

St John's Church of England Primary School

Spring Park Road, Shirley, Croydon CR0 5EL

Inspection dates 13–14 January 2016

Overall effectiveness **Outstanding**

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- This is a school which helps pupils develop a love of learning. Pupils develop an understanding that their hard work will help them in their later studies and career. Pupils' aspirations are developed as a result and they have a strong understanding of university and careers.
- Leaders have created a culture of high aspirations where no child is left behind. Everyone who works at the school understands that only the very highest standards are acceptable. As a result, pupils make outstanding progress and their confidence flourishes academically and socially.
- Teachers use highly skilful, probing questions to get to the heart of what pupils understand. They extend pupils systematically with learning opportunities that deepen their understanding and skills.
- Teaching assistants are highly focused on the development of pupils' learning. They spend their time focused on questioning pupils, unpicking their thinking and deepening their skills.
- Pupils, regardless of their background, ethnicity or starting point in learning, make superb progress in their learning. The school knows each pupil, their strengths and areas for development, while deeply caring about everyone as an individual.
- The governing body is collectively an exceptionally able group. They are highly challenging and work together to ensure that the school continues to strive towards excellence, while caring for all. They initiate research to get under the skin of the school. This helps them to understand what needs to be improved or be kept the same. They work to improve the school while protecting its unique culture and ethos.
- One parent explained, 'I feel blessed that my children attend this school.' This sums up the high esteem that parents, children and staff feel towards their school.
- The curriculum has many significant strengths. In particular, the teaching of reading, writing, music, computing and science are strengths. Pupils' work is well above the national expectations for their age throughout the school. Pupils also benefit greatly from the regular opportunities to develop their speaking and listening across the curriculum.
- Children in the early years get off to a tremendous start in their learning. They are very well supported and grow in confidence quickly. They consistently make excellent progress as a result of excellent teaching and detailed assessments.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Leaders and managers should develop further pupils' spelling, particularly advanced bilingual pupils, by providing opportunities to develop subject-specific vocabulary beyond science.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- The headteacher, ably supported by her deputy headteacher, has been highly successful in forging a leadership team focused on improving the outcomes of all pupils. She has demonstrated a relentless focus on achieving and sustaining the very highest standards over time. This has resulted in improvements in teaching, assessment, behaviour and the early years since the previous inspection in 2010.
- Leadership responsibilities are effectively shared. Middle leaders have been very well supported to ensure that they play a key role in developing their areas of responsibility. They make regular checks on the quality of teaching and pupils' achievements within the subjects they lead. Middle leaders use the information they gain from this work to further drive up standards through training and improve their plans for further improvement. They are enthusiastic, committed and innovative in their work. With clear guidance from senior leaders, their work has secured significant improvements in teaching and the curriculum since the last inspection.
- Leaders and governors are exceptionally committed to equality of opportunity. They have been highly successful in ensuring that the learning community is harmonious and reflects the school's key rule of 'loving one another'. The school's values are embedded throughout the school community, ensuring that all pupils are able to access the curriculum, and discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.
- The quality of teaching is regularly checked by senior and middle leaders. They review a wide range of evidence to ensure that all staff are effectively improving the outcomes achieved by pupils. Leaders are meticulous in ensuring that they review pupils' books, progress and attitudes over time. Feedback to staff is focused on improving the learning of pupils. As a result, new staff are quickly brought up to speed with the expectations of the school and make improvements to their own performance.
- The funding for disadvantaged pupils is used very effectively. It is focused consistently on meeting the needs of the small number of eligible pupils. Funding is reviewed forensically to ensure that it is helping pupils to achieve their full potential. Pupils eligible for this funding routinely exceed the achievement of other pupils in school and their performance continues to improve throughout the school.
- The curriculum is rich and varied. Teachers work hard to make learning meaningful and enjoyable for pupils. Pupils' work in a range of subjects exceeds the expectations for their age: for example, in reading, writing, music, design and technology, computing and science. Opportunities for pupils to develop an understanding of what it means to live in London and be British are well developed in the curriculum. Pupils have a very well-developed understanding of the democratic institutions in Britain. Their understanding of democracy is exceptional for their age. They have experience of creating and reading manifestos, taking part in a hustings and voting. They told inspectors why they wish to live in a democracy and not live under a dictatorship.
- Leaders have used the additional government funding for primary school sports to increase participation in a range of games and sports. High-quality coaching has further enhanced the school's teaching of physical education and has helped to upskill staff to ensure long-term benefits to the school. The school has been successful in a range of country sporting events, including swimming and cross-country running.
- The local authority identifies the school as a 'light touch school'. However, they have maintained a watchful eye to ensure that the school has continued to progress since the last inspection. They have provided suitable challenge, particularly in relation to the mathematics curriculum, helping to ensure that it fully meets the needs of all pupils.
- Since the last inspection, the headteacher has supported another school that has been classified as requiring special measures locally. She also supports new headteachers both in the local authority and diocese. The school is regularly visited by teachers from other schools to learn from the strong practice that has been developed in this school over time.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The governing body is impressive. Governors have ensured that as a group they have a wide range of skills and experiences. They use their knowledge and understanding to great effect, challenging leaders to sustain strengths and secure continuous improvements. Governors have a clear understanding of what makes St John's unique and keep a watchful eye that, as changes are made, its culture is maintained and strengthened. It is clear that governors see themselves as custodians working in the long-term interests of the school. They keep a very close eye on the performance of pupils and are skilful in ensuring that they get to the core of how all groups are performing. Where

