

St John's Church of England Academy

Bowens Hill Road, Coleford, Gloucestershire GL16 8DU

Inspection dates

3–4 March 2016

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
Early years provision	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Leaders, including governors, have not tackled the serious shortcomings in the school's effectiveness swiftly and with urgency. They have been ineffective in driving forward improvements since becoming an academy.
- Leaders and governors have an over-generous view of the school's performance and the quality of education that it provides.
- Leaders do not implement their planned curriculum consistently. The quality of work in pupils' books is too variable.
- Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is inadequate. Children do not make enough progress in all areas of learning.
- The quality of teaching and learning over time has been inadequate. Leaders are not improving teaching rapidly enough. Teachers are not held to account for the quality of their teaching and the impact this has on pupils' progress.
- Middle leaders lack the skills to check pupils' achievement and progress in their subjects. They are too reliant on the vice-principal for direction.
- Teachers do not inspire pupils to want to learn. They do not have high enough expectations of the progress pupils can make. Teachers do not consistently challenge pupils to do their best and ensure all pupils, including the most able, disadvantaged pupils and boys, make good progress.
- Pupils do not make good progress from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics. Consequently, they are not well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Teachers' assessments of pupils' progress are often inaccurate and over-generous. Leaders have not ensured teachers have the skills to check pupils' learning effectively.
- Pupils do not use and apply their mathematical understanding effectively. This is slowing progress in this subject.
- Governors do not rigorously check the impact of recent initiatives to improve standards in English and mathematics.
- The school's current capacity to secure further improvement is weak.

The school has the following strengths

- Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. The school successfully promotes pupils' personal development and welfare and ensures they are well looked after and kept safe.
- Pupils are polite, enjoy each other's company and treat each other and all adults with respect.
- Pupils enjoy school. Their attendance is good.

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, by ensuring that:
 - teachers receive training to be able to accurately assess pupils' learning
 - teachers use the information they collect about what pupils can and cannot do to plan work that moves pupils' learning on and is appropriately challenging, especially for the most-able pupils
 - disadvantaged pupils and boys learn effectively and achieve their potential
 - tasks set inspire and motivate pupils to learn and make faster progress
 - teachers question pupils effectively in order to deepen their understanding
 - teachers check pupils' learning and resolve misunderstandings as they occur.

- Improve pupils' learning and progress in English and mathematics by:
 - ensuring teachers have the highest expectations of what all pupils and groups of pupils can achieve
 - providing further guidance to teachers to develop their skills in the school's agreed approaches to the teaching of writing and reading
 - planning learning which challenges and develops pupils' understanding and reasoning skills in mathematics.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance by:
 - implementing robust systems to check the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' learning
 - providing training to develop subject leaders' skills so that they support the drive to improve teaching and learning
 - ensuring governors hold leaders to account for the achievement of all pupils in the school, including in the early years, and for the use of pupil premium funds
 - ensuring the school's improvement plans include sharply focused targets with clear timescales for achievement, so that leaders and governors can systematically check the rate of improvement in teaching and learning across the school.

- Develop provision in the early years by:
 - ensuring the quality of teaching is at least consistently good
 - providing training for teachers and teaching assistants so that they develop their understanding of how young children learn
 - ensuring teachers receive training in assessing the learning of children in the Reception class
 - ensuring the learning environment supports children in making good progress in all areas of their learning.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management should be improved.

An external review of the school's use of pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is inadequate

