

Maidstone, St John's Church of England Primary School

Provender Way, Grove Green, Maidstone, ME14 5TZ

Inspection dates 15–16 July 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy
	This inspection:	Outstanding 1
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils	Outstanding	1
Early years provision	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The headteacher, supported by senior staff and governors, has helped to foster outstanding teaching and pupils' achievement since becoming an academy. The school is continuing to improve, as teamwork is a significant strength.
- Pupils achieve outstandingly well throughout the school. Results in national tests at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 have been consistently above average.
- Pupils are articulate speakers, creative writers and confident mathematicians. Pupils throughout the school learn extremely well.
- Pupils with special educational needs also achieve exceptionally well. Staff meet their needs very carefully. This ensures they learn at the same high level as everybody else.
- The range of activities that pupils follow in class is highly engaging and tailored very closely to pupils' interests. This develops their academic, social, and Christian understanding to high levels.
- Displays around the school are extensive and reflect the high academic standards pupils achieve. They also showcase their highly impressive skills in model making, art, and creative writing.
- Parents are highly pleased with the school, citing the caring, supportive, and Christian atmosphere created.
- The behaviour of pupils is typically outstanding through the school. Pupils are mature, thoughtful and extremely confident. They say that they feel exceptionally safe.
- Teachers use a range of highly effective methods to ensure that pupils achieve to very high levels over time. Pupils speak highly of their teachers as they 'have belief in them' to teach to a high standard.
- Early years provision is outstanding. Children have an extremely secure start to their school life. The range of activities they follow develops their skills, attitudes, and behaviour to extremely high levels. The outdoor area however, is not quite as interesting or well resourced as the classrooms.
- Pupils have a highly developed sense of right and wrong, fair play and a strong appreciation of the values and traditions of living in modern Britain.
- Additional funding is used with precision to ensure that a high proportion of pupils take part in a wide range of sports. Specialist teaching and regular competition against other schools help extend pupils' skills. The school has won awards recognising pupils' sporting prowess.
- Governors support the school extremely well. They have been instrumental in helping the school to maintain pupils' high levels of academic achievement while improving resources and facilities.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 18 lessons or parts of lessons, including the teaching of phonics (letter patterns and the sounds they represent), reading, writing, and mathematics. Most of these observations were conducted jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- The inspection team held meetings with staff and pupils, the Chair and two other members of the Governing Body, and a school improvement adviser. They also attended assemblies and listened to some pupils read in Years 2 and 6. Inspectors also observed some sports day activities.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents including those relating to safeguarding and child protection, and checks on the quality of teaching and pupils' academic performance. They examined the school's self-evaluation, reports from the external advisers, minutes of governing body meetings, accident and behaviour logs, and the school's plans for improvement.
- Inspectors looked closely at the work pupils did in lessons, as well as work they had completed over time and displays around the school.
- Comments made by parents spoken to over the course of the inspection were considered along with the 92 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire. The results of a parental survey recently conducted by the school were also considered. The responses from the 37 staff questionnaires were also taken into account. Three letters from parents were also received.

