their view, including regular visits to the school. Minutes of governors' meetings provide clear evidence of the right balance of support and challenge that they provide for senior leaders.
- Governors have a suitable range of skills and expertise that equip them well to support the headteacher and offer the right level of challenge. They have a clear understanding of their strategic role in holding leaders to account. Governors have wisely stepped back from the more operational role that they felt they had to take in the absence of a permanent headteacher.
- Responsibilities for keeping children safe are well understood by governors, who carry out important checks to do with health and safety, and safeguarding.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The well-being of pupils is at the heart of the school's work, so all staff embrace their responsibility to ensure that pupils are safe and well cared for.
- Senior leaders provide regular training and updates so that all adults in the school recognise the signs that may indicate that a pupil may be at risk. All are fully acquainted with the latest advice about safeguarding pupils. Staff understand the importance of recording all concerns promptly and accurately.
- Policies are up to date and comply with the latest guidance. The office manager takes great care to make sure that only suitable people can work in the school and records these checks carefully and thoroughly.
- Leaders work well with external agencies to ensure that vulnerable pupils are taken care of. A senior leader attends all relevant meetings and case conferences, ensuring that the right support is put in place. Where the headteacher deems that these agencies are not offering enough support, she challenges them relentlessly until the right support is provided. As a result, pupils who are at risk are safeguarded and find greater stability so that they can make better progress in school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved considerably since the headteacher joined the school, because she has made this her chief priority. New approaches to the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics have all been introduced successfully. Senior leaders have ensured that where new initiatives have been introduced they have been accompanied by the right training for teachers and learning assistants.
- Teachers and learning assistants have strong subject knowledge that enables pupils to acquire knowledge securely and to build and apply their skills, including in reading, writing and mathematics. This subject knowledge enables staff to introduce some quite complex terminology so that pupils are equipped with the right tools for learning.
- Pupils say that they enjoy lessons because staff make learning enjoyable and interesting. Several pupils talked enthusiastically about lessons that they had particularly enjoyed recently, including one where pupils built a pyramid out of custard-cream biscuits.
- Lessons are well organised and very little time is wasted. Everyone understands the consistently applied procedures for routines such as collecting books, and for pupils moving from the carpet to their desks. This results in calm, purposeful classrooms.
- Leaders have ensured that there are consistent procedures and policies in place for the teaching of writing. Staff have received training to provide them with the skills needed to provide lessons that interest pupils and teach them how to write accurately and in an engaging style. Teachers model writing effectively and develop pupils' skills thoroughly so that pupils are very clear about what they need to do to be successful.

- Pupils enjoy reading, and grow to become enthusiastic, knowledgeable readers. One Year 6 pupil said they 'really enjoy reading'. Older pupils can discuss different authors and explain their preferences. Pupils are in the habit of reading at home and value the way that it helps to extend their vocabulary as well as stretching their imagination. One girl explained how reading helps her to be a better writer. Younger pupils are also keen to read. Most read regularly, and this helps them to develop fluency and expression. Pupils are confident to tackle unfamiliar words because they know how to apply the skills they have learned in phonics sessions.
- Pupils achieve well in mathematics because teachers plan sequences of lessons to enable them to learn and practise new skills. Teachers also provide opportunities for pupils to apply these skills in solving challenging problems. Staff make sure that the most able pupils have activities to offer stretch and challenge and which require them to reason mathematically. However, occasionally teachers do not move these pupils on to more demanding work quickly enough.
- Presentation of work in Years 5 and 6 shows that pupils take pride in their work. However, lower down the school pupils need to develop better skills in handwriting to improve this aspect of their work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. One parent said, 'The school is full of love.' This caring atmosphere envelops the pupils, who all said they feel safe and secure. All parents and staff who expressed an opinion echoed this view.
- Mutually respectful relationships lie at the heart of this school. Pupils respect each other and adults. Pupils have complete confidence and trust that adults are there to support them. Older pupils, the 'guardian angels', look out for younger pupils.
- Pupils listen attentively in class and try their best. They have a clear understanding of what they need to do to succeed, and rise to the challenge enthusiastically. These positive attitudes to learning help pupils make good progress.
- Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe, including when online, where they are clear about the risks and how to avoid them. Pupils learn about a range of safety topics, such as hazardous substances, as well as how to stay healthy. They enjoy using the 'mile a day' track, which encourages pupils to take regular physical exercise.
- Pupils struggle to remember any incidents of bullying, and are confident there is none in school. However, they are well prepared to counter any such behaviour and report it appropriately, secure in the knowledge that it would be nipped in the bud.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils' conduct in class and around the school, including at lunchtime and free times, is exemplary. They consistently observe the well-established routines, which set high expectations for behaviour.
- Pupils have good manners, holding doors and standing aside for others to pass, often offering visitors a cheerful greeting or welcome.
- Instances of bad behaviour are very rare. Pupils who come to the school with challenging behaviour are well managed so that their behaviour improves quickly.
- The overwhelming majority of parents and all staff agree that pupils behave well. One parent commented, 'All the children at school are very well behaved and have good manners.' She said this based on her observations of pupils on the playground at the start and end of the school day.
- Senior leaders have successfully promoted the importance of good attendance and punctuality. As a result, attendance is above the national average, including for disadvantaged pupils. The proportion of pupils who arrive late for school has dropped dramatically in the last year.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- School achievement information, confirmed by evidence in pupils' books, indicates that most pupils across all year groups are currently making good progress and working at the standard expected for their age, particularly in reading and mathematics and, increasingly, in writing.
- Outcomes at the end of key stage 2 in 2016 were much lower than those seen nationally in writing and mathematics. Pupils made very slow progress. However, last year rates of progress accelerated sharply in reading, writing and mathematics because of rapid improvements in the quality of teaching. Consequently, proportions of pupils achieving the expected standards in reading and mathematics were well above the national average in 2017. Numbers of pupils achieving the higher standard in mathematics and reading were considerably higher than those seen nationally.
- At the end of key stage 1 in 2017, the percentage of pupils achieving age-related expectations in reading and mathematics was in line with national figures. The proportion achieving expectations in writing was above the national average.
- Over time, outcomes in writing, particularly for boys, have not been as strong as in reading and mathematics. Leaders are very aware of this and have adapted the curriculum to provide boys with subjects that interest them and capture their imagination. For current pupils, there is clear evidence that the rates of progress are increasing and standards are rising.
- Historically, outcomes for the small number of disadvantaged pupils across the school have been variable. However, leaders are now beginning to track these pupils' progress and are ensuring that the right support is in place. As a result, there is evidence that these pupils are making faster progress from their starting points.

- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are making increasingly good progress from their starting points. Leaders have sharpened systems for identifying and meeting these pupils' needs. Teachers monitor pupils' progress carefully and adapt support and intervention according to need.
- Pupils are successful at learning phonics. Outcomes in the Year 1 phonics check dipped in 2017, but leaders have convincing evidence for the reasons underlying this. Pupils currently in Year 1 are making good progress in learning phonics. Pupils who have not mastered phonics by the end of Year 1 quickly catch up. In 2017, all pupils had achieved the expected standard by the end of Year 2.

Early years provision

Good

- Children get off to a good start in the early years. In 2017, the proportion of children who achieved a good level of development was above the national average. Most children are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Many children in the current cohort had low starting points on entry to school. Leaders have ensured that good teaching and effective interventions have supported children well, especially those with speech and language difficulties. As a result, children are making good progress. Numbers on track to achieve a good level of development are in line with those seen nationally.
- Children are attentive and keen to learn. They respond quickly to instructions, so no time is wasted moving between activities. Children get on well with each other and learn to share and take turns. When an activity interests them, they can concentrate for quite long periods of time.
- Children learn well. Adults provide interesting activities for children, often in small groups, which enable them to acquire the early skills of reading, writing and mathematics. Staff offer effective guidance to children in these groups, enabling them to acquire new skills and knowledge.
- Adults ensure that the environment is safe and children know how to keep themselves safe. For example, children respect boundaries and do not go out of the gate to retrieve their ball. All other aspects of safeguarding are thorough and effective.
- The early years staff visit nurseries that feed into the school to help children's transition and school readiness. As a result, children settle into school quickly.
- Parents are happy with the start their children receive in Reception. Staff encourage parents to be involved in children's learning. The classroom is open for the first 10 minutes of each day so that parents can share in children's learning. At the end of children's first half term in school, leaders arrange for a meeting with parents to explain the school's approach to teaching children in the early years. This includes helping parents to understand how they can support children's learning at home.
- Leaders have a broadly accurate view of the provision and have identified that more needs to be done to ensure that most-able children achieve the higher standards, especially in writing. Senior leaders have rightly provided recent training for the class teacher to support these developments.

- Children have opportunities to access all areas of learning, both inside and in the small outdoor area. However, staff do not routinely offer enough guidance for all children, especially the most able, to make the most of independent activities and take the next step forward in their learning.
- Staff do not provide enough opportunities for independent writing. The most able children are not challenged to achieve the high standards they should in writing.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 126039 |
| Local authority | West Sussex |
| Inspection number | 10040719 |

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

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| 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 | 193 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Deirdre Nash |
| Headteacher | Toria Bono |
| Telephone number | 01403 265447 |
| Website | www.stjohnshorsham.school |
| Email address | head@stjohnshorsham.school |
| Date of previous inspection | 7–8 November 2013 |

Information about this school

- St John’s Catholic Primary School is a smaller-than-average primary school. There are seven classes, one for each year group.
- The headteacher joined the school in September 2016 after a year in which there had been three temporary headteachers.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is similar to that seen in other schools across the country.
- Most pupils are White British. However, there are several groups of pupils from different ethnic minorities. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above that seen nationally.

- The school met the government's floor standards in 2017, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors had several meetings with the headteacher and senior leaders about various aspects of the school’s performance, including leaders’ self-evaluation of the school and how well pupils are currently achieving.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of governors, three other governors, and the clerk to the governors. He also met with a representative of the local authority and a representative of the local diocese.
- Inspectors observed learning in all classes. Almost all observations were undertaken jointly with the headteacher. Inspectors observed an assembly.
- Inspectors conducted a scrutiny of pupils’ work with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. They looked at a range of pupils’ work across the curriculum from all year groups and all attainment levels. Work included that of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- Inspectors met with several senior and middle leaders, including those responsible for mathematics, English, the early years and SEN provision.
- The inspectors listened to pupils read and talked to a group of them about school life. They also met pupils on the playground and observed behaviour at free times around the school.
- An inspector held a meeting with a group of staff. Conversations were had with several staff members throughout the inspection.
- Inspectors took account of the 49 responses to Parent View, the online questionnaire, and the 36 written comments that were submitted. Responses from 20 staff were also considered.
- Inspectors met with parents at the start of the day.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documents, including those recording the work of the governors, and the single central record of checks on people who work at the school. They examined information on pupils’ current progress, and scrutinised the school’s safeguarding procedures.

Inspection team

Bruce Waelend, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Amanda Gard

Ofsted Inspector

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