

St Nicolas CofE (Voluntary Aided) Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	130975
Local Authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	367435
Inspection dates	10–11 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Mary Davis

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	431
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Marian Gunn
Headteacher	Christopher Edwards
Date of previous school inspection	22 May 2008
School address	Windermere Avenue Nuneaton CV11 6HJ
Telephone number	024 76382583
Fax number	024 76344853
Email address	admin3592@we-learn.com

Age group	4–11
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Royal Exchange Buildings
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M2 7LA

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. They observed 27 lessons and 16 teachers. Inspectors held meetings with groups of pupils, members of the governing body, staff, and groups of parents and carers. They observed the school's work and looked at policies, development planning, data related to the tracking of pupils' progress, senior leaders' monitoring of teaching and learning, safeguarding documents, minutes of governing body meetings, pupils' work and 151 questionnaires from parents and carers, together with those from pupils and staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- It explored the learning and progress of groups of pupils in current classes, particularly those of highest ability and investigated how effectively leaders have addressed the decline in attainment and progress shown in 2010.
- It looked at how consistently aspects of provision, particularly the quality of teaching, are raising achievement across the school.
- It looked at how well pupils understand their targets and how to improve their work.
- It evaluated how well the school promotes community cohesion and the impact of this on pupils' understanding of children in other contexts.

Information about the school

St Nicolas C of E School is larger than the average primary school. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is half the national average and the number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is very low. The school has Healthy Schools status, Artsmark Gold, Activemark, BECTA ICT Award, Eco Silver award and International Schools award.

Staff turnover has been considerable in recent years, mainly as the result of a significant number of teachers taking their entitlement to maternity leave.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

St Nicolas Church of England Primary is a good school. Its pupils are well-behaved, articulate and polite. They enjoy their learning and all aspects of school life and are extremely proud of their school. 'I love coming to school,' was typical of comments made by pupils during the inspection. Parents and carers are equally positive about the school's work and large numbers of parents take opportunities offered to attend assemblies and other events on a regular basis, resulting in a strong community ethos.

Since the previous inspection, rates of progress have been seen to be falling, and in 2010 were significantly below national levels, as was the proportion of pupils attaining the highest levels in English and mathematics. Leaders have now successfully addressed this decline and progress in lessons seen across the school during the inspection was good overall. The school's tracking of progress shows that pupils in the current Year 6 have made good progress during Key Stage 2, with improved attainment in all subjects, but particularly in mathematics. Attainment in writing across the school is below that in reading and strategies to address this are now beginning to have an impact, particularly in Key Stage 1. Many other pupil outcomes have remained at their previously outstanding level. Pupils have an outstanding understanding of how to stay healthy and enjoy 'Fruity Fridays' when they all bring in fruit to eat. They also enjoy taking a wide range of responsible roles, such as acting as prefects, who rewarding other pupils for good behaviour. Attendance is high and punctuality exemplary. Pupils respond extremely well to opportunities for reflection and can talk knowledgably about a variety of different religions. They get on very well with each other and resolve conflicts intelligently, so the school community is harmonious with warm relationships evident.

The quality of teaching is good including in the Early Years Foundation Stage, with a significant proportion of outstanding practice. Although most teachers plan well for different ability groups in their classes, including preparing a range of resources to support slower learners, this is not consistent across the school and in some lessons, those of highest ability are not sufficiently challenged. Some outstanding practice was observed of the use of assessment to support learning, where teachers regularly check pupils understanding through skilled questioning and move them on quickly once their understanding is secure. This is not consistent across the school. The quality of marking of pupils' work also varies across the school and pupils do not always know their targets or understand their next steps for learning. A good range of information and communication technology is used to enhance learning and has

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been instrumental in raising attainment in mental arithmetic and engendering an excitement about mathematics. The curriculum is further enhanced by a range of visits, for example to Coventry cathedral, inspiring art work and a wide range of extra curricular opportunities, including sport and music. The school cares for its pupils well. Those with special educational needs are well supported, as are those for whom circumstances make them vulnerable. Transitions between key stages are well managed as a result of the excellent partnerships between feeder nurseries and parents and carers are very positive about the way their children are enabled to settle quickly when they start in the Reception classes.