Inspection team

Kevin Hodge, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Janet Simms	Additional Inspector
Sue Cox	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger-than-average primary school in which most pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The school converted to become an academy school in November 2011. When its predecessor school, also called Maidstone, St John's Church of England Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted in 2010, it was judged as good overall.
- The proportion of pupils supported by pupil premium funding is much lower than the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and the few children adopted from care in the school. As there are typically five or fewer in each year group, their rates of progress are not reported in detail.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average.
- The school met the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress at the end of Year 6.
- Children in the early years are taught in two Reception classes and attend full time.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of the outside area for early years children.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher, supported by staff, has led the school extremely effectively since becoming an academy. There are exceptionally clear aims and values set by staff, which pupils readily talk about. The school's Christian teachings and values are integrated well through day-to-day activities. The exemplary attitudes through the school, set by staff and pupils alike, help teaching and pupils' learning to thrive.
- Good teamwork is a significant strength. This enables staff to give of their best and it shows in the way that staff enthusiastically identify ways that they can help pupils to learn even better. Senior leaders foster excellent relationships between pupils, parents and staff.
- Those staff who are responsible for subjects or aspects in the school, often known as middle leaders, are highly effective. They are scrupulous in the way that they look to identify any areas where pupils are not achieving their best before suggesting a range of effective ways to help pupils improve. For example, staff identified some minor weaknesses in pupils' writing and have worked very effectively to ensure that it stays high quality.
- The range of activities that pupils learn is very wide. It ensures that pupils' learning develops very well in a wide range of subjects. This is reflected in pupils' past work, the extensive displays of their efforts and the pupils themselves, who are highly enthusiastic about the activities on offer. Opportunities to learn musical instruments, different sports and dance and drama help develop their abilities to high levels.
- Pupils develop a good understanding of modern British values through activities which help them to understand what democracy and tolerance really mean. They supplement this understanding with visits away from the school and visitors, such as local magistrates who recently came into the school to tell children what they do and why. Their understanding of others further from the school is also highly developed through studies of those from differing backgrounds and/or beliefs. The school also ensures that the school's traditional Christian values have a high profile.
- The school's impressive monitoring arrangements ensure that top quality teaching is the norm. Senior staff regularly assess and evaluate the work of others in the school to identify any areas that can improve. Pupils' work, their views and ongoing assessment information are combined in order to assess the quality of teaching. Staff are very clear that salary progression links very closely to pupils' continuing excellent progress.
- The school uses additional sport premium funding extremely well. It helps provide outside specialists to promote sport both within the school and in the wider community. A high proportion of pupils take part in activities ranging from Kung Fu and tennis to gymnastics and inter-school competitions. It also enables teachers to have more in-depth training so that they too become very confident in teaching and promoting sport and healthy lifestyles.
- The school ensures that statutory requirements relating to child protection and staff appointments are met fully and are effective. Leaders ensure that everyone is treated fairly and has equal opportunities to thrive. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated by staff or governors.
- The coordination and work of special educational needs and those pupils entitled to additional funding are carried out to a high level. Staff identify pupils' needs very carefully and support is arranged from a variety of sources, both within the school and with the help of additional outside professionals.
- Staff and governors have developed excellent relationships with parents. All those who responded to the Ofsted parent questionnaire said they would recommend the school to others. A typical comment made to inspectors included 'excellent, caring and a supportive staff'.
- The school has had excellent guidance from a link adviser who has given advice in a variety of ways, not least in helping to maintain the high quality of teaching and pupils' learning. In this respect, help from outside professionals has been extremely effective in supporting the school's drive for improvement.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are highly effective and give the school excellent support. Over time, they have ensured that the school has changed to academy status smoothly. Despite significant building works to add additional classrooms, they have ensured that pupils' excellent learning stays at the forefront of what the school does.
 - Governors ensure that they clearly know the strengths and weaknesses of the school. This includes understanding information on the school's performance and keeping a close eye on the quality of teaching. They visit the school regularly. Governors, along with senior leaders, set high expectations for all staff so they are clear that salary progression for teachers links to pupils' progress. They are also aware of where support has been provided in the past to ensure that teaching remains high quality.
 - Governors use a wide range of skills to support and challenge the school's leaders to improve. They

