

# St Nicholas Church of England (Controlled) Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	132829
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	360450
<b>Inspection dates</b>	17–18 November 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Norma Ball

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	340
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	John Graves
<b>Headteacher</b>	Frances Nash
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	5 February 2008
<b>School address</b>	Fairfield Road New Romney TN28 8BP
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<b>Email address</b>	headteacher@st-nicholas-newromney.kent.sch.uk

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 19 lessons as well as small teaching groups out of class. Inspectors observed 15 teachers. They met parents and carers informally on the first day of the inspection, and held meetings with the headteacher, teaching staff, members of the governing body and pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised samples of pupils' work, the school's systems for tracking pupils' progress, management and curriculum documentation, teachers' planning and safeguarding documents. In addition, inspectors analysed questionnaire responses from 119 parents and carers, and took account of 19 staff and 143 pupils' questionnaires.

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

- What steps is the school taking to analyse and improve the progress made by all groups of pupils, but particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and pupils of higher ability, and especially in Key Stage 2?
- How well is assessment information used to identify underachievement, set appropriate work for all groups of pupils, and involve pupils in tracking their own progress, so that achievement is improved?
- How rigorously and effectively do leaders and managers at all levels contribute to school improvement?

## Information about the school

St Nicholas is much larger than the average primary school and serves New Romney and the surrounding rural area. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and very few speak English as an additional language. A larger than average proportion of pupils is known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is above average. The school has undergone a number of staffing changes since the last inspection and four class teachers are new to the school this term. The headteacher has been in post since September 2009. The school holds a number of awards, including the Activemark and Healthy School Status.

An Early Years Centre shares the school site, but it is not managed by the governing body and is subject to a separate inspection. It provides before- and after-school care and most children from the Early Years Centre Nursery enter the school Reception class.

**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?****4****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****3**

## Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is, therefore, given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the progress that pupils make, their attainment at the end of Year 6, and their behaviour.

St Nicholas is a happy school and most relationships between pupils and staff are harmonious. Attendance is average and pupils enjoy their time in school. One pupil summed this up when saying, 'I like our school a lot, it's special to us'. However, pupils do not attain as well as they should because expectations have been too low and lessons have been insufficiently challenging. Until recently, underachievement persisted from year to year. All pupils, but particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those of higher ability, have not made enough progress in their learning and have fallen behind other pupils nationally. Attainment at the end of Year 6 has been too low for several years. However, since the appointment of the new headteacher and the reorganisation of the governing body there are early signs that the progress pupils make is beginning to improve, especially in English. Most pupils behave well and are keen to learn, but in too many lessons a minority become distracted and disrupt the learning of their peers. Pupils say they feel safe in school, but express unease about incidents of poor behaviour by a few older pupils at playtimes.

As a result of new staff appointments and careful monitoring of teaching and learning by the headteacher and deputy headteacher, inadequate teaching has been eliminated and the quality of teaching is now satisfactory overall. There is some good teaching in literacy and numeracy lessons, especially in Key Stage 2. The purpose of lessons is explained to pupils but lesson introductions are often too long, reducing the time available for pupils to work independently. New systems for monitoring and recording are helping to track pupils' progress through the school. However, they are not always used effectively to ensure that planned activities challenge different ability groups, especially pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the most-able pupils, and enable them to make the best possible progress. Marking does not consistently identify for pupils how and where to improve a piece of work, or make clear what pupils need to learn next. It is more helpful in literacy than it is in mathematics.

Pupils have a good understanding of what is involved in leading a healthy life. The curriculum is satisfactory. Pupils have good opportunities to develop their creative skills in music and art. New initiatives in English and mathematics are beginning to help pupils improve the progress they make in Key Stage 1, but are still developing in Key Stage 2. The school recognises that it does not provide enough planned opportunities in different

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subjects to hone pupils' literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Pupils appreciate the help they receive from adults and feel able to confide their problems to them.