- Leaders and governors have not ensured the school provides a good quality of education for its pupils. Since converting to be an academy in September 2012, leaders have received little external scrutiny or challenge. This inspection has revealed significant weaknesses in the school's effectiveness. Leaders have not acted with the urgency needed to ensure the school improves rapidly.
- There have been changes of staffing and significant staff absence, particularly in the last two years. This has hindered the school in its drive towards improvement. Leaders' view of the school's performance is over-generous, resulting in a lack of challenge and ambition to improve.
- The vice-principal, who took up post at the beginning of the academic year, has made many changes, especially to raise standards of teaching in English and mathematics. However, beyond him, there are no other leaders who can effectively support this improvement work and drive the changes implemented recently. For example, middle leaders lack the skills to monitor standards in their subjects. This has resulted in leaders and staff not knowing how well groups of pupils are achieving and how much progress they are making.
- The principal and governors have drawn up an action plan to tackle some identified areas for improvement. However, there is a lack of urgency and ambition in this plan. For example, there are no timescales set out to check that the quality of teaching improves rapidly. As a result, leaders have been too slow in tackling areas for improvement which they have identified.
- It is strongly recommended that the school does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.
- Leaders have only recently decided to tackle and implement the demands and expectations set out in the new national curriculum. Consequently, teachers' expectations are too low, particularly in mathematics and English. Work in pupils' books confirms a lack of challenge, particularly for the most-able pupils, resulting in inadequate progress and achievement over time. In addition, work in other subjects, such as history, geography and science is of varying quality. Therefore, although leaders aim to promote equality of opportunity, this is not successful because too many pupils continue to underachieve.
- Leaders and teachers do not have an understanding of how to measure or track pupils' progress. They are almost entirely reliant on the vice-principal for guidance and support in assessing pupils' work and the standards they are reaching. As a result, assessments are inaccurate, especially in writing.
- The school has procedures in place to manage staff performance. However, targets set for leaders and teachers are not appropriate. Staff are not held to account for the progress their pupils are making or for the quality of their teaching. In particular, they have not been held to account for the achievement of boys, the most able and disadvantaged pupils in their classes.
- The school is not targeting its use of pupil premium funding well enough to ensure disadvantaged pupils achieve well. Typically, these pupils make similar progress to their peers in English and mathematics. However, work in pupils' books confirms that the most able among this group are not making the progress they are capable of as a result of a lack of challenge in lessons.
- The school's work to promote pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is strong. Pupils have a good awareness of British values and demonstrate respect and tolerance for others. Pupils understand the principle of democracy, as demonstrated in the work of the Year 6 pupils to improve their catering facilities which are now of a high quality. Displays in the corridors support pupils' understanding of British values and other faiths and religions. Pupils spoke knowledgeably about Sikh customs and the festival of Hanukkah, demonstrating tolerance and respect for cultural diversity.
- The sport funding is used effectively to provide a range of extra-curricular and sporting activities. These include football, netball and cross-country tournaments against other schools. This funding is effective in increasing pupils' participation in sport and encouraging a healthy lifestyle for its pupils.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors' evaluation of the school's effectiveness is too generous. The information they receive from the principal is not giving them the in-depth and accurate information they need to be able to challenge leaders effectively. Governors have given too little attention to checking pupils' achievement and progress robustly. Minutes from meetings confirm they have not taken the urgent action needed to check that the quality of teaching is improving quickly. They do not check the impact that recently introduced strategies have had on improving standards and achievement for pupils in English and mathematics, particularly for boys, disadvantaged pupils and the most-able pupils.

- The governing body knows how the pupil premium and sport funding is being spent and information is available on the school’s website. However, they have not checked sufficiently how well this funding has been used to improve the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.
- While governors manage the principal’s and teachers’ performance targets, they have not tackled weaknesses that have been identified in teaching with sufficient rigour. Consequently, the quality of teaching in several classes remains unacceptably weak.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school’s business manager ensures that all checks are made on staff, governors and volunteers. All training is up to date, enabling staff to recognise signs of risk or harm and ensure the appropriate action is taken to safeguard pupils. All recruitment checks are in place before staff members take up their post. Staff training also includes information to enable staff to protect pupils from extremist views or possible radicalisation. Pupils say they feel safe at this school. Parents state that their children are well cared for and looked after. Staff hold very positive views about working at this school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inadequate