have been very helpful in planning for the future growth of the school and negotiating additional new accommodation.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils are extremely clear about the school's values of trust, friendship, forgiveness and compassion. Their very mature attitudes, impeccable behaviour and respect for others are all significant strengths.
- Pupils are keen and enthusiastic to tell visitors about the many exciting things that they do, whether it be their enjoyment of making models, being on the school council or in looking forward to their new schools next term. Pupils behave outstandingly well around the school, at playtimes, lunchtimes and within assemblies.
- Pupils enjoy their range of responsibilities such as peer mentors, play leaders, members of the school council or acting as buddies for younger pupils. For example, one older child took his role very seriously when helping one of the youngest pupils at the start of the day to make sure he had settled in well.
- Pupils are very clear that inconsiderate behaviour rarely takes place. They say that bullying is almost non-existent and are clear that staff respond speedily in helping them to resolve any difficulties that, on rare occasions, take place. Relationships between pupils are of the highest quality, supporting their view that any poor behaviour is very rare.
- Parents who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire or who wrote to the inspectors confirmed the view that pupils' behaviour, attitudes and understanding of the school's Christian values were all extremely strong features of the school.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils readily say that they feel extremely secure within the school, despite periods of disruption while significant building works took place. A high level of staff supervision around the school ensures that pupils feel safe when moving between classes and at playtimes.
- Pupils are crystal clear about the potential benefits and pitfalls of using the internet. They are very clear that they should report any websites which are not suitable and that they should not reveal any personal details when using the internet at home.
- The school's safety logs indicate that accidents are relatively rare. Regular and in-depth risk assessments, combined with extremely effective safety procedures, ensure that accidental mishaps are kept to the absolute minimum. If they occur, they are dealt with swiftly and very effectively.
- Regular visitors to the school, such as police or firefighters, help reinforce clear messages about how to behave, keep safe and be responsible. Pupils' very mature outlooks aid their sense of safety.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teaching is typically outstanding. Activities engage pupils' interests exceptionally well and develop their skills to a high level so that pupils achieve outstandingly. High expectations of teachers ensure that the quantity of work is high and the quality is excellent. The most-able pupils are challenged effectively in a variety of ways to reach very high standards in their work.
- Teachers use many different approaches to extend pupils' understanding; for example, Year 6 pupils learning Pythagoras' theorem or learning how to write more effectively. Pupils are challenged in highly effective ways in order to extend their mathematical and writing abilities fully.
- Pupils have very clear and useful advice on how to improve their work. The school's clear assessment routines, fully understood by the pupils, mean that pupils act upon the guidance they are given and this accelerates their progress. Pupils say that they like their targets set for them by staff. Pupils are clear that the teacher sets the targets, but they 'own' their learning and are responsible for acting on the suggestions to improve.
- Reading is taught extremely well. Pupils read very widely and frequently. They readily understand what they read. Pupils are enthusiastic to tell inspectors that they like their 'Give Me 5', where pupils are rewarded for reading five books with an adult each week throughout the year. This boosts their motivation to read widely and often, as well as encouraging home/school support. Younger pupils are taught letter sounds and combinations very carefully and systematically. Children in the Reception classes, for example, readily sound out letters to help them read unfamiliar words.

- The impact of teaching upon writing is excellent. Much work has gone into equipping pupils to write in lively and interesting ways, both in English lessons and within different subjects. Teaching ensures that both pupils' writing and number skills are used in lots of different and effective ways.
- Teaching assistants provide skilful support for groups and individuals, which helps pupils to make good progress. They work well with teachers to share information about pupils' progress or any specific needs that may arise.
- Effective mathematics teaching over time has ensured that pupils throughout the school achieve extremely well. Pupils have highly accurate and quick problem-solving skills. Past work indicates that teaching also extends and develops pupils' knowledge of shape, presenting data and in using their skills in investigative ways.
- Those pupils who have special educational needs benefit from a range of teaching which is targeted closely to their specific needs. Pupils receive high quality support in improving their academic, social and physical needs.
- Classrooms are exciting and stimulating, and reflect just how much pupils' work is valued. There is an excellent combination of work that pupils complete along with highly attractive displays which give pupils help in their writing, mathematics, and topic work. Work in books is normally presented to a very high standard throughout the school.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Pupils' achievement is outstanding throughout the school. From their beginning at the school in the Reception classes through to when they leave, pupils develop a wide range of skills that prepare them extremely well for their transfer to secondary school.
- Results in national tests for pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 have been above average in writing, mathematics and reading since the academy opened. Older pupils also achieve very well in their grammar, punctuation, and spelling tests at the end of Year 6, reaching levels that are above the national average.
- The school's checks on pupils' progress this year and early results from this year's national tests indicate that pupils will again achieve extremely well and have improved upon last year's already high results. For example, the proportion of pupils reaching higher than expected levels in Year 6 is particularly high in reading and grammar tests.
- Pupils are confident and creative writers through the school. They can write in a wide range of ways, such as newspaper reports, persuasive adverts, cautionary tales, or when writing as detectives. Pupils in Year 6, for example, enjoyed writing about the different ways that their parents influence what they can and cannot do. This prompted a wide range of sensible ideas, which they then wrote about quickly and creatively. Pupils' spelling is consistently accurate and their knowledge of punctuation is sophisticated.
- In mathematics, older pupils understand algebra, how to convert fractions to decimals, areas of simple and more complex shapes, and how to do investigative work. They are quick at calculation and problem solving and liked to tell inspectors how these skills can be used in different ways beyond school. For example, in a Year 5 lesson, pupils were absorbed in their learning when finding different percentages of different sums of money.
- Pupils are highly confident and enthusiastic readers. They read with great fluency and interest. They can speak in detail about the stories they read, the characters and possible endings. They know a wide range of authors and have a number of favourites, which they can recall easily. Many enjoy the challenges set by their class teachers.
- Pupils in Year 1 reach above average levels in the national spelling and phonic check and results this year look to have improved upon those reached last year. These achievements are reflected in pupils' day-to-day lessons where younger pupils readily tackle unfamiliar words as they sound out letters and combinations confidently and accurately.
- The most-able pupils achieve extremely well across the school. For example, high proportions of pupils reached better-than-expected levels last year in Year 2. Nearly half the pupils reached the higher levels in reading and a third in writing and mathematics. In last year's national tests, Year 6 had above average results for those pupils reaching higher levels. In this year's tests, both groups of pupils improved upon this picture of achievement. The proportion of pupils reaching levels more usually associated with secondary pupils has also improved, reflecting the very high expectations that are set by teachers.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve at the same level as their classmates. Their specific needs, be these academic, physical or social, are identified accurately. A range of very effective methods is then put in place so that pupils achieve very confidently through the school.