necessary they revisit issues over time to satisfy themselves that the issues are being resolutely addressed. This enables governors to ask insightful and probing questions which support and challenge school leaders. Parents report that governors are 'highly visible' and this ensures that they are not dependent on any one person for an understanding of how the school is performing at any one time. The Chair of the Governing Body has led two interim executive bodies locally. The governing body has been careful to reflect on the learning from this work to further strengthen and improve its own performance over time. This is characteristic of the reflective and self-critical attitude governors bring to their work with the school.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders and governors have ensured that all staff are aware of statutory requirements. Staff understand well the different types of abuse and neglect which can threaten the well-being of children. For example, they have a secure understanding of female genital mutilation, extremism, child sexual exploitation and breast ironing. Governors have carefully checked that staff have a good understanding of the training in these key safeguarding issues and that staff understand the thresholds for referral to other external agencies.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

- Expectations are consistently high throughout the school and in all subjects. Teachers and support staff provide learning activities which stretch and deepen the understanding of pupils. Pupils learn exceptionally well and make outstanding progress as a result.
- In reading, writing and mathematics, pupils are provided with work which allows those lacking confidence to access challenging work. Most-able pupils are helped to consider work which taxes their thinking and expects them to apply their learning in different contexts. For example, in mathematics, pupils are routinely asked to consider using their skills in unfamiliar problems. Pupils relish the opportunities and told an inspector that they love learning. One pupil summed this up by saying, 'I love mathematics as you can use your learning to help you solve other problems. Learning helps you learn even more.'
- Pupils are provided with regular opportunities to consider and debate. This ensures that over time their writing and speaking develop in sophistication. Year 6 pupils were observed discussing and debating the rights and wrongs of animal testing. Pupils were eloquent and persuasive in debating their views and showed respect for those with differing opinions. This work not only helps pupils make excellent progress in their speaking, listening, reading and writing. One pupil explained, 'I have wanted to be a doctor for some time, but I am so enjoying constructing arguments that I am thinking I would possibly like to be a lawyer.' This shows the value of helping pupils consider their potential career later in life as they identify strengths in their skills.
- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge. This is demonstrated by their tremendous skill in extending pupils' thinking through questioning. For example, pupils in Year 5 were observed learning about thermal insulators. This learning was further extended by being asked to apply their learning, 'Why is a polystyrene cup used to hold hot drinks? Is this the best material to hold a hot drink? Why?'
- The teaching of music is a particular strength of the school. Children from Reception are provided with a solid base of songs and taught to keep rhythm and use simple instruments. Older children take responsibility for helping to conduct singing and harmonise melodies. Pupils singing collectively is breathtakingly beautiful and contributes strongly to their spiritual development.
- Teaching assistants are very well briefed prior to learning sessions. They are deployed to specific teaching groups and provide focused oral and written feedback during lessons. Teaching assistants play an important part in ensuring that pupils overcome gaps in their understanding through their careful checks on learning. Their questioning is very skilled. It develops pupils' thinking and helps to ensure that pupils make strong progress in learning.
- The homework completed by pupils is of a very high quality. Pupils take great pride in their homework and learning projects. This is typical of the high levels of diligence, enjoyment and pride they take in their work. Parents are highly complimentary of this aspect of the school's work. One parent explained that the school helps all the family to be involved in home learning projects: 'This really helps me talk to my son about what he is learning about in school. It helps me feel part of his academic learning.'
