

St Nicholas' Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Rawreth

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115090
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	357694
Inspection dates	8–9 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Richard Blackmore

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	116
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dave Collins
Headteacher	Lorna Pigram
Date of previous school inspection	30 April 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors observed seven lessons and four teachers. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body, the headteacher and other teachers with leadership responsibilities. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation including the school improvement plan, monitoring records, the school's self-evaluation document, pupils' progress records and the safeguarding procedures. Questionnaires were received and analysed from 51 parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- Have the recent changes in provision had a positive impact on the rate of progress and standards, particularly at Key Stage 2?
- How effective are the safeguarding procedures?
- What effect has the work of subject leaders had on school improvement and raising attainment?

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average primary school and all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is broadly average. These pupils have a range of difficulties. There is provision for Reception children in a mixed-age class with Year 1 pupils and a new headteacher was appointed in January 2010. The school has gained the Eco Schools award, the Intermediate International School accreditation and the Gold Standard Healthy Eating mark.

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

2

Main findings

St Nicholas' Church of England Primary School provides its pupils with a good education. The headteacher has quickly identified the strengths for the school to build on and the areas that it needs to improve to speed up further pupils' good rate of achievement. She is successfully involving and supporting staff and governors to develop a self-critical approach to identify and put in place strategies for continual improvement. New tracking systems are helping teachers to make sure that pupils are making the progress expected of them. Recent improvements are substantial and already having impact, which demonstrates the school has good capacity to continue to improve.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make satisfactory progress and standards are average by the end of Reception. Adults are sensitive to the needs of the children but assessment of progress during learning sessions is not used well enough to plan the next steps. Additionally, the outdoor environment is not usable for learning in poor weather as there is not enough shelter. Effective teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2 is helping pupils to make good progress and reach above average standards in English, science and mathematics by the end of Year 6. However, they are doing less well in mathematics because there are too few problem solving activities and opportunities for pupils to find things out for themselves. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities also make good progress, because targets on individual education plans are focused on the full range of essential skills. Pupils are carefully guided to reach these targets by support from outside specialists and sensitive and well organised help from school staff.

Nearly all pupils make good progress in all lessons because teaching typically creates an environment where pupils enjoy their learning, demonstrated in their outstanding attendance, because as one pupil commented, 'It's all good.' Teachers make learning fun, involve pupils in lively question and answer sessions and use resources imaginatively, developing a keen sense of wanting to find out more. However, in some lessons, teachers' planning does not ensure that tasks meet the needs of all pupils, especially the more able, with the result they are insufficiently challenged and do not always make enough progress in lessons. The marking of pupils' work is sometimes unclear and as a result some pupils say that they do not know how to improve their work. There are occasions when activities do not always enable every pupil to learn as well as intended because there is a drop in the pace of the lesson and consequently progress slows.

The school looks after its pupils well, including those who are most vulnerable, and works closely with a wide range of outside agencies to meet their needs. Provision for pupils' with learning difficulties ensures this group of pupils make good progress towards both academic and personal skills. The priority given to the care of pupils is evident in the effective and carefully planned support provided for pupils with emotional difficulties.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - assessing children's progress more systematically during learning sessions to plan future learning needs
 - ensuring the outdoor area can be used more continuously and frequently as a learning resource.
- Make teaching more consistently good by:
 - speeding up the pace of some lessons
 - marking pupils' work so that pupils know how their work can be improved
 - providing greater challenge for the more-able pupils
 - planning more practical problem solving activities in mathematics.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils make most progress in English and science, from standards that are typical for their age when starting school, showing particularly good skills in extended writing and understanding texts. They are less confident in mathematics when carrying out investigations by themselves and independently finding strategies to solve problems. They responded well when challenged to work at a fast pace; older pupils quickly and enthusiastically wrote comprehensive reports on World War Two when given a deadline to work towards, developed from interesting and well chosen film footage of events at Pearl Harbour.

Pupils behave well, although some pupils do not always listen attentively because the speed of lessons sometimes slows, but this is effectively managed by staff. They have a good understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle, readily talking of the importance of exercise and healthy eating. Pupils are adamant that they feel very safe in school. They cooperate well when working in small groups and as a result they have well developed speaking, listening and social skills. Opportunities for reflection in class 'circle times' and assemblies help pupils to show respect for others and promote the school's core values of 'respect, integrity and responsibility'. Good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported through events such as the 'Drum Jam' which helped pupils learn of the history and contemporary use of African drums. Good basic skills, combined with effective working practice, prepare pupils well for the next stage of their education.

Pupils make a strong contribution to the school community. As monitors for the information and communication technology equipment, they are responsible for checking laptops are fully charged and turned off if not being used. Pupils are involved in the local community and have helped in the celebrations of the Rayleigh Christmas lights and their contribution to the wider community is evident in their understanding of different cultures through their work with schools in Canada and Uganda.

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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	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
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	2

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

How effective is the provision?

Teachers routinely make the purpose of lessons clear to pupils, providing a focus for learning. This, together with more regular use of their assessments of pupils' learning is helping teachers to adapt their lesson plans to ensure the match of tasks to pupils' varying abilities is mostly accurate. In a Year 3 and 4 lesson, pupils enjoyed telling each other about fractions. This helped refine their understanding in the light of the teacher's carefully judged questions that maintained a sharp focus on the aim of the lesson which was to quickly gain a clear knowledge of numerators and denominators.

The curriculum supports learning well with many opportunities that contribute to developing good skills in information and communication technology and the ongoing development of personal qualities through a wide range of opportunities to work collaboratively. Teachers are being encouraged to ensure that the curriculum is closely geared to pupils' needs and interests and during pupil reviews, staff to reflect on future curriculum and learning requirements of individual and groups of pupils. A recent review by senior staff has laid secure foundations for an even stronger emphasis on the application of skills across different subjects. These aspects, as well as enrichment activities through special events weeks, visits and visitors, are strengthening teaching.

