

St Nicholas Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	109972
Local authority	Wokingham
Inspection number	378024
Inspection dates	1–2 February 2012
Lead inspector	Carolyn Carnaghan

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary Controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	136
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Imelda Charles-Edwards
Headteacher	Christine Hyatt
Date of previous school inspection	13 November 2006
School address	School Road Hurst Reading RG10 0DR
Telephone number	0118 9340837
Fax number	0118 93230736
Email address	admin@st-nicholas.wokingham.sch.uk

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Carolyn Carnaghan

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two day's notice. The inspector observed ten lessons taught by six teachers and held meetings with staff, pupils, leaders and managers and members of the governing body. The inspector scrutinised the school's work, including its plans, documents and policies, and took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. They analysed 134 responses to questionnaires for parents and carers.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average sized primary school with lower than average numbers of pupils with disabilities or special educational needs. Most pupils are from a White British heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is also smaller than average. At the start of the inspection the school had just moved into its new building and staff were still in the process of unpacking equipment and materials. The school meets the current floor standard.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are broadly in line with expectations in most areas of their learning. They make satisfactory progress in the Reception Year as they settle into school. By the time they leave at the end of Year 6, pupils have achieved well. Having made good progress, they reach above average levels of attainment.
- Pupils with disabilities or special educational needs make good progress. The care and support they receive is carefully targeted to assist their needs and as a result of rapid diagnosis and evaluation of the support required, these pupils thrive at school.
- Achievement in writing is slightly slower than in reading and mathematics so the school has put into place a programme through which writing is encouraged across the curriculum and attainment is beginning to rise.
- Teaching is generally good although sometimes too much time is taken in setting up the main activities so progress slows. This also means that some pupils do not always have the chance to work at a faster pace. Lessons promote independent learning and this helps build self-confidence.
- Pupils' behaviour is consistently of a high standard. The moral ethos of the school is clearly exemplified in the thoughtful way pupils work with each other. They collaborate well in pairs and groups and are very cooperative. Attendance is average, but improving; a small number of pupils are taken away on holiday during term time.
- Leaders and managers have high expectations and these are shared by the pupils. Their evaluation of the school's strengths is broadly accurate but does not always clearly pinpoint where learning is not as strong as it could be, such as in the Reception Year and Year 1.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding because the school ensures that needs are exceptionally well met and that everyone has the chance to develop as rounded individuals.

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

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that provision in Reception Year and Year 1 focuses more securely on the basic skills of writing and reading so that pupils receive a firmer grounding on which to build their future progress.
- Sharpen procedures for monitoring and evaluating all of the school's activities, particularly its teaching.
- Raise attendance by ensuring that the number of unauthorised absences is reduced.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils' achievement is good; a greater than average proportion reach the highest levels in tests in English and mathematics in both Years 2 and 6. All groups of pupils, including those with disabilities or special educational needs, make good progress across subjects. Pupils are clear in their expression of how much they enjoy coming to school. Parents and carers agree that their children are making good progress at the school.

Children in the Reception Year start to build their confidence very quickly and the teachers' encouragement to explore and become independent learners means they are soon integrated into school life. Progress in some learning areas is not as fast as it could be. For example, in writing, children sometimes struggle to build their skills because activities are not targeted sufficiently at individual needs and there are not enough opportunities to use these skills.

Further up the school pupils develop their core skills well. In order to address the slightly slower achievement in writing, opportunities are being built into every part of the curriculum. For example, in one lesson pupils took their time to develop a personal rulebook for becoming a better person. Reading is encouraged at every opportunity, so by the end of Year 2, many pupils have reached above average levels of attainment. By the time they leave school, attainment in reading is also above average.

Mathematics skills are seen as fun and lessons enjoyable. Well-targeted activities ensure pupils make good progress in this subject so that, again, levels of attainment are higher than average.