- Pupils are very well taught in their computing lessons to write simple code. They produce programming with increasing sophistication and are very proud of their work in this subject. Teachers' strong understanding of the curriculum ensures that all children are helped to make strong progress in the subject over time.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- A culture of exceptionally high expectations from staff, parents and pupils ensures that all members of the school community focus on pupils achieving their full potential. Pupils develop an exceptional level of confidence in their own ability academically, and also in interacting with their peers and adults. They show a high level of sophistication in their oral and written language.
- Pupils take enormous pride in the quality and presentation of their work. They want to achieve highly and believe doing their best is important. They talk with aspiration about their future, including a clear understanding of career possibilities and high education: 'I want to do well at school as I will need good grades to go and study marine biology at university.' This commitment to education contributes strongly to their excellent academic progress at school. Teachers help pupils develop a steely resolve to succeed. This ensures that pupils see challenges as a natural part of the learning process, rather than to fear challenges.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of how to keep themselves healthy through exercise and their dietary choices. Pupils have opportunities through their lessons to explore healthy eating, and consider the eating choices of people through history, for example through hosting a Roman feast. Leaders carefully monitor participation rates in extra-curricular physical activity. This is high for all groups of pupils and has been rising over the past three years.
- Leaders work effectively with other agencies to ensure that pupils' welfare is of the highest priority. They are quick to identify potential issues and flag these with relevant professionals, such as social care, the school nurse or the local authority. Pupils are taught how to look after themselves in school and how to stay safe beyond school. They have a clear understanding of what to do if they feel unsafe, including online.
- Pupils, parents and staff are clear that the school is a safe and happy place. They say that bullying is rare but that concerns are dealt with decisively when they arise. Pupils are equally quick to praise each other when they are upholding a school value. This praise is celebrated and valued by the whole school community.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils show an impeccable level of behaviour both in classrooms and around school. The building is filled with a sense of polite, friendly and calm behaviour. All pupils know the expectations that leaders and their peers have of their behaviour. Pupils are highly respectful of their peers, adults and visitors.
- Pupils are keen to be role models for their peers. They are highly proud when they are awarded additional responsibility, such as becoming a prefect. An even more coveted award is the 'red scarf'. Pupils vie to achieve this recognition for consistently excellent conduct and attitudes to learning.
- Pupils are keen to be elected to the school's parliament. They relish the responsibility this brings and understand the importance of keeping promises made prior to their election.
- Attendance is exceptionally high for all groups of pupils. Punctuality is also excellent with very few pupils being late before or after their class register is closed. This contributes to pupils' excellent achievement at school and illustrates their enjoyment of learning. Leaders have well-developed systems to identify any attendance concerns in order to sustain the school's high attendance levels.

Outcomes for pupils are outstanding

- All pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and most able, make outstanding progress from when they start school. This is consistent across reading, writing, mathematics and science.
- The consistently excellent progress begins when pupils join the school, regardless of whether they join the school in Reception or later in their educational career. This means that attainment is above national average by the time they start Key Stage 2. The rapid progress continues through their time in juniors and pupils very often complete primary school well above national expectations. Consequently, pupils are very well prepared for secondary school.

