

St John's Church of England Primary Academy

Addison Terrace, Wednesbury, West Midlands WS10 9AR

Inspection dates

27–28 September 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The able and committed principal has led the school forward in a successful drive to improve outcomes for pupils.
- The school's Christian values, aptly titled 'GETFAB', permeate the work of the school through the promotion of generosity, endurance, tolerance, forgiveness, ambition and belief.
- Members of the trust and governing body have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They provide effective support and challenge for leaders at all levels.
- Outcomes for pupils in 2017 were much improved on the previous year. By the end of key stage 2, the proportions of pupils achieving the expected standards in reading and mathematics were above national levels. This was also the case for disadvantaged pupils.
- Pupils behave well at school. They are polite and show respect for each other. Pupils feel safe at school and enjoy their learning.
- All adults provide good care and support for pupils. Adults make sure that pupils are safe and know how to stay safe.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well and make good progress in their learning.
- Typically, good teaching enables pupils to learn and make progress. Sometimes, however, teachers do not identify errors or misconceptions quickly enough and pupils continue to make mistakes in their learning.
- Expectations in writing standards are not yet consistent across the whole school. There is no whole-school approach to handwriting.
- Teachers sometimes challenge pupils with work that is too hard, or move pupils on too quickly in their learning when they have not yet grasped some key concepts.
- Leaders do not yet track pupils' progress in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- Children do not make good enough progress in the early years foundation stage. Learning activities in the outdoor environment are not planned well, and lack purpose. Language and communication skills are not promoted well.
- The teaching of phonics is weak in the Reception class. Staff do not yet have the requisite skills to teach phonics effectively.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Take swift action to improve the provision in the early years foundation stage so that:
 - staff have a clear understanding of the purpose and use of the outdoor learning provision
 - children are provided with interesting and engaging learning experiences that help them make more rapid progress in all areas of their development
 - children, including those for whom English is an additional language, are supported more effectively to develop their language and communication skills
 - staff receive appropriate professional development so that they can teach phonics effectively, and match activities to children’s abilities.
- Continue to improve leadership and management by further improving assessment systems so that pupils’ progress in the foundation subjects can be tracked.
- Further improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that it is consistently good or better by:
 - making sure that teachers plan and deliver work that is well matched to pupils’ abilities and provides an appropriate level of challenge
 - making sure that staff consistently check pupils’ understanding in lessons so that misconceptions can be addressed quickly.
- Further improve outcomes in writing by:
 - ensuring that there is a consistent approach to handwriting, enabling pupils to develop their writing skills
 - raising expectations across the school of pupils’ writing to match those seen in upper key stage 2.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since the principal took up her post, she has built an effective leadership team which is focused on making rapid and sustained improvements to the school. Leaders' accurate self-evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses has enabled them to prioritise improvements and work systematically to address them.
- Staff are overwhelmingly positive about the changes and improvements to the school that have been made by the principal and her team. Staff also recognise that leaders are mindful of their well-being and workload.
- Staff are able to access and benefit from a high standard of support and professional development within the trust. They spoke highly of the 'quality learning circles' which are facilitated by the trust, which focus on all aspects of the curriculum. These groups enable staff to reflect on, and further improve, their practice.
- Leaders have established rigorous systems for monitoring all aspects of teaching and learning. Leaders gather a breadth of evidence through regular monitoring activities and meet with teachers to discuss the outcomes of their findings and take further action where necessary. Work is moderated, both internally and with other schools in the trust, on a regular basis and judgements about the standards of work are accurate.
- Leaders hold teachers to account for the performance of pupils, and progress information about pupils is discussed at regular meetings. This enables leaders and teachers to check on a regular basis on the performance of the pupils in their charge and put additional support in place where progress is slower.
- Leaders manage the performance of staff well, setting appropriate and challenging targets linked to school improvement. The performance of support staff is also effective. Staff value the variety of professional development opportunities they are given.
- Pupils enjoy a wide range of curriculum activities. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is a strength of the school and the Christian ethos threads through all aspects of this work. The school was awarded the Values Quality Mark in 2017 in recognition of the strength of this work. Each year group's 'treasured work' folder celebrates learning about wider areas of the curriculum, including politics, current affairs and life in modern Britain, preparing pupils well for their future education and work. While pupils have visited a cathedral, they have not yet visited other places of worship.
- Pupils are able to take part in a variety of activities. Leaders are now beginning to develop a more thematic approach to the curriculum so that pupils can make links between subjects and develop their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum. Pupils have the opportunity to learn Spanish in key stage 2. While leaders have maintained a broad curriculum while raising standards in the core subjects, work in the foundation subjects is not of a consistently high standard across all year groups. Pupils do not do as well in science, compared to the national average, but leaders know this and are taking the necessary steps to improve outcomes in science.

