

Inspection of a good school: St Nicolas Church of England Academy

Windermere Avenue, Nuneaton, Warwickshire CV11 6HJ

Inspection dates:

2 and 3 February 2023

Outcome

St Nicolas Church of England Academy continues to be a good school. There is enough evidence of improved performance to suggest that the school could be judged outstanding if we were to carry out a graded (section 5) inspection now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a friendly, welcoming place to learn. Pupils are rightly proud of their school. Leaders ensure that the school's motto, 'Together we flourish', applies to pupils and staff.

Leaders have high expectations for pupils and ensure that they study a broad and ambitious curriculum. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve very well. Pupils are enthusiastic learners who take great pride in their work. They are exceptionally well prepared for their next steps at secondary school.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They have highly positive attitudes towards their learning. Pupils show kindness and consideration towards others. Older pupils look after the younger pupils in the school at playtimes and with reading. On the rare occasions that bullying does happen, staff deal with it quickly. Pupils feel safe in school. They are confident to talk to adults if they have problems. Pupils value the extra support, such as the 'garden room' that is available to them if they need to talk about any worries.

In addition to the wide range of clubs offered, leaders provide many exciting opportunities for pupils to experience learning outside the classroom. This includes trips to outdoor activity centres, cathedrals and museums.

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

Leaders have designed a curriculum that identifies the precise knowledge they want pupils to learn in every subject, including for children in early years. Leaders have ensured that staff receive training and support to enable them to deliver the curriculum effectively. Teachers plan activities that provide opportunities for pupils to revisit important knowledge and skills. For example, in Reception, children make prints with single colours

using fruit. Older pupils then explore colour-mixing through printing in the style of Yayoi Kusama. In Year 5, pupils create complex relief prints on fabric based on the designs of William Morris. Leaders review the curriculum continually to ensure that all pupils have the best chance of success.

Teachers present information clearly. In mathematics, pupils regularly recap prior learning. Pupils then have the required knowledge to tackle more complex ideas. Teachers use assessment well to identify gaps in pupils' learning. They provide timely feedback to address any misconceptions. Pupils know how to use the 'metacognition mountain' to help themselves if they are unsure about their work. This helps them to become independent learners.

Staff understand the needs of pupils with SEND very well. Early identification and clear targets allow teachers to provide effective support for pupils with SEND. As a result, these pupils achieve well. Support for pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties is particularly effective. Leaders make sure that pupils with SEND are included in all areas of school life.

Leaders prioritise reading. Children learn about the sounds that letters represent in structured sessions right from the start of Reception. Teachers make frequent checks on the progress that pupils make. They quickly put in place effective support for those pupils who struggle with reading. This ensures that pupils develop the knowledge they need in order to read fluently.

The Reception environment is vibrant and well organised. Adults make sure that they take every opportunity to reinforce learning. Children are always engaged in meaningful learning and play. There is a clear focus on the development of language and vocabulary in early years. Children know that the special words that are important in their learning are on the 'sticky knowledge tree'. They are able to explain the meaning of words such as 'carnivore' and 'thaw'.

Pupils have many opportunities to take on responsibility in roles such as those of prefect and play leader. Pupils make meaningful and positive contributions to the life of the school. Leaders listen to their views. For example, recently, pupils asked for more opportunities to experience digital artwork. Leaders listened and the whole school completed a photography project. Pupils learn to understand different beliefs and cultures. They support local and national projects such as local care homes, animal rescue centres and shelters for the homeless. This helps the pupils to develop empathy and respect for others. Pupils understand what it means to be a citizen in modern Britain.

Governors know the school's strengths. They are ambitious for pupils' academic and personal success. Staff are proud to work at the school. They feel strongly supported by leaders.

Parents and carers are positive about the school. They talk about the 'fantastic teachers' and caring staff. However, some parents feel that they would like to know more about what their child is learning and how well they are doing.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established a robust culture of safeguarding. They provide staff with regular training. This ensures that adults have the knowledge they need to help keep pupils safe. Staff understand how to raise concerns about pupils' safety. Records show that they do so quickly. When safeguarding leads are aware of a concern, they act appropriately, involving other agencies when necessary. Leaders' checks on the suitability of staff are rigorous. Safeguarding processes and procedures are carefully scrutinised by governors.

Pupils say that they feel very safe in school. They learn about important topics such as online safety and staying safe and healthy.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some parents, including some parents of pupils with SEND, feel that communication between home and school is not always as effective as it could be. They do not feel fully informed about how their children are doing in school. Leaders should ensure that they engage well with parents, share information effectively and improve communication between home and school.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, St Nicolas Church of England (Voluntary Aided) Primary School, to be good in May 2011.

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](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	140878
Local authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	10227079
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	423
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Paula Whitfield
Headteacher	Sharon Thorpe
Website	www.stnicolas.covmat.org
Date of previous inspection	25 April 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a Church of England academy and is part of the Diocese of Coventry Multi Academy Trust. The school's most recent section 48 inspection for schools of a religious character was in July 2016. The next section 48 inspection will take place within the prescribed period.
- Leaders do not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and art. For the deep dives, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke to teachers and pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector held meetings with curriculum leaders and the special educational needs coordinator. She met representatives of the academy governance committee and trustees.

- The inspector examined a range of school documentation, including leaders' self-evaluation, improvement plans, records of governance and documentation relating to attendance and pupils' behaviour.
- The inspector looked at a range of documentation on the school's website.
- The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead to discuss the actions taken to keep pupils safe. The lead inspector reviewed a range of documents, including the school's single central record.
- The inspector took account of responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and the pupil survey. During the inspection, the inspector met with groups of pupils both formally and during less structured parts of the day.
- The inspector spoke with groups of staff and took account of views expressed through the staff survey.
- The inspector listened to a sample of pupils in Year 1, Year 2 and Year 3 reading to a familiar adult.

Inspection team

Corinne Biddell, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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