

# St John The Baptist Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	115137
<b>Local Authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	311854
<b>Inspection date</b>	8 October 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Colin Henderson

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	60
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	1
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Belynda Fellows
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Amanda Mitchelson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	13 June 2005
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Pebmarsh Halstead Essex CO9 2NH
<b>Telephone number</b>	01787 269300
<b>Fax number</b>	01787 269074

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Pupils come from the village and the surrounding area. The proportion from ethnic minority backgrounds is below average and all speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, although the proportion with statements of special educational need is above the national average. The numbers of children who start in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) are very small. There is no common trend in the attainment on entry, which varies remarkably widely from year to year. The school has been awarded the Active Mark.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This is an improving school that provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. It is emerging from a difficult period caused by high levels of staff change and illness. The headteacher has provided good leadership through this challenging period. She gives a strong focus to improving the school and maintaining its caring and supportive Christian ethos. Pupils and their parents value this highly as reflected in their many positive comments such as, 'there is a wonderful day-to-day atmosphere in the school and my daughter can't wait to get there'. The strong links with parents, the local church, other local schools and community organisations contribute well to pupils' learning.

Current academic performance across the school is satisfactory and improving because of pupils' desire to learn, some good and occasionally outstanding teaching, and increasingly effective support for individuals and groups of pupils. Pupils achieve satisfactorily overall. Standards of attainment in Years 2 and 6 tests and assessments vary considerably from year to year, ranging from above to below average, because of the very small numbers of pupils and the wide differences in their abilities from year to year. Most attain standards by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 that match those expected for their ability, although some more able pupils do not always attain as well as they could. The headteacher has developed effective procedures to track the progress of all pupils. These identify those who are not on target to attain their expected level by the end of the year. These pupils are then supported to get back on track. This is improving pupils' performance, although the success of these processes has been restricted by staff absence. For example, plans for the headteacher to improve the performance of groups of less able pupils were delayed, as she had to increase her own teaching commitment significantly.

Some new initiatives, for example, the use of improvement targets, are helping pupils improve their work. However, they are not implemented consistently enough in each class to ensure that pupils know how to achieve better. This, together with some weaknesses in teaching in Years 3 and 4, do not ensure that pupils always achieve as well as they should. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Teachers' expectations in some lessons, particularly of more able pupils, are not always high enough. Where teaching is interesting and challenging, for example, in Years 5 and 6, pupils respond enthusiastically in lessons and achieve well. As one parent commented, 'his new teacher has enthused my son more than ever!' Pupils who find learning difficult receive good support from an efficient team of learning support and teaching assistants. They work closely with teachers to match activities to pupils' specific learning needs. As a result, they make good progress towards their individual learning targets.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They enjoy school and have a strong sense of belonging. They are particularly proud of their contribution to improving the school through the school council. Pupils listen attentively in most lessons and their behaviour is excellent. They have a good understanding of healthy and safe lifestyles. Pupils participate enthusiastically in an improved curriculum that includes an increased number of interesting, exciting cross-curricular approaches, such as the 'Cine Literacy' film-making work. The curriculum is enhanced by a good range of sporting, creative and other learning activities that are well attended. Teachers and support staff know their pupils well and provide good personal care and support, although effective guidance to help pupils to improve their work is in the early stages of development.

The enthusiastic headteacher has encouraged a strong team approach after many changes in her staff. She increased the opportunities for other key staff to focus on what needs improving in their areas of responsibility. However, because of some staffing changes, this is still in the early stages of development. Governors are well informed about how well the school is doing and increasingly involved in working with the school to check on the education it provides. The school is improving as a result of the energy and drive of the headteacher and the increasingly effective staff team, demonstrating that it is soundly placed to develop further.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 3**

Children starting in the EYFS join the infant class, which also has Year 1 and 2 pupils. These older pupils are good role models for 'new' children and make them feel welcome. Consequently, children settle happily into this friendly environment, helped by the great care and attention provided by staff. Children who need special help with learning thrive. They have good support and are respected and embraced by the whole school community.

Teaching is satisfactory. There are good features in the strong relationships and promotion of independence. Planning for the wide age and ability range within the class is good, although it is not always explicit enough to ensure that teaching assistants know what is expected of the more able children. There is a good balance between activities directed by adults and those chosen by children. The stimulating outdoor learning environment is used to good advantage. Achievement is satisfactory. By the end of Reception, children have made sound progress from their starting points so that a good number exceed the national standards, while some remain a little below. Letter sounds and how to use these to spell and read are taught well so that progress is good in this area.