- Pupils are able to access a variety of activities at the breakfast and after-school clubs, such as choir, netball, dodgeball, Spanish and gymnastics. Increasing participation rates show that pupils are enjoying these activities.
- Leaders make sure that pupil premium funding is used effectively to enable disadvantaged pupils to be treated equally and achieve well. Additional targeted support is provided in lessons and pupils have also benefited from additional resources for reading and mathematics, and an Easter school. Pupils are also supported to attend residential visits or music and theatre trips. Disadvantaged pupils are now making accelerated progress and are catching up with their peers.
- The primary physical education (PE) and sport premium funding has been used effectively to improve the quality of teaching of PE. Pupils' participation in sports activities has also increased. Pupils are now able to try new sporting activities, such as archery and tennis, with support from external sports coaches.
- The funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used well and is having a positive impact on their progress. Each pupil has a personal learning plan which is reviewed regularly. Pupils receive effective, targeted support and the school works closely with external agencies, where appropriate, for additional support and advice. The leader of this area meets regularly with teachers to monitor the impact of the support. Staff receive additional training to enable them to support pupils well.
- In 2016, leaders identified weaknesses in the progress made by children in the early years. They took steps to address this by providing additional skilled staff in this phase. This had a positive impact on children's outcomes. This year, due to budget considerations, changes have had to be made to staffing levels. This is now affecting the quality of the provision in the early years; it is not yet good enough to ensure that children reach their full potential. Despite this, leaders are determined to provide the support and training necessary in this stage.

Governance of the school

- The principal's high expectations are shared by the multi-academy trust and the governing body. Trust members and governors are rigorous in holding leaders to account, and this has contributed to the drive for improvement and the raising of standards in the school. In turn, trust members recognise the high aspirations and drive of the principal and her skills are used well to support other schools in the trust.
- Governors receive comprehensive information from the principal, which enables them to monitor the work of the school closely and have a clear understanding of how well pupils are achieving. Their range of skills and expertise enables them to ask searching questions of leaders and they will offer robust challenge when needed.
- The trust's raising achievement board provides further rigour in the monitoring of the school's work. The trust members use their knowledge of the school to provide coaching and mentoring support in appropriate areas, and this has had a positive impact on improvements seen in the school.
- Trust members and governors make sure that they meet their statutory safeguarding duties, and check that policies are fit for purpose. They make sure that they keep up to

date with training, including that on the safer recruitment of staff.

- Governors ensure that the process of managing staff performance, including that of the principal, is fair and transparent. They also check that any additional funding they receive, such as the pupil premium, is used wisely.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities and take them seriously. The way in which staff care for pupils' welfare and safety is evident in the daily running of the school. Staff receive regular training and updates about all aspects of safeguarding to enable them to notice if a child may be at risk of harm. Staff know to whom they should report their concerns and they understand their statutory responsibilities about reporting female genital mutilation.
- The designated safeguarding lead and her deputies have an excellent knowledge of the risks in the local area, and make sure that pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe. Records are up to date and kept securely.
- Safeguarding leaders utilise support well from external agencies, such as the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and Brook Young People, to help pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. Pupils with medical conditions are supported effectively by trained staff. Leaders have organised information sessions for parents to help them understand the risks that their children may face, and how these can be managed.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- In most classes, and in most lessons, teachers use assessment information well to plan lessons, making sure that activities are well matched to pupils' abilities. As a result, time is used well. Pupils respond quickly to teachers' instructions and are engaged in their learning.
- Teaching assistants provide good support for pupils in their lessons. They give additional help where necessary, but also encourage pupils to work independently. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported, with activities matched to their learning needs.
- Pupils to whom inspectors spoke were clear about what they were learning. They also know that they should try and solve their problems first, using the school's 'SPOT' approach, without asking for help too quickly. This helps them to become independent learners.
- In some lessons, where activities are not closely matched to pupils' abilities, pupils lost interest in their learning. This was also the case where work was sometimes too challenging. While it is clear that teachers have high expectations of the pupils, inspection evidence showed that, on occasions, pupils had not grasped key concepts in their learning, but were moved on too quickly to the next, harder activity. As a result, this did not enable them to consolidate some of these key concepts.

