

St John's Primary School

St John's Road, Wallingford OX10 9AG

Inspection dates

3–4 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	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils' progress is too variable. Achievement is stronger in some subjects and classes than others because teaching is not consistently good.
- Progress in mathematics is not rapid enough to enable pupils to achieve well in Key Stage 2. For the past two years, pupils have not made as much progress as others nationally.
- Leaders and governors are not sufficiently focused on ensuring that changes to teaching and learning increase pupils' progress. Improvement plans are not specific enough.
- Not all teachers have high enough expectations for pupils. Sometimes, pupils are not given challenging work to complete. Consequently, they do not make as much progress as they should.
- Teachers do not always make the best use of lesson time. Tasks are not always well matched to pupils' learning needs. Some opportunities to further pupils' learning are missed.
- Children in the early years provision do not make good enough progress across the curriculum to achieve well. Children's development in writing is weaker than other areas of learning because they do not have enough opportunities to write.
- In the early years provision, adults do not intervene and develop children's learning often enough. Children are not challenged to quickly take the next steps in their learning.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher is dedicated and determined to secure improvements to teaching and learning. Staff work well together to support her aims.
- Pupils are caring and well mannered. They behave well in class and around the school.
- Pupils are positive, confident and proud of their school. Personal development is a strength of St John's.
- The curriculum is extensive and engaging. As a result, pupils enjoy learning.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the leadership, management and governance of the school by ensuring that all leaders and governors:
 - set high expectations for pupils' achievement
 - refine improvement plans so that they have specific actions and clear timescales, and are sufficiently focused on improving pupils' outcomes
 - rigorously measure the impact of their work on pupils' progress.

- Improve outcomes by:
 - ensuring that teaching is consistently good or better in all subjects and year groups
 - challenging all pupils, including children in the Reception class
 - making effective use of time in lessons, including ensuring that there are sufficient opportunities for children in the early years provision to practise their writing.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- The headteacher is determined to secure a wide-ranging education for the pupils in her care. She has established strong relationships with staff, parents and pupils. Everyone is working together to implement many changes to the school. Governors, parents and staff are positive about the headteacher's dedicated leadership.
- Senior leaders and middle leaders regularly check pupils' progress and use this information to identify developments to teaching and learning. Leaders have created detailed improvement plans that set out many actions. However, these plans are not specific enough and there are no timescales to enable leaders to see whether their plans are on track. Furthermore, plans are not sufficiently focused on raising pupils' achievement. As a result, leaders are not able to explain the impact of their actions.
- Governors have sought to prioritise improvements to the quality of teaching. This year, they have made provision for the assistant headteacher to focus on providing personalised support to teachers. Teachers have received some training and appraisal targets linked closely to these aims. However, it is too early to see the impact of this work.
- Both senior and middle leaders carry out regular checks on teaching and learning. Teachers receive feedback and some next steps to develop their practice. Checks on teaching and learning relate to the areas that the school is seeking to improve. For example, leaders have made a number of changes to the way that mathematics is taught, and therefore, leaders have looked at pupils' mathematics books and observed mathematics lessons. Nevertheless, there is no evidence yet to show how this has improved pupils' learning.
- Last year, pupil premium spending focused on meeting pupils' pastoral needs. This year, leaders are seeking to increase disadvantaged pupils' achievement by providing additional, individual lessons. Current information shows that disadvantaged pupils are making similar progress to their classmates in reading and mathematics. These lessons have not yet raised achievement in writing. The pupil premium is now spent effectively.
- The assistant headteacher has made some effective changes to phonics lessons. Teachers now carry out regular checks on pupils' learning and use this information to provide support to those who are at risk of falling behind. The expectations for pupils' learning in phonics are higher and time is better used than in the past. Consequently, pupils' achievement in phonics is improving.
- The curriculum is extensive and interesting for pupils. Learning across the range of subjects is based around a topic. Each topic starts with a 'wow' event. For example, pupils in Year 3 and Year 4 learn about the 'rolling stone age'. This started with shelter building and included a visit to Stonehenge. Other events such as a French day and art week provide further enrichment. Almost all pupils enjoy learning as a result.
- The school's values help to support pupils' social, moral, cultural and spiritual development. Every fortnight, a different value is revisited. Learning about trust helps pupils to further their social, moral and spiritual development. Teachers also use this to teach British values. For example, tolerance is one of the school's values. Leaders have provided pupils with opportunities to learn about other faiths such as Islam. Pupils visited a mosque and created Islamic patterns on tiles. Through topics such as this, teachers are able to develop pupils' cultural understanding and promote discussion and equality. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The additional sports funding is spent well. A dedicated sports coach works alongside teachers and has increased their confidence in teaching in physical education lessons. Funding is also used to provide extra-curricular activities, including hockey, multi-skills, gymnastics, dance and cricket. Consequently, participation in sports activities has increased.
- The OPEN Trust provides some support to leaders. There are opportunities to share practice and provide training for staff. Senior leaders and governors have appreciated help with their improvement priorities such as phonics and mathematics.
- The headteacher has strengthened links between school and home. Parents are regularly invited into school to share learning and find out about the curriculum. The very large majority of parents feel that they receive valuable information about their child's learning.