- Over time, the quality of teaching has been inadequate. As a result, pupils do not make sufficient progress or achieve well enough. Standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are inadequate, particularly for boys, the most able and disadvantaged pupils.
- Teaching is characterised by a lack of challenge, rigour and teachers’ generally low expectations. Teachers do not plan lessons which inspire and motivate pupils to work hard and develop a love of learning. Pupils have not developed sufficient resilience to tackle harder work. For example, Year 6 readers explained that they do not choose harder books in case they cannot read the words.
- Teachers do not have the skills to accurately assess pupils’ learning and plan tasks which build on what pupils already know, can do and understand. For example, work in books confirms pupils continue to be taught concepts in mathematics that they have already learned. In addition, the ‘three levels of challenge’ approach brought in by leaders is not effective. Some pupils choose work that is clearly too hard. For example, pupils in Year 1 struggled with instructions they could not read and were unable to access the problem-solving activity. Consequently, little learning took place.
- Teachers do not provide learning which appropriately challenges pupils, particularly for the most able. Expectations for this group of pupils are simply not high enough. Work in books across a range of subjects, including English, shows little evidence of high-quality work. In lessons, teachers do not quickly pick up on pupils’ mistakes and misunderstandings. This considerably slows pupils’ progress over time.
- Teachers’ subject knowledge is weak, particularly in relation to the demands of the new national curriculum, which the school has chosen to introduce. A lack of quality training means that too many are unable to understand and implement the more challenging expectations effectively. As a result, work is often not set at the correct level of challenge – resulting in inadequate learning and progress.
- Teaching assistants support pupils in lessons and provide good support for pupils with special educational needs. However, they lack training in delivering key sessions such as those on letters and sounds in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2. Pupils spend too much time waiting their turn. These sessions lack challenge and rigour, resulting in too many pupils making insufficient progress.
- Teachers’ questioning is not effective in supporting pupils to think deeply. Teachers do not use questioning consistently to check pupils’ learning and reshape tasks and explanations in response to identified gaps in pupils’ understanding; this is slowing their progress.
- The school has recently changed its approach to the teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) in the early years and Years 1 and 2. Although this is beginning to have a positive impact, pupils are still struggling to use their knowledge of letters and sounds to read unfamiliar words. Consequently, pupils are not on track to reach the expected standard in the Year 2 re-test.
- Pupils routinely read teachers’ comments to improve their work. They say these comments are helpful and support them in their learning. Nonetheless, this approach, agreed by the school, is yet to be used consistently in all classes and the impact on pupils’ progress is too variable.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are sure that their teachers look after them and provide a supportive environment. They are happy to come to school and feel well cared for and safe.
- The school's ethos is underpinned by its Christian values, which permeate the work of the school. Pupils were unfailingly polite to the inspectors, and demonstrate respect to all adults and their peers.
- The school's approach to supporting potentially vulnerable pupils and those with disability or special educational needs is good. Staff use a range of external agencies effectively to provide high-quality care and support. Parents praise this work and appreciate the support their children receive. As a result, this is an inclusive and supportive community.
- Pupils know how to stay safe. The vice-principal has ensured that pupils learn to stay safe online, providing e-safety days, lessons and assemblies. As a result, pupils spoke knowledgeably about the potential risks of using the internet.
- The school's on-site outdoor classroom provision is having a positive impact on developing pupils' self-confidence. Pupils learn to take risks safely.
- Pupils are adamant there is no bullying in the school. Leaders have established a calm and well-ordered environment where pupils feel valued. Their pastoral development is given a high priority and is of a high quality, resulting in strong personal development.
- The wrap-around care provides a good service for families. Pupils are well looked after and prepared for the day ahead. During the inspection, pupils were respectful and courteous to each other in this setting. Pupils demonstrate similar behaviours to the adults who care for them.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning require improvement, particularly when teaching lacks challenge and fails to capture their interest over time. Where learning lacks challenge, pupils lose focus and their attention wanders. As a result, they do not demonstrate perseverance in their work because they are not motivated to give of their best.
- Pupils too often have to wait their turn or for the teacher to check their learning in lessons. This is not helping pupils to learn effectively, make good progress or develop a keen desire to learn.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and during break and lunchtimes is good. They are polite and treat each other and their school with respect. There is no litter and the classrooms are tidy and well organised.
- Attendance is good. All absences are followed up on the day. Lengthy absences are investigated by the family support worker, who provides the support needed to ensure pupils return to school quickly. Exclusion is used as a last resort and is rare in this school. Nonetheless, leaders do not rigorously evaluate the attendance of groups of pupils and therefore do not have an in-depth understanding of where absences occur and any subsequent effects on achievement.

Outcomes for pupils

are inadequate

- Outcomes for pupils at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics are below the national average and have been since the school converted to be an academy. The achievement of boys and disadvantaged pupils was below that of their peers. Pupils made expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics in 2015 in key stage 2. However, this is insufficient to enable pupils to catch up to the standard they are capable of.
- The school's information on pupils' current rates of progress shows that too many pupils are only making expected progress, at best, from the beginning of the academic year. Leaders agree assessments cannot be relied on, especially in writing. Work in books across a range of subjects confirms pupils are working at below the levels expected for their ages. Too few are making good progress.
- Standards in the use of English, spelling, punctuation and grammar are well below the national average. A recent drive to improve standards in this aspect of English has yet to show impact. Work in books shows little evidence of progress being made in pupils' writing. In addition, teachers do not address misconceptions swiftly so that pupils are unsure how to correct their mistakes properly.
- Pupils perform well below the national average in the Year 1 national phonics screening check. No

disadvantaged pupil met the required standard in 2015. There was weak teaching and a lack of focus on the learning and progress of these pupils. As a result of a sharper focus on improving standards, the school is predicting improved outcomes in 2016. However, inspectors found too many pupils who are struggling to reach the expected level. They are not able to apply their knowledge of letters and sounds effectively to decode unknown words. In addition, they do not have the skills to read for meaning. Pupils in Year 6 lack high-quality teaching of reading and as a result are not making good enough progress from their starting points.