Procedures are in place to make sure all pupils are kept safe and healthy and these are reviewed on a regular basis. During lessons support from teaching assistants is usually effective although occasionally they do not support pupils enough while the teacher is

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talking. Pupils are well cared for and the support given to pupils is good because when a pupil is identified needing help, a programme of specialist teaching is quickly put into place. Pupils are individually known by all staff so awareness is high. For example, 'provision tracking' by the school ensures pupils are closely tracked to meet challenging targets and if at risk of not reaching expectations are given extra support. Pupils said that they can always talk to an adult if they are worried about anything.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher is ambitious for the school and has high expectations for pupils and staff, which are driving rapid improvement throughout the school. She is succeeding well in providing opportunities for staff working at all levels to share responsibility and accountability. As a result, subject leaders are now more aware of pupils' performance and in consultation with teachers, are identifying any lapses in their progress more quickly. However, the checking of the effectiveness of new procedures is not yet fully embedded and as a result there are times when teachers do not use strategies consistently well to make the most of pupils' capabilities.

Governance is satisfactory and governors are involving themselves more in the school community, understanding the broad strengths and weaknesses of the school, but are not rigorous enough in comprehensively evaluating the school's performance.

Senior staff are determined in their work to actively involve parents in the life of the school and in supporting their children's learning, through information evenings and regular updates on developments in the school, for example the teaching methods used in mathematics. Current requirements for child protection, safeguarding and risk assessments are robust. Arrangements are good and the school ensures that pupils have a clear understanding of how to keep themselves safe. The school is inclusive and committed to promoting equal opportunities and eradicating any discrimination.

The school has a wide range of successful partnerships, including the link with the local secondary school, which supports pupils' welfare and learning. The school promotes community cohesion well, particularly within the school which is a warm, cohesive community. However, its evaluation of its work in this area is less detailed than evaluations in other areas. International links are strong and the partnership with Teso Primary School, Uganda, ensures pupils have a clear understanding of the needs of others and a respect for different cultures.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
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
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
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

From starting points that vary from year to year but are often typical for their age, children in the Reception class make steady progress because activities are suitably organised. Adults place a strong focus on helping them to talk about their ideas and to socialise well, while also learning the basic skills of reading, counting and problem solving. Children have access to a secure outdoor area. However, this lacks shelter to ensure children can comfortably work outside whatever the weather. 'Polly's House' promotes good conversation, imaginative play and social interaction between the children, especially during their child-initiated activities. Adults ask interesting questions, which makes children think and respond well. Children enjoy doing creative activities and the range of materials is varied to promote the six areas of learning. For example, children enjoyed writing in shaving foam, particularly when shaping letters in the foam using toy cars. Staff develop strong relationships with parents and carers which lay the foundations for a positive partnership with the school. The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are satisfactory. The welfare requirements are met to ensure that children are safe and well supported.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account: Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation	3

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Stage

Views of parents and carers

Responses from parents and carers were returned in respect of nearly half the pupils. Almost all were happy with their children's experience at the school, indicating unanimously that their children are kept safe at school and the school is well led and managed. Where parents and carers added comments, these tended to praise the positive impact of the new headteacher. Inspection evidence showed this to be the case. A few parents and carers expressed concerns about the way the school deals with poor behaviour and helping their children to lead a healthy lifestyle. Inspectors found that there have been issues in the past related to behaviour but that it is good. The school is a very calm and orderly place and pupils have a good understanding of how to be healthy. One or two expressed concerns about how often they are given information about their children's progress and how much their children enjoyed school. Inspectors found that the school's reporting arrangements meet statutory requirements and pupils reported favourably on their time in school. Nevertheless, parents indicate overwhelmingly that they are happy with their children's overall experience of the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Nicholas' Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Rawreth 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 51 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 116 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	35	69	14	27	2	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	37	73	14	27	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	29	57	20	39	2	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	32	63	18	35	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	31	61	18	35	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	37	73	13	25	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	31	61	18	35	2	4	0	0
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)	25	49	19	37	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	35	69	14	27	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	31	61	17	33	2	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	22	43	28	55	1	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	35	69	16	31	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	38	75	12	24	1	2	0	0

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

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.



10 November 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Nicholas' Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Rawreth, Rayleigh, SS6 9NE

You may remember that I visited your school recently with one other inspector. We really enjoyed our time with you and I am writing to thank you for being so welcoming and helpful. I thought you would like to know what we found out.

You go to a good school. Under the leadership of the new headteacher there are many new improvements which you told me you like and help you to feel safe. You are well looked after and have confidence to approach the adults around you if you have any concerns. You have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and make very helpful contributions to the school and local community. Your attendance is excellent - well done!

Children get off to a steady start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and as you move through the rest of the school you make good progress in English and science because of improvements in teaching. You are not doing quite as well in mathematics. Some of you who find learning a bit easier are not always given work that is challenging enough to really make you think and some of you are not clear about how to improve your work.

Your headteacher and the staff are keen to make things even better for you. We have asked the headteacher to make sure the youngest children have better access to their outside area in bad weather and for staff to check more frequently how well they are learning during lessons. We also want your teachers in Key Stages 1 and 2 to help you to make even better progress by making sure that the work always challenges you enough to make you think, particularly those of you who find work easy. We also want them to make sure that marking helps you to improve your work and the speed of lessons is quick. You can help by making sure that you do your best and keep concentrating in lessons.

Yours sincerely

Richard Blackmore

Lead inspector

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