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

Quality of teaching

Most lessons are well planned and teachers make good use of assessment information to ensure that all groups of pupils are usually challenged and supported. The pace of lessons can be too relaxed when teachers have not prepared resources sufficiently; this means they start too slowly. Teachers build on what pupils have gained in lessons by setting interesting and challenging homework. This provides further opportunities for pupils to develop their independence. Pupils know their targets and good marking of work ensures they understand the next steps in learning. Occasionally, the teaching of reading and writing in the Early Years Foundation Stage is not fully adapted to meet the range of children's needs so that a few children cannot engage with all elements of the activity.

Pupils relate well to one another and their teachers. Pair and group work is a feature of many lessons and this develops pupils' social skills very effectively. Parents and carers are happy that lessons provide good opportunities for their children to make progress. Teachers' subject knowledge is high and they are confident and enthusiastic practitioners. In some lessons they question pupils closely to check understanding but this is inconsistent. Lessons provide numerous opportunities for pupils to develop spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding; they demonstrate a clear sense of right and wrong and empathy for those less fortunate than themselves.

Teaching assistants are alert to any signs of underachievement and provide good support for pupils who may be facing barriers to progress. This ensures consistency in progress, particularly in Years 2 to 6.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour in lessons is never less than good and frequently better; their positive attitudes ensure that learning proceeds smoothly. They invariably concentrate tenaciously and show an enthusiasm for learning, striving to reach teachers' expectations. Teachers manage behaviour in lessons and around the school with quiet assurance. Parents and carers agree that bullying is almost unknown and should it occur, the school deals with it most effectively. Records show no evidence of significant bullying of any kind at the school over a number of years.

Discussions with pupils indicate that they feel that their school is a very safe place and they show an excellent understanding of how to stay safe whether it is on the internet, or on the narrow, local roads.

Attendance is improving securely over time but remains broadly similar to the national average. However, a small group of parents and carers contribute to higher than expected levels of unauthorised absence by taking their children on holiday during school terms. Punctuality both to school and to lessons is excellent.

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

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Leadership and management

The headteacher leads a cohesive team of staff who share her values and ambition for the school. Regular monitoring of teaching and other aspects means that the school's self-evaluation provides a clear picture of its strengths and weaknesses. However, lesson observations are insufficiently frequent and sometimes do not clearly identify areas for improvement. This means that a few inconsistencies in teaching remain. The school uses assessment well to promote learning; in particular, it identifies pupils in danger of falling behind and acts quickly to ensure equality of opportunity for all. The governing body conducts regular checks on the school and is keen to offer support and challenge when appropriate.

Careful curriculum planning ensures that pupils' learning experiences are both broad and balanced. There are strong creative elements, for example pupils enjoy role-play activities in many subjects. There are good opportunities for independence such as an assembly when a group of pupils enacted a drama based on a morality tale and delighted their audience of peers. Many lessons and the curriculum in general support good provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, encouraging pupils to reflect on their place in society and the nature of other cultures. The engaging nature of the curriculum promotes good behaviour and opportunities for pupils to understand how to keep safe. School provision for safeguarding meets statutory requirements.

Parents and carers show strong confidence in the leadership of the headteacher and her team. They appreciate opportunities, both formal and informal, to interact with staff and find out how well their children are getting on. Since the previous inspection, the school has maintained above average levels of attainment and pupils continue to achieve well. Effective plans provide a good template for the future and the school has strong capacity for continuing improvement.

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	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



3 February 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Nicholas Church of England Primary School, Hurst, RG10 ODR

Thank you very much for making me so welcome when I recently visited your school. It was a pleasure to meet such courteous and well-behaved young people.

St Nicholas School is a good school. You make good progress and your attainment by the time you leave school is above average. Good teaching and an interesting mixture of topics to study ensure that you grow and learn well. You told me that you enjoy school and I was pleased to see how well you get along with one another and your teachers. The school's leaders and managers work very well together to provide you with a good education.

I have asked your teachers to do a few things to make your school even better.

- Make sure that children in the first two years of the school have better opportunities to develop reading and writing skills.
- Ensure the school checks up on teaching and learning more thoroughly.
- Raise attendance by reducing the number of holidays taken during term time.

You can help by continuing to work as hard as you can and by always coming to school, every day.

Yours sincerely

Carolyn Carnaghan
Lead inspector

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