- Outcomes, both attainment and progress in learning, are outstanding in all year groups. The school's own assessment information confirms this, and outstanding attainment and progress are also evident in pupils' learning records, such as exercise books.
- Children make consistently excellent progress in the early years. Children start their time in the school with skill levels broadly typical for their age. By the time they enter Key Stage 1, the proportion of children with a good level of development is above the national average.
- Pupils are given an excellent foundation in reading skills. Pupils make rapid and sustained progress in their ability to use their knowledge of phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) when they read and write. This skill helps supports their learning across the curriculum and is key to their enjoyment of reading and learning more widely. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected level in the Year 1 phonics check is consistently well above the national average.
- Disabled pupils and those who have a special education need make good and often outstanding progress from their individual starting points. This progress is due to teachers' careful assessment of pupils' learning needs and planning to stretch and deepen their understanding. Effective interventions and partnerships with a range of specialists also help to ensure that the right support is put in place to meet specific and individual needs.
- Outstanding progress is made by pupils regardless of their ethnic heritage. This demonstrates the school's success in promoting equality of opportunity. Pupils new to the English language similarly make excellent progress when they join the school.
- The school carefully exposes advanced bilingual pupils (who speak English competently but are not native speakers of the language) to scientific words which may not be familiar to them. However, leaders recognise that they do not consistently do this across the curriculum. This will further support the vocabulary development and spelling of advanced bilingual pupils over time.

Early years provision

is outstanding

- Despite a change in staffing in the autumn term, children quickly picked up the routines of school life and have developed excellent attitudes to learning. Induction arrangements are very effective. A parent told inspectors, 'The school could not do enough to make sure my child settled well. They were keen to find out about my child from my perspective and kept me up to date with their progress once they started. Nothing is ever too much trouble.'
- Children make excellent progress in all areas of their learning in the early years. Staff know the children well and are skilled at capturing evidence of their learning. This evidence is used to carefully plan learning activities which build on the needs of children while capturing their interest and imagination.
- Adults are highly skilled at using questions to increase the vocabulary used by children. Staff seize such opportunities when teaching children: for example, in phonics or music lessons and during less structured play.
- Leaders ensure that the classroom and outdoor learning areas are bright and vibrant, with a range of high-quality learning opportunities updated daily. Staff use the wide range of resources creatively to engage children in their learning and 'hook' them into learning topics.
- Teachers and support staff are well trained and developed. They understand the expectations the school has to ensure that all children are kept safe. They have developed excellent relationships based on mutual trust and respect. Children show each other this same high level of respect. They play and learn happily together.
- Children are extraordinarily eager to learn. They become quickly absorbed in learning tasks around the classroom and outdoors. They want to learn and, as a result, make a tremendous contribution to the excellent progress they make.

School details

Unique reference number	101788
Local authority	Croydon
Inspection number	10003919

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	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	230
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Phillipson
Headteacher/Principal/Teacher in charge	Martina Martin
Telephone number	020 8654 2260
Website	www.st-johns.croydon.sch.uk
Email address	office@st-johns.croydon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	4–5 October 2010

Information about this school

- St John’s Church of England Primary School is slightly smaller than the average-sized primary school nationally.
- There are currently eight classes in the school, with one class per year group, except in Year 5 which has two classes. The school is currently working with the local authority and Diocese of Southwark to expand the school to two classes per year group.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic heritage groups is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, and looked after children) is below the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is above average.
- The school meets the government floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils’ attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was initially carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 as a short inspection of a school judged to be good at its most recent section 5 inspection. The inspection was converted to a full section 5 inspection when it became apparent that the school might have improved sufficiently to be judged outstanding.
- Inspectors observed learning and teaching in all classes across the school, including a visit to the music class and the outdoor area of the early years. The lead inspector also visited five classes with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with pupils, senior leaders, middle leaders, a representative of the local authority, and seven governors including the Chair of the Governing Body.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of pupils' work, including evidence from their art portfolios and their programming from computing. Inspectors also heard pupils read, observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, around the school and at lunchtime. They considered the views of parents, taking into account the 56 responses on the online parent questionnaire Parent View. Inspectors also considered the four free text question responses submitted by parents and the 31 questionnaires completed by staff.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation including the school's safeguarding records; behaviour and attendance information; minutes of the governing body; and evaluation of its work and plans for further improvement. Inspectors also considered records made by the local authority following visits made by its representatives.

Inspection team

David Storrie, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Roger Easthope	Ofsted Inspector
Avtar Sherri	Ofsted Inspector

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