

# Inspection of St John's Church of England Voluntary Aided First School, Frome

Christchurch Street East, Frome, Somerset BA11 1QG

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Inspection dates: 23 and 24 April 2024

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Early years provision

**Good**

Previous inspection grade

Good

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils enjoy attending St John's First School and are keen to do well. The school is a welcoming and nurturing environment. The values of kindness, safety and respect underpin the ethos of the school. They help pupils to recognise the importance of treating one another fairly and kindly.

The school has undergone a number of recent changes, including to leadership. While the school has identified what needs to improve, the pace of improvement has been too slow. As a result, the curriculum does not yet ensure all pupils are ready for the next stage in their learning.

Pupils and parents value the support and care that staff provide. Relationships are positive. Staff are friendly and warm, and they know pupils well. Pupils know that there are adults in school that they can talk to if they have a concern. This means they feel safe.

Most pupils have positive attitudes to their learning. This starts in the early years where children enjoy playing and learning together. Children learn to take turns and to share.

The school ensures that the curriculum extends beyond the academic. For example, pupils are involved in local community art projects, charity fundraising and working with a local care home. This helps them to become active citizens in the community.

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

Since the last inspection, the school has worked closely with the local authority and external partners to make improvements. This has included work to improve the curriculum. In subjects where the curriculum is more developed, for example, in mathematics and art, it identifies what pupils need to know and remember and the order in which they need to learn it. In these subjects, staff training supports teachers to effectively deliver the curriculum. This helps pupils to develop a secure understanding and to achieve well.

However, some subjects are less well developed, including some areas of the English curriculum, beyond phonics. In these subjects, the curriculum does not define the small steps in learning that pupils need to take. This means that pupils do not build on what they already know. Expectations for what pupils can achieve are not consistently high for all subjects and for all pupils. In some subjects, the curriculum, and its delivery, do not meet the needs of all pupils. As a result, some pupils do not learn well.

The school has prioritised developments in reading. Children learn to read as soon as they start school in Reception Year. Daily phonics practice helps pupils to develop the knowledge and skills that they need to learn to read. If pupils fall behind, they receive extra support to catch up. However, the quality of some of this support is

inconsistent. As a result, some pupils do not become confident and fluent readers quickly. Most pupils read books that match the sounds that they know and have learned. Where books are less closely matched, pupils struggle with reading. This hinders them from becoming confident readers.

The school has made recent changes to the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), but much of this work is in its infancy. In a few subjects, such as mathematics, teachers adapt the learning well to provide extra support to pupils who need help. However, this is not yet the case for all subjects. While staff swiftly identify pupils' needs, some support plans are not precise. This means that the provision does not always match pupils' needs. As a result, pupils with SEND, including those accessing the nurture provision, do not receive the support they need to learn as well as they can.

The school's recent work to develop the behaviour policy is having a positive impact. Most pupils understand the expectations. The school is calm and orderly. Pupils play well together at social times. Older pupils support younger children during breaktimes through their play leader roles. This gives them a sense of responsibility. At times, the behaviour of a minority of pupils disturbs the learning of others. While staff do address these issues, sometimes these incidents persist.

The school supports pupils' personal development well. Pupils learn about the importance of looking after their physical and mental health. They learn about protected characteristics in an age-appropriate way. Through the school council, pupils enjoy having a say in how to improve the school. The school has strong links with the local church. Pupils can talk about different religions and cultures. They learn to celebrate difference. This helps to prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- While there are some green shoots of improvement, actions to improve the school have been too slow. As a result, expectations for what pupils can achieve are not yet high enough. The school needs to raise its expectations to ensure that the curriculum is implemented effectively in all classes and for all pupils.
- In some subjects, the curriculum is being developed and it does not identify the steps in learning pupils need to take so that they can build on what they know. As a result, some pupils' needs are not met well, including in some elements of the English curriculum. The school needs to identify the steps in learning pupils need to take and fully implement an effective curriculum. In so doing, it should ensure

that there are consistent and high expectations for all pupils to learn the intended curriculum, so they are ready for the next stage in their learning.

- Provision for pupils with SEND is not yet strong. The support plans for some pupils with SEND lack sufficient precision to ensure pupils receive the help they need to learn a broad and balanced curriculum. As a result, some pupils with SEND do not build their knowledge well enough across the curriculum. The school needs to ensure that the quality and effectiveness of support plans are improved. It must ensure staff and subject leaders are trained well to implement the right support so that pupils with SEND achieve well.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	123843
<b>Local authority</b>	Somerset
<b>Inspection number</b>	10297939
<b>Type of school</b>	First
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	229
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Kerry Smith (Acting Chair)
<b>Headteacher</b>	Teresa Gilbert
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.stjohnsfrome.co.uk">www.stjohnsfrome.co.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	7 and 8 February 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- There have been a number of changes to leadership since the last inspection. The new headteacher started in April 2023. The substantive deputy headteacher started in April 2023. The new special educational needs coordinator started in January 2024.
- St John's First School is part of the Diocese of Bath and Wells. The school had its last denominational education inspection under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 in February 2023.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- There is a breakfast club and an after-school club led by the school for pupils who attend the school.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's

education provision.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and other senior leaders, curriculum leaders and groups of teachers.
- Inspectors held meetings with governors, including the chair of governors, and met with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, and art. 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. Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in geography and history.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the view 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.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the Ofsted Parent View online survey. An inspector also spoke with parents at the end of the school day. Inspectors considered the responses to the Ofsted online staff survey.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site. Additionally, the inspectors spoke to pupils to discuss their views of the school.

### **Inspection team**

Nicky McMahon, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Julie Fox

Ofsted Inspector

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