

Inspection of Maidstone, St John's Church of England Primary School

Provender Way, Grove Green, Maidstone, Kent ME14 5TZ

Inspection dates:	4 and 5 March 2025
The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Early years provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

St John's Church of England Primary School, Maidstone is a single-academy trust. The headteacher is Daniel Smith, and the responsibility for the school rests with the board of governors, who are directors and trustees, chaired by Susan Willmott.

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged as outstanding for overall effectiveness at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected under section 5 of the Act since July 2015. Since September 2024, schools have not been awarded an overall effectiveness grade.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive at this highly aspirational school. The school's values, including compassion, are at the heart of the school's excellent work. One pupil summed up the views of many when they said, 'These make the school a happy place.' This is evident in purposeful classrooms and breaktimes, where pupils of all ages play together excitedly. Pupils behave exceptionally well. They show courtesy to all. Pupils have warm and trusting relationships with staff. They know that staff will deal with any concerns they have.

Teachers have high expectations of pupils. Pupils work extremely hard to meet them. As a result, they achieve very well. They learn the skills and knowledge they need and apply them confidently. Pupils' work shows they are exceptionally well prepared for their next steps.

Pupils make a significant contribution to the school community and beyond. Pupils hold a variety of roles that range from supporting pupils playing games at breaktime to acting as house captains. Pupils take these roles seriously. Members of the eco-council carry out these roles diligently by working with the local authority to monitor car emissions in the local area. Pupils contribute to the community by raising large amounts of money for numerous charities.

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

The school's highly ambitious curriculum meets the needs of pupils consistently, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The curriculum sets out the knowledge, skills and vocabulary that pupils need to learn with considerable precision. The school prioritises pupils' recall of their prior learning exceptionally well. This helps pupils to build on their learning very securely over time. As a result, pupils develop a deep and lasting knowledge of the subjects they learn.

Staff have extremely high aspirations for pupils. The school ensures pupils achieve these by identifying their needs swiftly, including those with SEND. Staff are highly skilled in meeting these needs. They adapt learning precisely so all pupils learn the important skills and knowledge they need. Disadvantaged pupils, including those with SEND, achieve incredibly well as a result.

Teachers have excellent subject knowledge. This means they explain learning very clearly, showing pupils exactly what they need to know and do to be successful. For example, in early years, staff model language precisely. They ask skilful questions that deepen children's understanding. Staff routinely check whether pupils have remembered what they have learned. This means they identify gaps in knowledge quickly. Teachers provide high-quality support to ensure that pupils catch up rapidly.

Pupils love reading. They read deeply and widely and recall the books they learn in detail. Older pupils read with high levels of fluency. Pupils in the early stages of reading make an excellent start. Expert staff teach phonics consistently well. Pupils learn the sounds and letters they need securely from the moment they start school. This helps them to become

confident readers swiftly. The books pupils read are closely matched to their phonics knowledge. This helps them to practise their reading independently and successfully. Staff identify pupils who fall behind very accurately. Staff ensure they have the support they need to catch up.

Pupils learn the crucial skills and knowledge that will help them flourish. They know key mathematical concepts and apply them confidently throughout their work. Pupils become skilled writers. They use rich and varied language to write engaging texts in several styles. Pupils recall their prior learning clearly. This helps them to build strong connections between the subjects they learn. As a result, pupils develop a detailed understanding of the curriculum.

The school is relentless in its work to ensure that all pupils prosper. The school develops leaders very successfully. They become expert at improving provision. They work closely with trustees to provide them with key knowledge about the school. As a result, trustees offer meaningful challenge and support. Dedicated staff are rightly very positive about the support and training they receive.

Pupils have highly positive attitudes to learning. This begins in early years, where children show deep curiosity and excitement in class. The school rings with the sound of learning. Pupils love school and attend frequently. This is improving over time. The school has clear strategies to support those pupils who require additional help. Attendance for these pupils is improving too.

The school prioritises pupils' personal development. This work is excellent, and all pupils benefit from it. Pupils enhance their learning through exciting trips and visits. For example, pupils contribute to local archaeological digs. They develop a range of skills and talents through the clubs they attend. Pupils have mature attitudes to difference and treat everybody with respect.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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	137615
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10341697
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	436
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Susan Willmott
CEO of the trust	Daniel Smith
Headteacher	Daniel Smith
Website	www.st-johns-maidstone.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	5 December 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Information about this school

- St John's Church of England Primary School is an academy converter and makes up the single-academy trust of the same name. The school's most recent section 48 Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodists Schools took place in June 2019. The school's next section 48 inspection will take place within eight school years.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The school's headteacher and senior leadership team have changed since the last inspection.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given

an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of the school’s education provision.
- This is the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspection team met with the headteacher as well as with other leaders and staff. The lead inspector also held telephone conversations with representatives from the local authority and diocese.
- The inspection team carried out deep dives in the following subjects: reading, mathematics, science, computing and music. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils’ work.
- The inspectors considered the views of parents and carers through their responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View. The inspectors spoke to staff and pupils during the inspection and took account of staff responses to Ofsted’s online staff survey.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors 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.

Inspection team

Gavin Thomas, lead inspector

His Majesty’s Inspector

Andrea Harris

Ofsted Inspector

Leah Morgan

Ofsted Inspector

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