■ The governance of the school

- Governors have some understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They have recently started to review pupils' progress information in greater detail. However, governors do not use this information to rigorously check the impact of leaders' work to improve pupils' outcomes.
 - Governors have oversight of their duties. They receive regular reports to ensure that safeguarding is effective and check how leaders spend pupil premium funding. Governors are regular visitors and are actively involved in school life.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The headteacher promotes a culture of vigilance and ensures that staff receive regular training. As a result, staff know what to do if they are concerned about a pupil. Appropriate action is taken to help keep pupils safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment **requires improvement**

- Teaching is not yet consistently good throughout the school, and therefore, not enough pupils are making good progress. Rates of progress vary across classes and subjects.
- Not all teachers set high expectations for pupils' progress. Teachers do not always provide pupils with tasks that are challenging enough. As a result, some pupils are not achieving as well as they should.
- Teachers do not always match tasks well enough to pupils' learning needs. Sometimes, tasks are too complex and teaching assistants have to endeavour to explain them. In some lessons, teachers do not allow pupils to start activities quickly enough, or they miss opportunities to develop pupils' reading, writing and mathematical skills. In these instances, valuable learning time is wasted and pupils do not make as much progress as they should.
- Pupils' writing books show that expectations of pupils, and opportunities to write, vary across different year groups. As a result, pupils' progress in writing varies across the school. In the best examples, pupils have frequent opportunities to write at length and for a range of reasons. For example, in Year 6, pupils wrote detailed explanations of the digestive system.
- In some classes, pupils experience effective mathematics lessons that develop their problem-solving and reasoning skills. Teachers present pupils with challenging tasks and ask them to 'prove it'. For example, in a Year 3 lesson, pupils were asked to decide whether every number ending in three was in the three times table. Pupils confidently explained their thinking using mathematical vocabulary such as multiple. Consequently, pupils in these classes show that they can apply their mathematics well to a range of problems and enjoy such challenges. One pupil said, 'I love it!'.
- In phonics lessons, teachers and teaching assistants demonstrate good subject knowledge. They use this to make sure that pupils pronounce sounds correctly and to support their early writing. For example, in a Key Stage 1 phonics lesson, the teaching assistant helped pupils to read words with the 'soft s' sound by showing pupils to break it into 'sound buttons'. As a result, all pupils were involved in the lesson and showed that they could read these 'tricky' words.
- Teaching assistants provide effective support to pupils. For example, in a Year 5 mathematics lesson, the teaching assistant quickly identified that some pupils with special educational needs were confusing addition with subtraction. The teaching assistant worked with the pupils to help them recognise their mistake and enabled them to complete the task. Through careful questioning and explanations, teaching assistants reshape tasks and facilitate pupils' learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Across the school, pupils are caring and supportive of each other. This was evident in 'JACS', the school's breakfast and after-school club. In the breakfast club, pupils of all ages were working together on the computer. Pupils are also keen to share their learning with friends, teachers and visitors. There is a strong emphasis on personal development at St John's.

- Pupils are proud of their school, confident and keen to contribute to improvement work. There is an active school council and the eco-council is seeking to make the school more environmentally friendly. Through elections that include an experience of a polling station and opportunities to share different points of view, pupils are supported to understand democracy and freedom of speech.
- Almost all parents feel that their child is safe, happy and well cared for at school. Most pupils feel safe. Although a very few pupils feel that sometimes others are unkind, pupils are confident that adults will help them if they have a problem. Pupils have a good understanding of bullying and some of the different types such as racist bullying.
- Pupils have plenty of regular opportunities to learn about safety. They know how to stay safe online. Very recently, the 'life bus' visited the school and pupils had the chance to learn how to make smart choices about their health and personal safety. All pupils have frequent personal, social, health and economic education lessons. The school rightly recognises that it has an important part to play in promoting well-being for life.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- In most classes and lessons, pupils display positive attitudes to learning. On a few occasions, pupils were more easily distracted and lost focus. This was because teachers' expectations of their behaviour were not high enough or tasks were not well matched to their learning needs.
- Pupils behave well around the school. At the end of breaktimes, pupils line up in an orderly fashion and walk quietly into class. Pupils show good manners. For example, they hold doors open for each other and adults. As a result, the school is calm and orderly.
- Staff work well with parents to support pupils who have challenging behaviour. As a result, incidents of poor behaviour are reducing over time. There have been no exclusions for the past three years.
- Pupils' attendance is above the national average. Leaders have provided challenge and support to the families of pupils who had high levels of absence last year. As a result, attendance for this group of pupils is now as high as that of others.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Outcomes require improvement because the progress of pupils is too variable. In some year groups and subjects, pupils are not achieving well enough, reflecting variations in the quality of teaching. Some groups of pupils are not making as much progress as their classmates.
- Progress in mathematics in Key Stage 2 is not rapid enough to enable pupils to achieve as well as they should. In 2014 and 2015, not enough pupils made sufficient progress and reached the standards expected at the end of Year 6. Current information shows that the proportion of pupils making good progress in mathematics is variable. Pupils in Key Stage 1 are making better progress than those in Key Stage 2.
- For the past three years, at the end of the Reception Year, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development has been below the national average.
- Rates of progress for vulnerable pupils vary. Pupils with special educational needs or disability make better progress in mathematics than they do in reading and writing. Information from other checks on pupils' learning shows that these pupils are making small steps of progress in reading and writing. Disadvantaged pupils are making less progress than their classmates in writing. In mathematics and reading, rates of progress are similar to those of others. The small numbers of disadvantaged pupils in each year group make it difficult to compare their attainment with that of their classmates.
- In the Year 1 phonics check in 2015, the proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard fell and was below the national average. Over the last three years, achievement in the phonics check has fluctuated. Leaders have recognised this and made some important changes to phonics lessons. Consequently, most children in the Reception class, and the majority in Year 1, are now achieving the standards expected for their age. Almost all the pupils in Year 2 who did not meet the expected standard in 2015 are making much better progress in phonics. Current pupils' achievement in reading is stronger than in mathematics and writing across the school.