The headteacher has made an incisive assessment of the important areas for development in the school. She works in close partnership with the deputy headteacher and together they have inspired staff with their commitment to improve the school and the achievement of all pupils. New leadership teams ensure that leadership and management responsibilities are shared, and subject leaders are extending their role in promoting their subjects and monitoring developments carefully. Accurate self-evaluation is enabling all leaders and managers to focus their efforts on the right priorities to improve provision rapidly. The effectiveness of the governing body is satisfactory. It is taking an increasingly active part in monitoring and planning future developments. A number of parents and carers commented positively on the recent improvements in the school. One, typical of many, said, 'Things have improved greatly in the last year'. As a result of all these factors, the school's capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve learning in lessons in order to quicken progress and raise attainment, so that by July 2011 the majority of lessons are good or better, by:
  - using assessment information more sharply in lessons to provide work which fully challenges pupils, especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the most-able pupils
  - raising the pace of lessons, planning efficient lesson introductions, and ensuring that pupils settle quickly to their independent learning tasks
  - improving the quality and consistency of marking so that all pupils understand how to improve their work and the next steps in their learning.
- Improve behaviour by:
  - consistently and effectively managing pupils' behaviour so that no learning time is lost in lessons
  - ensuring that incidents of unsatisfactory behaviour in the playground are reduced.
- Improve the links between subjects to provide further opportunities for pupils to develop their key skills in English, mathematics and ICT.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

4

Children join Reception with skills and abilities below the levels expected nationally for their age. Inroads are now being made to address previous inadequate progress made by pupils in Years 1 to 6, but lesson observations showed that attainment remains too low for all groups of pupils. There are fragile signs that attainment is improving in literacy in Key Stage 1. The school's own tracking shows that extending vocabulary, finding interesting texts to read and inspiring writing topics are beginning to have an impact on Key Stage 2 because they are engaging pupils' interest. Improvement in mathematics lags behind. Lessons that provide more challenge in problem solving and less reliance on worksheets

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are a focus for development, with the support of advisory staff. Booster groups for pupils falling behind in their learning are also showing early signs of helping to improve progress in English and mathematics in Key Stage 2.

In some lessons pupils behave well, listen attentively and enjoy whole-class and group discussions. However, this is not the case when the pace of learning slows or teachers are not following the school's new behaviour policy. In a Year 3 science lesson based on sound and how the ear picks up sound vibrations, learning was interrupted several times by the need to focus on some pupils who became distracted in the long introduction and wanted to move to practical tasks. Other pupils were disturbed and learning time was lost. One pupil summed up their frustration at interruptions to lessons when saying, 'We lose everything from our minds and then we can't work'. By contrast, in a Year 6 personal and social education lesson, all pupils were fully engaged in a lively debate on the elements of bullying behaviour, and concentrated hard.

Pupils and staff say that behaviour has improved. The school has worked with pupils to develop a new behaviour policy which is being adopted. Pupils and their parents and carers alike felt this was one of the main areas in which they would like to see more improvement, both in lessons and in the playground. Most pupils respond positively to the encouragement they receive to reflect on their behaviour and how it affects others, and to be kind and helpful. They are generous in support of charities. Pupils develop an awareness of other faiths and cultures but their understanding of the multicultural nature of modern British society is underdeveloped. Older pupils carry out a range of duties, including as mentors, play leaders and school council members, with pride and efficiency. Pupils have a good awareness of all the elements that contribute to a healthy diet and lifestyle and this is reflected in the Healthy School Status and the Activemark award. Despite their sound personal development, pupils' unsatisfactory achievement means that they are inadequately prepared for the next stage in their education.

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*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>4</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	4
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>4</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>3</b>

<sup>1</sup> 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 are using new strategies to improve pupils' skills, especially in literacy, with growing confidence. Targets are set for pupils in numeracy and literacy. Pupils find these helpful and enjoy their consultation sessions with their teachers to set and review their targets. Within groups, expectations of what pupils can achieve are not always high enough and, as a result, the work planned for pupils does not always make enough use of assessment information to stretch them fully. In a Year 5 literacy lesson involving a writing task to give instructions on playing the flute, pupils of higher ability were given the same work as pupils working at a lower level. While pupils made satisfactory progress, no tasks were available for the most-able pupils to extend their learning and improve their progress.

The support provided for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is inadequate because it is inconsistent across classes. Pupils are not routinely encouraged to develop the confidence to join in class discussions and independence in developing their skills. Teaching assistants are appropriately deployed and work effectively with pupils in small groups. However, opportunities are often missed at the start of lessons for teaching assistants to work closely with pupils and help those pupils who find learning more difficult to make a confident contribution to class discussions.