There has been significant improvement in the leadership and management of the EYFS since the last inspection. The leader encourages staff to work effectively as a team but has had no time to check how well staff work with groups. Parents are welcomed warmly into school and encouraged to contribute to their children's learning.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve pupils' achievement by raising teachers' expectations to a consistently high level in each class.
- Increase the involvement of other key staff in checking how well pupils are achieving and in identifying areas for school improvement.
- Extend the use of procedures that help pupils know how well they are achieving and what they need to do next to raise the standard of their work.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils achieve satisfactorily overall throughout the school, although it is not always consistent in each class. Infant pupils achieve satisfactorily, with some good progress, for example, in writing. Pupils' achievement in the lower juniors is satisfactory overall, although it not always as good as it should be, particularly for more able pupils. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 currently

achieve well in lessons, for example in English, because of good teaching and their enthusiasm to learn. Standards of attainment, as evident in the Year 2 and Year 6 test results, vary considerably from year to year, ranging from above to below average. Overall, pupils achieve satisfactorily from their starting points, but the school is aware that some of the more able could attain higher standards. Pupils who find learning difficult, for example those with sensory problems, make good progress because of careful planning and effective individual support.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils enjoy coming to school and demonstrate this with their good attendance. They say it is 'a very friendly place and you have fun'. Pupils' behaviour is exceptional, both in lessons and in the playground. They are very positive about learning. Most listen attentively and work hard in lessons, especially when the teaching grasps their interest. Pupils know what is needed for a healthy and a safe life and enjoy taking part in plenty of physical activities. All pupils are members of the school council and take their collective responsibility for making important decisions about the school environment very seriously. They organise fund raising events for national charities. Their involvement in the 'Imagine This 2' project helps them improve their school community. It provides good opportunities for them to apply their key skills and gain a good understanding of the world of work and of the challenges ahead. They are well involved in the local community and participate in local village events. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Most teaching is competent. There is some good and occasionally outstanding practice, for example in Years 5 and 6. This helps pupils make at least satisfactory progress overall. However, there is significant variation across the school. Teachers plan a good range of learning activities and most use technology successfully to capture pupils' interest, for example, the outstanding use of an interactive whiteboard to improve pupils' poetry writing skills. They use questions well to encourage pupils to share their ideas, although the use of more challenging questions to extend pupils' knowledge is not a regular feature. Inconsistencies in the pace of some lessons and in teachers' expectations of the more able, especially in Years 3 and 4, do not ensure that pupils always achieve as well as they should.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The school has improved its curriculum by including French and Spanish, and by developing cross-subject approaches such as 'Mantle of the Expert', where pupils act out roles to explore ideas or solve problems. These interest pupils and motivate their desire to learn. They encourage independence in their learning and good learning habits. Pupils learn how to stay safe and be healthy well. They have good opportunities to take part in physical activities in lessons and after school. The curriculum is carefully modified for pupils who may be vulnerable or need extra help. Consequently, these pupils have very good self-esteem and are confident to 'have a go'. For its size, the school provides a good range of clubs and visits, as well as residential trips that are open to all pupils from Years 4, 5 and 6.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

The good personal care and support helps pupils to become increasingly self-confident and be happy in school. There are secure systems for ensuring their safety and encouraging healthy lifestyles. Pupils are confident that they can approach any adult to share any concerns that they may have. The effective support given to pupils with disabilities helps them to feel valued and included successfully in activities that are appropriate to their needs. Many pupils are beginning to benefit from helpful guidance to improve their work, with targets for reading, writing and mathematics, and some effective marking. These are not used consistently enough to ensure that all pupils know what they need to do next to raise their standards.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Parents value the purposeful leadership of the headteacher, 'Her energy and enthusiasm have proved infectious!' She has managed the school well to minimise the possible disruption resulting from staff changes and lengthy absence. Her willingness to take on additional teaching ensured more consistency in pupils' learning but has limited aspects of her strategic planning. She has worked effectively to improve the quality of the learning environment, and teaching and learning. She has created a new leadership team which is getting a clear understanding of what needs improving and how to tackle it. Members use assessment information with increasing effectiveness to check on how pupils achieve, although they have had few opportunities to observe lessons. The school manages community links well. It is an important part of this rural community and the values of tolerance and understanding of all others feature strongly. Governors are increasingly involved in ensuring the efficient use of funds and checking the education provided, although procedures are not always focused rigorously on how well pupils achieve.

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**

**Annex A**

## Inspection judgements

<b>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</b>	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

<b>How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?</b>	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

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<sup>1</sup>Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

9 October 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of St John The Baptist Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Pebmarsh,  
CO9 2NH

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking to you about what you do in school, looking at your work and watching you learn. You clearly enjoy school and, together with most of your parents, you think that it is a happy and friendly school, and we agree.

We were pleased to see how well you get on together. Your behaviour is excellent and this means that teachers can get on with the job of helping you to learn. It was interesting to talk to some of you about your school council and how you are helping to improve your school, such as 'Imagine This Phase 2'. You clearly have some good ideas, especially when raising money for different charities. You told us that you enjoy your work, especially the different visits and the good range of activities. Many of you learn well and Mrs. Mitchelson and her staff are working hard to try to help you to learn as well as possible. You enjoy the good teaching in some of your lessons and we have asked Mrs Mitchelson and her staff to help you learn even better by making all your lessons interesting and challenging. Some of you are getting a better understanding of how to improve your work and are keen to achieve your new learning targets. We have asked the teachers to help all of you to understand what you need to do to improve your work. We have also asked your school to provide more opportunities for teachers who are responsible for particular subjects to see where they can help you achieve even better.

Thank you again for helping us to find out about your school and we hope that you will continue to be happy and to work hard.

C Henderson

Lead inspector