Inspection of a good school: St John's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Buckhurst Hill

High Road, Buckhurst Hill, Essex IG9 5RX

Inspection dates: 22 and 23 June 2022

Outcome

St John's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Buckhurst Hill continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at St John's feel happy, safe and valued as individuals as there is a strong sense of caring that underpins the school's Christian values. Pupils experience 'life in all its fullness' through pillars of global citizenship, aspiration and well-being. These are brought to life for pupils through the curriculum and an extensive assembly programme.

Pupils are supported to be confident and polite and to aim for excellence. Pupils like the fact that leaders know them as individuals and match support to their needs. This particularly applies to pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils value the movement breaks they are given, where they visit a sensory circuit. These short breaks help pupils to concentrate in lessons.

Pupils see themselves as one community. They are very accepting of difference. Pupils behave in a polite and courteous way and incidences of bullying are rare. This was very evident at the recent sports day, where the school community came together. Pupils know that teachers generally have high expectations of them and these expectations are realised through what pupils achieve.

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

Leaders have carefully considered the context of the local area when designing the curriculum. For example, pupils learn about a local man's role in war when studying history. This connection to their own lives helps pupils to better understand world events.

Leaders have also thought carefully about how they can deepen pupils' knowledge through a rich set of connected experiences. For example, when studying Africa, pupils go on a trip to see the Lion King and then use this experience to learn about the geography of Africa. They connect what they have learned to the study of Nelson Mandela as a

significant historical figure from Africa. Teachers then use skilful teaching to support pupils to understand complex concepts, such as apartheid. This is also the case in early years foundation stage (EYFS), where activities are linked around themes, which help pupils to make connections between key concepts, such as numbers and words.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge and use assessment effectively to adapt teaching based on what pupils know. As a result, teaching supports the intended curriculum well. Pupils with SEND have specific plans which identify their needs. Teachers use these plans effectively to support and adapt teaching to meet pupils' needs.

Leaders have thought about how the school pillars of global citizenship, aspiration and well-being can be linked into the curriculum. This ensures that spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision is of a high quality. For example, linking to global citizenship, Year 5 undertook a project on refugees. This gave pupils understanding they could apply to real-world events. It led pupils to organise a sponsored walk in the forest to raise money for Ukrainian refugees. Pupils see themselves as global citizens, behaving in a tolerant and considerate way.

Reading is prioritised. Starting in EYFS, pupils are well supported in phonics to develop the skills they need to decode and blend words. Teachers adapt provision well to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. Books are largely well matched to what pupils can decode. However, this is not always the case and some pupils find some words difficult to read. Leaders ensure that pupils read a wide variety of different types of texts. As a result, most pupils enjoy reading. Some, however, choose texts that they see as easy, so they are not challenged enough to develop their vocabulary.

Teachers' effective teaching of the curriculum keeps pupils interested. As a result, pupils stay on task and do not disrupt each other's learning.

The school is well led and managed. Leaders take account of staff well-being and workload and staff feel that they have a voice in shaping the direction of the school. Parents and carers also feel included and value the work done by leaders to develop the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established a culture which allows pupils to pass on concerns. Pupils can name the three trusted adults they can talk to if they have a concern. Leaders keep a clear chronology of all safeguarding issues and take appropriate action to follow them up. They work with the trust and external agencies to secure the help that pupils and families need.

Appropriate training is in place for staff at all levels. They are confident about how to recognise and report any issues. Safer recruitment checks are in place and the single central record of recruitment checks is regularly audited by governors to ensure its accuracy.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders do not always match texts closely enough to the level at which pupils read. This means that younger pupils sometimes encounter words in their books which they find difficult to decode. Some older pupils choose texts that are too easy and so do not develop their vocabulary and reading ability as well as they should. Leaders need to ensure that texts closely match the needs of the pupils who read them.

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 a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, of the same name, to be good in October 2013.

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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can complain to Ofsted.

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	145599
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10238292
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy convertor
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	412
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Lee Batson
Headteacher	Jonathan Furness
Website	www.st-johns-school.com
Date of previous inspection	17 and 18 October 2013

Information about this school

- The school is the host school for West Essex SCITT.
- The school uses one registered alternative provision.

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 leaders and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in the following subjects: reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector also visited lessons and spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.

- The inspector met with leaders, including the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher and the chief executive officer of the trust. The inspector met with trustees and local governors.
- The inspector explored the school's safeguarding culture through viewing safeguarding records and procedures, meeting with a range of pupils and staff and talking to safeguarding leaders.
- The inspector considered the 131 responses and 74 free-text responses made by parents to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors also considered the 54 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire and the 50 responses to Ofsted's online pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

James Chester, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector

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