- The number of pupils entitled to additional funding, known as the pupil premium, is typically less than five in each year group and, as a result, their specific rates of progress are not reported. That said, this group of pupils achieves extremely well within day-to-day lessons, in line with other pupils. These pupils too have well chosen activities, which complement whole-class and other types of teaching.

The early years provision

is outstanding

- Children in the early years provision achieve outstandingly well from starting points which are usually typical for their age. That said, recently, children have begun school with weaker skills in their language and number areas of learning. Children are prepared extremely well for their start in Year 1.
- The early years is managed outstandingly well. This results in very clear planning and extremely relevant and engaging activities which promote high levels of achievement. Parents are rightly very pleased with the way that the children settle into school quickly and achieve so well. A range of highly effective ways is devised to help children start school or change classes smoothly. Welfare, health and safety arrangements are high profile and are very effective in ensuring that children feel very safe and secure.
- Excellent teaching ensures that early reading and writing skills are taught highly effectively. Children read simple words quickly and accurately, and recognise sounds and letter patterns in words shown to them by their teacher. Children really enjoyed using their knowledge when trying to find words with particular combinations of letters hidden around the classroom. Many displays illustrate children's very good early writing, number and artistic capabilities.
- Children are confident to communicate with adults and each other. They speak clearly and listen intently to their teacher and others. They are enthusiastic when responding to their teachers and think about their answers before they tell everyone. As a result, children learn very effectively through the activities planned for them.
- Outside activities complement the wide range found within the classroom, although the provision is slightly less developed. The school rightly wants to give the outside area a 'make over' to make it even more attractive. For example, it wants to add more soft surfaces and renew and update some resources, such as play construction materials.
- Children like role playing and extending their physical skills when using the different resources available. Children were particularly enthusiastic to make special 'goo' linked to their pirate theme. When an inspector asked them how it was made, they rightly said, 'Read the instructions!' Others told inspectors all about how pirates had hidden some treasure, which they then discovered. They then described in detail the treasure they found, using a wide vocabulary.
- Teaching is typically outstanding. A variety of interesting activities helps children to develop a very wide range of skills in all areas of learning. Reading and number skills are taught systematically so children are confident to make early attempts at writing and early reading skills. Children also have many opportunities to influence their own learning, such as devising the sorts of things they would like to find out related to their topic themes. This included making sure that they looked after any 'treasure' that they found as it was very 'special'.
- Children behave extremely well. Teachers are exceptionally skilful at knowing when to allow children to complete their activities or in helping them to decide what other activities they would like to investigate further. Children work together with minimal supervision, often helping each other in the activities that they choose to follow. They work very carefully and very safely.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	137615
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	449782

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

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	308
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Maureen Parkes
Headteacher	Tim Harrington
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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