- At the end of Year 6 in 2015, pupils' attainment in reading was just above the national average. The proportion making expected progress was similar to others nationally. However, fewer pupils made more than expected progress in reading than the national average.
- The most-able pupils achieve well. In 2015, the proportions of pupils reaching standards above those expected for their age at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 were above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Progress in writing at the end of Key Stage 2 increased significantly in 2015 so that almost all pupils reached the standard expected for their age. Half of the class reached the higher level in writing. Furthermore, pupils' attainment in grammar, spelling and punctuation increased to above the national average last year.
- At the end of Key Stage 1, pupils' attainment has been above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics since 2011.

Early years provision

requires improvement

- The majority of children join the Reception Year with skills and abilities that are typical for their age. However, some children enter with reading and writing skills just below others of their age. Not enough of these children catch up so that they are ready for Year 1. In the past, there was insufficient phonics teaching. Some children do not have enough opportunities to develop their writing skills. Therefore, children's attainment in reading and writing is lower than in other areas of learning.
- Adults do not always challenge children enough. When children choose activities, adults often do not intervene and develop their learning. Although adults regularly check children's learning, they do not act rapidly to help them to take the next steps. Consequently, children are not achieving as well as they should. Nevertheless, the most-able pupils receive some teaching in the Year 1 class that is enabling them to make good progress in reading and writing. For example, a teacher worked with a group of children to help them learn to spell words with 'es' on the end when writing a Mother's Day poem.
- The new leader of early years has a sound understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. The leader has used this information well to start to make some important changes. For example, phonics teaching started shortly after children joined the school this year. As a result, most children are attaining standards expected for their age in phonics.
- The early years leader is strengthening links with partners. Recently, parents received a home-school book that enables them to contribute information to checks on children's learning. The early years leader has also worked with other professionals in local pre-schools to share expectations and skills in phonics teaching. However, it is too early to see the impact of this work.
- Children behave well and play safely in the Reception class. Adults prioritise children's safety. Children select equipment with care and collaborate well to play and learn together. For example, three children worked well together to make a tent, pretending to camp in a field, and others used climbing apparatus with confidence.

School details

Unique reference number	139762
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10011106

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	207
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ronald Harink
Headteacher	Nicola Hughes
Telephone number	01491 837305
Website	http://stjohnswallingford.org.uk
Email address	office.2567@st-johns.oxon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- St John's is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- A very small minority of pupils are disadvantaged (those who qualify for the pupil premium, which is additional government funding for those who are eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority). In some year groups, there are very few disadvantaged pupils.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. Few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs or disability is similar to the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- St John's Primary School converted to become an academy in June 2013. This was the first inspection of the academy. The predecessor school of the same name was judged to be good in February 2013.
- St John's works collaboratively with four other primary schools. Together they have formed the OPEN (Oxfordshire Primary Education Network) Trust. The trust's aim is: 'working together to provide an outstanding education for all our children'.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons and parts of lessons, eight of which were conducted jointly with the headteacher and assistant headteacher.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, middle leaders, pupils, four members of the governing body and the other four headteachers in the collaborative trust.
- Inspectors spoke to five parents on the playground and took into account 56 responses, including 36 comments, to the online questionnaire, Parent View. They also considered one email from a parent.
- A range of documents were looked at, including the school's information about pupils' achievement, and records concerning pupils' attendance, behaviour and safety.

Inspection team

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