The head teacher is well supported by his team, including a strong group of core subject leaders and the Early Years Foundation Stage leader, who are new to their roles, but are beginning to have an impact on their areas of responsibility. The quality of teaching is monitored well and weaknesses are effectively addressed. However current processes for self-evaluation leading to clear and focused strategic planning are less well-developed; outcomes and plans for improvement are not communicated well enough to all stake holders. Consequently, underachievement has not been identified or addressed quickly enough. Information provided for the governing body lacks insufficient clarity to enable them to be fully involved in planning for the school's further development. Leaders at all levels are now effectively addressing the recent fall in achievement and the school shows a satisfactory capacity to maintain these improvements.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate rates of progress and raise attainment, particularly in writing by:
 - sharing existing good practice to ensure that all teachers consistently plan to meet the needs of different ability groups, particularly of the most able, within their classes
 - improve the consistency and quality of assessment to support learning in order that pupils understand their targets and their next steps for learning.
- Establish consistent, rigorous and well-communicated evaluation practice to drive ambition and promote achievement across the school, and to enable the full involvement of the governing body in strategic planning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils generally enter Year 1 with skills that are above average in most areas of learning. Although attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2010 fell to average levels, taken over the past three years, attainment has been above average. Pupils enjoy their learning and are keen to do well. They concentrate well and try their best, even when the task lacks excitement or when, on occasions, it is insufficiently challenging. There is a real buzz of excitement in mathematics lessons as pupils work at a fast pace to beat each other and the clock to solve mathematical problems. The

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very few pupils who speak English as an additional language and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make equal progress to their peers as a result of the good level of support that they receive.

Pupils say that they feel safe and have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including e-safety. They take charge of promoting road safety, including producing posters to advise parents and carers not to park outside the school. Some parents and carers expressed concerns about bullying, but pupils are confident that the school manages this well and that there is always someone who will support them. Peer mentors and buddies support younger ones and take their mediation role seriously in promoting good relationships. Behaviour is good both in lessons and around the school and makes a positive contribution to learning. The school council is an active group who make a significant contribution to the school community. This includes managing a budget provided by parents and carers, for example, requesting a trim trail on every playground to promote a healthy lifestyle. Pupils look forward to the sponsored school run and enjoy raising money for charity through business and enterprise activities. They are proud of the partnership with a school in Uganda and the ways that they have been able to offer support. They have an excellent understanding and respect for the cultures and beliefs of others and fully value the enrichment brought about by increasing numbers in the school of those from different backgrounds. Their good basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology, together with their well-developed social skills prepare them well for their future economic well-being.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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How effective is the provision?

Warm relationships are evident in all classes and promote positive attitudes to learning. Most teachers use assessment information well to plan tasks that are appropriately challenging for the range of abilities in the class. The variety of resources provided engage and excite pupils in their learning. In the best lessons, resources are provided to enable the lowest ability pupils to work independently, for example by arranging words to make a sentence and then to practise writing it. In these lessons teachers built on prior learning and provided opportunities for writing that were purposeful and linked well with other topics. For example Year 2 pupils enjoy researching facts about crocodiles using the internet and then writing about what they have discovered. In some lessons observed pupils became restless when insufficient resources were provided to enable them to undertake the task set or when the task was dull and not relevant to their understanding. In a minority of lessons, teachers lacked sufficient overview of the whole class to be able to evaluate the learning taking place. They failed to identify that some pupils were stuck or, for example, that their computer was not working, because they were concentrating on a small group. Some teachers provide detailed advice on how to improve in their marking of pupils' work however, this is often not linked to their targets. Although some opportunities for self- and peer-assessment are provided, opportunities are being missed to encourage pupils to respond to teachers' comments and take responsibility for their own learning.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and includes a study of French. It covers a good range of topics, particularly at Key Stage 1, promoting opportunities to write about a range of experiences. There is good provision of personal, social and health education resulting in pupils' good and outstanding personal outcomes. The range of sport, music and other activities are often innovative and ambitious, including the performance of Shakespeare plays and 'Imagineering' and there is a large take up for such activities as Judo and instrumental tuition. The recent introduction of schemes to raise achievement in English and mathematics are beginning to have an impact across the school.

There are well-organised arrangements for the welfare of pupils who are well known as individuals. Support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is increasingly well-targeted and these pupils are now identified much more carefully and individual programmes of support are put in place. This is now beginning to have an impact on raising achievement of this group of pupils. Excellent partnerships with external agencies support the work of the school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where	2

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relevant, through partnerships	
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders are strongly focused on further improving and raising achievement and maintaining standards despite recent staffing turbulence. Priorities are set out in the school development plan, but success criteria are not always clear in relation to measurable outcomes. Clear records show that the monitoring of teaching and learning is effectively carried out and new subject leaders are increasingly being involved in this activity. There is now evidence that recent strategies to raise achievement are resulting in improving outcomes. Overall governors discharge their responsibilities satisfactorily, with appropriate committees being in place and some governors visiting the school regularly. Their commitment to their role can be demonstrated by the importance they have placed on undergoing training but their strategic role is under-developed. Safeguarding procedures are robust and pupils' safety is a priority for all staff and governors. The curriculum ensures that pupils understand aspects of safety and child protection arrangements are secure, with all staff being suitably trained. All appropriate policies are in place and risk assessments, including of the site safety, are thorough.