- The teaching of phonics in Year 1 is effective. Pupils are able to practise the sounds that letters and groups of letters make. Outcomes in phonics have risen for the last two years.
- Pupils enjoy reading and the school's well-resourced library gives pupils access to a wide range of authors and genres. On the whole, pupils read with expression and fluency and are clear about which authors they enjoy. Reading records are not used as well as they could be to promote reading at home, as teachers do not always monitor their use. A few pupils in key stage 1 were reading books that were not well matched to their reading ability.
- Teachers generally have strong subject knowledge, and this is used well to model learning and develop pupils' language. Pupils who attend the 'high flyers' group are challenged to work at greater depth in their learning and the success of this can be seen in outcomes for pupils.
- In mathematics, there is clear evidence of progress over time, with pupils applying their mathematical skills across a range of strands. There is a strong focus on mastery of the subject across the school, with regular opportunities to develop problem-solving and reasoning skills. This has resulted in excellent outcomes in key stage 2 mathematics this year, with a very high proportion of pupils achieving greater depth in their learning.
- Work in pupils' books shows that standards in writing are improving. Pupils are applying their grammar, punctuation and spelling skills in their writing and improving their work. Pupils' 'hot' and 'cold' writing tasks show progress over time. Teachers, especially in upper key stage 2, use engaging themes and topics to maintain pupils' interest in their writing. For example, pupils had to write about justifying the use of fidget spinners. In some year groups, teachers' expectations of pupils' writing is not high enough.
- While pupils are encouraged to write at length in other curriculum subjects, they are not applying the skills they have learned in English with the same level of consistency in the foundation subjects.
- Pupils' standards of handwriting vary across year groups. There is no whole-school approach to the development of handwriting. Some pupils are forming letters incorrectly from an early age, and this is not always addressed. Where pupils practise their handwriting, they do not always apply it to their written work. Standards in handwriting and presentation of work are better in upper key stage 2.
- Pupils are encouraged to assess their own and others' work on a regular basis. Pupils are confident to talk to their partner about how they could improve their work, but they do not apply the same high standards when assessing their own work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils try hard in lessons and have positive attitudes to learning. They are interested in

the work they are doing and show a good level of resilience.

- Pupils play cooperatively at breaktimes. They carry their lunch trays carefully and sensibly to the dining room and the school is a calm and orderly environment.
- Pupils enjoy the extra responsibilities they are given, through the school council and the house system. They wear their badges of responsibility with pride.
- Pupils feel safe and say that they are well looked after by all staff. They have a good knowledge of how to stay safe on the internet. Pupils learn about how to stay safe in a variety of different ways, including water safety and road safety. Leaders engage external providers to help deliver messages about personal safety, grooming and female genital mutilation and seek additional help for pupils in areas such as mental health.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. They agree that their children are well cared for and safe in school. They trust the school to support and help resolve any issues as they arise. Leaders also signpost families towards appropriate help when they need it.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils know the rules and expectation for behaviour and follow them well. Pupils look forward to receiving 'dojos' for positive behaviour and enjoy celebrating their achievements in assemblies. Inappropriate behaviour is rare across the school.
- Pupils conduct themselves well in and around the school. They are polite and show respect to each other and to adults. Pupils greeted inspectors politely and held doors open for them. At breaktimes, pupils play cooperatively together and take time to help each other. At lunchtimes, pupils queue sensibly for their lunch and carry their trays carefully into the dining room.
- Behaviour in lessons is positive, with the majority of pupils showing an eagerness to learn. Occasionally, when pupils are not challenged in their learning, they lose concentration and some low-level disruption occurs. Pupils told inspectors that a few pupils could behave better because they disturbed learning in lessons.
- Pupils understand what bullying is, including different types of bullying such as cyber bullying, and know what to do if it happens to them. They told inspectors that there is very little bullying in school and that adults deal with it quickly if it does happen.
- Attendance is improving and systems are in place to deal with pupil absence effectively and in a timely way. The 100% club rewards high levels of attendance and pupils value the rewards they receive. While persistent absence is above the national average, it is reducing over time. This is because leaders are working closely with families to promote the importance of regular school attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- From a range of different starting points, in all year groups, pupils are making good progress.