- Disadvantaged pupils do not achieve as well as their peers across the school, although a higher proportion made better than expected progress compared to their peers in 2015. However, outcomes in 2015 confirm that no disadvantaged pupils achieved the higher levels in mathematics and reading. The quality of teaching is not sufficiently challenging to ensure the most-able disadvantaged pupils achieve well and make good progress during their time at the school.
- Teachers have an over-generous view of the achievement and progress of the most-able pupils. Work in books confirms that teachers' assessments are inaccurate. Outcomes at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics were below the national average, particularly in writing. This picture is mirrored at the end of Year 6. Work in books confirms that the most-able pupils are not making the rapid progress needed in all subjects to ensure they achieve the higher levels at the end of the academic year.
- Pupils with disability and those with special educational needs make good progress in their personal development but this is not mirrored in their academic progress. Currently, it is not clear which pupils have specific special educational needs and which ones are struggling with their work because of inadequate teaching. The special educational needs leader does not have a good understanding of the progress these pupils make from their starting points.

Early years provision

is inadequate

- Leaders and governors have not ensured that leadership and management of the early years is effective. Leaders do not have the skills to accurately check children's learning. In addition, leaders agree that assessments made when children started school this academic year are inaccurate.
- Children start Reception with skills which are typically below those expected for their age, especially in personal and social skills and physical development. However, the school's own records suggest that in other areas of learning, such as communication, language and literacy, some children begin school with skills which are typical for their age. Although the school is predicting improved outcomes at the end of this year, the inaccuracy of teachers' assessments and the quality of teaching and work in children's books suggest the predictions may not be achieved.
- The quality of teaching is inadequate. Teachers' expectations of what children can achieve are too low. Teachers and teaching assistants are not sufficiently well trained to observe learning. Although the school has strengthened its approach to collecting evidence on children's learning, staff are not using this information effectively to plan next steps. Consequently, children are not making enough progress across the areas of learning and they are not well prepared to transfer into Year 1.
- Teachers do not challenge children sufficiently to inspire and motivate them to learn. Children were observed sitting quietly on the carpet for long periods of time waiting their turn. No attempt was made by the teacher to draw them into the discussion or to pose questions to extend their learning and understanding.
- The classroom learning environment does not support teaching and learning well enough. For example, in one classroom no resources are provided to develop children's mathematical thinking and reasoning. The inspection found that progress in mathematics is insufficient.
- Children learn their letters and sounds in groups each day. Teaching assistants are not sufficiently well trained to lead these sessions. As a result the learning and progress children are making in their reading and writing are slow.
- The school has improved the outdoor area. However, too much of the provision is directed by adults and this restricts children's creativity and ability to think and do things for themselves.
- Children behave well in the Reception classes. However, when too little is demanded from them, their attitudes to learning become less positive. Nonetheless, the children are well cared for and kept safe. Adults follow agreed procedures and work closely with the on-site pre-school and children's families to ensure all children, and especially those whose circumstances might make them vulnerable, receive good-quality care and support.

School details

Unique reference number	138745
Local authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	10005557

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	202
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gary Gillespie
Principal	Jan Wagstaff
Telephone number	01594 832 046
Website	www.sjacademy.co.uk
Email address	head@st-johns.gloucs.sch.uk

Information about this school

- St John's Church of England Academy converted to become an academy on 1 September 2012. When its predecessor school, St John's Church of England Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall. This is a stand-alone academy.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- The school is slightly smaller than the average-sized primary school, with one class in each year group, except for Reception, where there are two classes.
- Children in the early years (Reception classes) attend full-time.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children looked after) is average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs is just above average. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or education, health and care plan is above average.
- Almost all pupils are White British.
- The school runs and manages its own breakfast and after-school club.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited 16 lessons or parts of lessons, most of which were jointly observed with the principal or vice-principal. The inspector also observed the teaching of phonics.
- The inspector spoke to pupils throughout the inspection, including at break and lunchtimes.
- The inspector looked at pupils' work in their books together with the vice-principal, to establish the current quality of their work and progress over time.
- Inspectors heard groups of pupils read from Year 2 and Year 6. Also, the lead inspector spoke with a group of pupils to determine their views of the school.
- The inspector attended collective worship on the second day of the inspection, to celebrate Mothering Sunday.
- The inspector held discussions with the principal, the English and mathematics subject leaders, teachers and teaching assistants. In addition, the inspector met with a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documentation including the school's improvement plans, the management of staff performance, information on pupils' progress, and records relating to behaviour and safety. The lead inspector also looked at minutes from recent governing body meetings and the school's records of the monitoring of teaching and learning.
- The inspector took account of 20 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. The inspector spoke with parents at the start of the school day. In addition, responses to the Parent View free-text service were analysed.
- Questionnaires from 18 members of staff and from six pupils were returned and analysed.

Inspection team

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