The school uses a variety of media to communicate with parents and carers and provides many opportunities for them to be involved in their children's learning, for example through workshops, such as those demonstrating mathematics teaching methods. The school is very committed to working in partnership, for example with local businesses and schools, including the Uganda school. Its outstanding practice demonstrates the impact on learning, social skills and preparation for the adult world. Although an appropriate policy for equal opportunities is in place, there is no evidence of monitoring or evaluation. The school is able to demonstrate, however, that all groups of pupils are now making equal progress and that there is no discrimination. The school actively promotes community cohesion and has established itself at the centre of the community providing accommodation for local groups and signposting parents and carers to community events. Strong links with the national and international communities are being established through the church, including a developing link with a school in Liverpool.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2

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The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children join the Reception classes from a variety of private nurseries. They make good progress overall, including those identified as having skills that are below expected levels. The development of social and personal skills is demonstrated by children’s ability to take responsibility and form relationships with adults and other children, and their ability to play independently and with others. Children enjoy selecting activities and are aware of their own safety and that of others. The Early Years Foundation Stage team have a good and improving understanding of the requirements and needs of the children under the new leadership of the key stage and the impact of her leadership is beginning to be seen in improving provision. The inside environment for learning is good, although the outdoor area is ready for updating. The range of activities, including the role-play areas of a shop and bus are purposeful and provide opportunities to develop numeracy and other skills. Observations are recorded and assessment methods are robust to inform planning and evaluate learning. Parents and carers are extremely positive about the way their children enjoy school. ‘The school has been superb in settling my son into Reception...his teachers are kind and caring.’ This comment is typical of those made by parents and carers who feel fully involved in supporting their children’s learning. The leader of the key stage has quickly established good teamwork and good progress is demonstrated in each area of the phases’ work. Clear areas for improvements have been identified, leading to effective action planning. Safeguarding and welfare requirements are well met.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Those parents and carers who responded were overwhelmingly positive. A few

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parents and carers expressed concern about incidents of bullying but pupils told inspectors that the school always ensures their safety and deal with this issue well. A minority of parents and carers expressed concern about the quality of teaching and learning in specific year groups. Inspection information confirmed that teaching across the school is inconsistent and have asked the school to address this. Other views included a concern that parents and carers are insufficiently involved in making decisions. The inspection found that the school works hard to engage parents and carers and welcomes suggestions and comments. A small minority of responses expressed concern about behaviour management, but inspectors found behaviour to be good and managed well.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Nicolas Church of England Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 151 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 431 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	93	62	50	33	4	3	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	107	71	37	25	6	4	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	70	46	67	44	10	7	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	78	52	55	36	13	9	3	2
The teaching is good at this school	79	52	61	40	8	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	73	49	65	43	10	7	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	73	48	73	48	3	2	1	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	72	48	68	45	2	1	1	1
The school meets my child’s particular needs	71	47	70	46	7	5	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	51	34	79	52	11	7	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	54	36	72	48	10	7	4	3
The school is led and managed effectively	74	49	63	42	6	4	5	3
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	85	56	57	38	5	3	2	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



12 May 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Nicolas CofE (Voluntary Aided) Primary School, Nuneaton CV11 6HJ

Thank you very much for the welcome you gave to me and my colleagues when we visited the school for its recent inspection. We enjoyed talking with you and seeing all that you do. We particularly enjoyed your beautiful singing in assembly.

Our inspection has judged that you go to a good school. The care that the school provides for you is good and, as a result, you feel safe and well-known. The standards that you reach are rising steadily, particularly in mathematics, although standards of writing still need to improve. Your good behaviour and your excellent understanding of how to stay healthy impressed us. You concentrate well and enjoy your lessons and all the activities that are provided for you, including all the clubs, sport and music. Your teachers provide lessons that are interesting and the mathematics computer games make your learning fun and enable you to learn well. We think though, that some teachers don't always give you work that really challenges you. We have also asked teachers to ensure that you always know your targets and make it clear when they mark your work, what steps you need to take to achieve them. You make an outstanding contribution to your school community and enjoy taking responsibility. We were impressed by the work of the prefects and the way older pupils help younger ones. You get on extremely well with each other and are respectful of those with different beliefs and backgrounds to your own.

The leaders of the school are working hard to make sure you learn well and develop well as young people, but we have asked them to make sure that they evaluate their work more clearly so that they can continue to develop the work of the school and raise achievement. You can all help them by continuing to work hard. I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mary Davis
Lead inspector

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