- In 2017, the proportions of pupils meeting the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics in Year 2 were broadly in line with the national averages. Pupils performed slightly better in English and mathematics than in writing.
- In 2017, progress and attainment for pupils at the end of key stage 2 had significantly improved, with the strongest progress in reading and mathematics. This is as a result of the targeted interventions and improved quality of teaching in this key stage overall.
- In 2016, outcomes for disadvantaged pupils at the end of key stage 2 were significantly below those of other pupils nationally. As a result of a sharper focus and effective interventions, these pupils are now making accelerated progress and differences are diminishing rapidly.
- Outcomes in the national phonics screening check for pupils in Year 1 have risen over the last two years, and have been above the national averages.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. Support for these pupils is carefully targeted through the identification of provision in personal learning plans. This ensures that barriers to learning are reduced and each pupil's needs are met. Leaders check the progress of these pupils regularly to make sure that they are receiving the right support to help them make progress.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language are making good progress in relation to their starting points. Progress in key stage 1 is slower, but in key stage 2 they make accelerated progress to reach the levels expected.
- The most able pupils in school, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, are now achieving higher outcomes, but the proportions of pupils achieving greater depth in their learning are not yet consistent across all key stages. In the 2017 national assessments, the proportion of pupils who achieved greater depth in their learning in key stage 1 was slightly below the national average. In contrast, the proportion of pupils in Year 6 who achieved greater depth in their learning was higher than the national average, with especially strong outcomes in reading and mathematics.
- Evidence of work in pupils' books who are currently in school shows that they are making good progress overall in a range of subjects. However, leaders do not yet collect and analyse information about the progress of pupils in the foundation subjects to enable them to target interventions where necessary.
- While progress and attainment in writing outcomes are improving overall, these are not yet consistent for all groups of pupils. Outcomes continue to be lower in writing than in reading and mathematics in both key stage 1 and lower key stage 2.
- Leaders are making sure that pupils learn about how to prepare for the next stage of their education, and life after school. Pupils' transitions to new schools are supported well. Pupils are able to participate in careers fairs and visits to universities to help raise their aspirations. This enables them to consider their future employment and education options.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- While outcomes for children in the early years are improving, leaders recognise that there remain some areas which require further development in order for children to be well prepared for Year 1. Leaders are now addressing these with urgency.
- Recent improvements have been made to the building and the organisation of the indoor learning space, but it is too early to see the impact of this change on the overall provision.
- Leaders know that the outdoor learning area requires improvement. Not all staff understand how to develop children’s learning effectively in this area. There is insufficient focus on learning outcomes for the children and, as a result, the purpose of some of the activities is unclear. Where activities are well planned, children become engrossed in their learning. During the inspection, inspectors saw some children enjoying looking for mini-beasts and studying them with a magnifier. However, some activities are not exciting, or do not allow the children to be creative and develop the range of skills they need to acquire.
- The outdoor space is not consistently well organised. There are insufficient opportunities for children to develop their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum. Children are not always able to access additional materials such as number lines and key vocabulary. The environment does not support children sufficiently who are at an early stage of learning language, or speak English as an additional language. For example, key vocabulary and additional pictures or symbols to support language acquisition are not displayed in the indoor or outdoor environment, and this slows children’s progress in becoming confident speakers.
- The small number of children in the pre-school provision are supported well in their learning. However, they have limited access to the outdoor learning environment, which restricts their learning experiences. Very small numbers of pre-school children move in to the Reception class.
- In the Reception class, the teaching of phonics is ineffective. This is because staff have not been trained well enough to teach phonics. Too much emphasis is placed on writing letters and words, with insufficient opportunity to practise letter sounds and blends.
- Writing materials do not enable children to develop their fine motor skills sufficiently because pencils are too small. Children are not able to learn how to use a tripod grip properly, so find it difficult to control the small movements needed to write letters and numbers correctly.
- The leader of the early years has a clear understanding of current strengths and weaknesses. Accurate systems are now in place to track children’s progress in all areas of learning. More children are now achieving a good level of development. Children who are disadvantaged are making similar progress to their non-disadvantaged peers and the difference in attainment between these groups of children is diminishing.
- Children in the pre-school and early years settings are safe, supervised, cared for and supported well. Safeguarding is effective and welfare requirements are met.

- Children behave well and those new to the school are quickly learning routines and expectations. They are beginning to cooperate well during activities and additional adults support them during their play activities.
- Staff are now beginning to benefit from the additional support available within the trust for the early years. The trust's improvement adviser is also providing coaching and mentoring support in the early years, but it is too early to see the impact of this action.

School details

Unique reference number	140856
Local authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	10037089

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy convertor
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	200
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Roger Gilbert
Principal	Sarah Cockshott
Telephone number	0121 556 0269
Website	www.stjohnsacademy.co.uk
Email address	finance@lichfield.anglican.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- St John's Church of England Primary Academy converted to become an academy in 2014. When its predecessor school, St John's CofE Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to require improvement.
- The school has a small pre-school provision which 16 children currently attend, mostly on a part-time basis. This is managed by the governing body. The provision is due to close in July 2018.
- The number of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding is above the national average.
- The majority of pupils are from minority ethnic groups. While half the pupils speak

English as an additional language, most converse well in English.

- The school runs a breakfast club.
- In 2016, the school met the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The principal provides leadership support to other schools in the trust.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all year groups, accompanied by senior leaders.
- Inspectors met with pupils and heard a selection of pupils read. They looked at examples of pupils' work in their books, and spoke to pupils about their learning.
- Inspectors met with the principal and other members of the leadership team. Inspectors spoke to a small group of staff and considered 16 responses to the Ofsted online staff questionnaire.
- The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer and the improvement adviser of the trust. She also met with four members of the governing body.
- Inspectors spoke to a number of parents at the start of the school day, and considered the small number of responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire.
- A range of school documents was scrutinised, including the school's self-evaluation, development plans, information about managing staff performance and current progress information. Information about all aspects of safeguarding, behaviour and attendance was analysed. Governing body minutes were scrutinised.

Inspection team

Deb Jenkins, lead inspector

Michael Appleby

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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