

Inspection of a good school: St John Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School Danbury

Little Baddow Road, Danbury, Chelmsford, Essex CM3 4NS

Inspection dates:

19 and 20 September 2023

Outcome

St John Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School Danbury continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

St John's is a calm and happy place where pupils are confident to be themselves. Pupils learn in a caring and accepting environment. Pupils have positive relationships with staff. They trust adults to help them with their concerns or worries. As a result, pupils feel safe. Pupils behave consistently well. From early years onwards, they show the school's values of kindness, perseverance, truthfulness, responsibility and respect in all they do.

Pupils follow a curriculum from which they learn a broad range of knowledge. Leaders have high expectations for all pupils to achieve. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) get the support they need to learn well. Pupils enjoy their learning and always try their best. Pupils achieve well, and they are proud of their achievements.

Pupils can access a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. They attend clubs and trips and take part in school-wide competitions and events, such as the yearly triathlon and the colour run. Pupils develop their leadership skills by acting as eco-councillors or members of the charity committee. Pupils use these roles to make a difference to their school, such as raising awareness of local charities.

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

The school has set out an ambitious curriculum. Changes have been made to the curriculum to ensure that pupils achieve well. Subject leaders are passionate and confident in leading their subject. In most subjects, subject leaders have set out their expectations and what they want pupils to learn over time. However, in a few subjects, this is still not as well developed. The school is not making the necessary checks to ensure that the curriculum is being taught as intended in all subjects. As a result, pupils

develop gaps in their knowledge and struggle to recall what they have learned in a few subjects.

From early years, teachers are highly skilled at asking questions to check pupils' understanding. Teachers present information clearly. They adapt learning effectively to meet pupils' needs. Pupils with SEND are very well supported and learn the same curriculum as their peers. Adaptations to learning support pupils to make strong progress. Staff use a range of assessment strategies effectively to check pupils' understanding in most subjects. Staff use this information to target gaps in learning. They check that pupils have the solid understanding needed before moving on to new learning. For example, during a reading task, the teacher ensured that pupils knew the meaning of 'boastful' before moving on to describing the character.

The school makes sure that reading is a high priority for pupils, staff and parents. Teachers confidently teach the fundamentals of reading through high-quality phonics teaching. They understand what pupils need to work on next to improve their fluency. From the early years, leaders prioritise vocabulary development. Staff ensure that pupils have books that match their reading stage. Staff quickly identify pupils who need extra support with reading. Pupils get the help they need to become confident, fluent readers.

Children in the early years develop positive learning behaviours, such as concentration and resilience. As a result, children are enthusiastic about taking on challenges and working hard. This continues throughout the school. Pupils behave consistently well in lessons. They are excited to learn and proud of their learning. They are keen to share their achievements with adults and peers.

The school has mapped out what pupils will learn about relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education. Pupils learn about relationships in ways that are suitable for their age. Pupils are confident in living the school vision of 'let your light shine'. They showcase their talents and interests in musical concerts and school-wide competitions. Pupils use the leadership opportunities given to them to make a difference to their school community. They experience a range of enrichment activities that bring learning to life, such as the lambing live experience, where pupils learned about agriculture first hand.

Governors provide strong support and challenge to leaders at all levels. The school provides purposeful and effective training for staff. Staff know that they can request support, if needed, and they feel valued. Staff are proud to work at St John's.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, the school has not set out the core content that it wants pupils to know. This means that, in some subjects, pupils develop gaps in their knowledge. The school needs to set out clearly what it wants pupils to learn and do in all subjects.
- In a few subjects, the school is not checking that the curriculum is being taught as intended. This means that pupils struggle to remember what they have learned. The school should ensure that the curriculum is being taught as planned and that pupils are recalling learning over time in all subjects.

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 30 and 31 January 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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	115112
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10288444
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	219
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sarah Lawrence
Headteacher	Jona Davies
Website	www.st-johns-danbury.essex.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	30 and 31 January 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school uses one unregistered specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND.
- The school is in the Diocese of Chelmsford. The most recent section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, took place September 2017. The next section 48 inspection will be in the next two years.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher, subject leaders and the special educational needs coordinator. The inspector also met with eight governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- The inspector met with a representative from the local authority to gather information about school support and development.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and art. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with the subject leader, 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 looked at other curriculum plans and pupils' work in some other subjects, including history, geography, RSE and health education, religious education and science.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspector took account of the 61 responses and free-text comments submitted to the online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View.
- The inspector took account of the 24 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and the 79 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey. The inspector also spoke to pupils during playtimes and lunchtimes and during lessons to seek pupils' views. She spoke with a group of staff to gather their views.

Inspection team

Nerrissa Bear, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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