The curriculum provides a broad range of learning activities, and a sound range of extra-curricular activities extends learning beyond the classroom to make it more fun. Pupils

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spoke with enthusiasm about their visit to the nearby Rare Breeds Centre, for example. Links are developing between subjects to provide further opportunities to improve pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. Pupils feel confidence in the adults who care for them, and the school is addressing their concerns about playground incidents. Parents of children with a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities are very positive about the school's proactive and holistic approach to their meeting their needs. Valuable links are established with local schools and nurseries to help promote the smooth transfer of pupils at different stages of their education. The care provided by the school is extended by a satisfactory range of links with outside services and agencies. The school family liaison officer provides a valuable link for families, not only to the school but also to other local services when they are needed.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>3</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has provided clear and ambitious leadership for the school which has been welcomed by staff and the governing body. Teaching has improved and teachers have engaged enthusiastically with the drive to improve the school. Strategies to raise attainment in English and mathematics are becoming more firmly embedded, although signs of their success are still fragile. Staff are working as a close-knit team and welcome the corporate approach to leadership and management that arises from the leadership team's structure. Subject leaders are beginning to extend their leadership and management roles to embrace monitoring of lesson planning and lesson observations. Staff have been supported in their new responsibilities by focused training.

Parents and carers are pleased that the range of information available to them, including regular consultation meetings, has improved. The school plans sessions that are focused on particular curriculum areas to help parents and carers to be more involved with their children's learning. The safeguarding of pupils' welfare is satisfactory and policies and procedures are securely integrated into the school. The promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory. Pupils are helped to develop an appreciation of their own local community. However, the headteacher and governing body are aware that not enough work has been done to provide pupils with a full appreciation of their role as future national and global citizens.

The governors share the drive and ambition now apparent in the school. They are taking steps to acquire the skills necessary to take a more active part in planning its strategic direction and to offer full support and challenge to the school. They have a clear committee structure and have assigned responsibilities among their members for key



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areas of the curriculum to improve their detailed knowledge of the school. They are working closely with senior staff to raise achievement so that all pupils have equal opportunities to succeed. Not enough has been done until recently to improve the progress made by pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Senior staff have now prioritised the monitoring of the progress of this group as well as the quality of teaching, to raise their achievement. At present the school is not providing equality of opportunity for them.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>4</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Most children enter Reception with particularly limited skills in aspects of communication and language, numeracy and creative development. Staff help children settle quickly and encourage them to be independent and express themselves confidently. Sometimes children, especially boys, dominate games even though they are encouraged to share and cooperate with others. Children make satisfactory and sometimes good progress across all six areas of learning because activities are carefully planned. Activities make sound use of the resources available but sometimes lack flair and excitement for children. For example, the sand tray was used well to develop children's fine skills in using tweezers to find beads hidden in the sand, but the activity was not extended to count or sort the beads to link to number skills. Adults work in close partnership to guide learning in small groups, and intervene well in children's independent games in both the indoor and outdoor learning areas to encourage children to develop their ideas and express themselves clearly. One boy engaged in blowing bubbles in a tray of bubble bath water was delighted with the results of his work: 'Look, they just grow and grow by magic!'

Learning flows between the indoor and outdoor learning areas, and good use is made of staff resources by planning across the two classes so that staff are efficiently deployed in

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all areas. Staff work as a happy team with regular planning meetings. Children's development is monitored carefully and the resulting information is used effectively to give regular information to parents and carers on their child's progress. The 'learning journey' record of children's time in Reception provides sound information on progress but is not enlivened by, for example, a good range of work or photographic evidence of children's activities. Leadership and management by the new leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage are satisfactory. Links with parents and carers are friendly and regular so they feel effectively involved in their child's learning and development. Home visits have been introduced prior to children joining Reception and these have been welcomed by parents and carers. Links with local nurseries also help with the smooth induction of children and their families to Reception.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>3</b>
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 Stage	3

## Views of parents and carers

A large majority of the parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire or spoke to the inspectors were pleased with the school. They value the fact that their children enjoy school and are happy. A small minority expressed some concerns, especially about behaviour, and also about how well the school takes account of suggestions and concerns and how well their child is prepared for the future. The school recognises that the behaviour of a few pupils is a concern and that some lessons can be interrupted as a result. There has been a review of behaviour and a regular focus on encouraging good behaviour, and pupils have been fully involved in the new behaviour policy that has been recently introduced. A number of parents and carers did comment positively on the recent changes in the school.

## 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 (Controlled) 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 119 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 340 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	62	52	52	44	2	2	2	2
The school keeps my child safe	64	54	50	42	3	3	2	2
My school informs me about my child's progress	61	51	47	39	7	6	3	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	57	48	50	42	6	5	3	3
The teaching is good at this school	44	37	63	53	4	3	4	3
The school helps me to support my child's learning	42	35	65	55	5	4	4	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	41	34	69	58	7	6	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)	40	34	59	50	9	8	2	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	44	37	60	50	7	6	4	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	30	25	49	41	25	21	8	7
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	39	33	60	50	10	8	5	4
The school is led and managed effectively	51	43	54	45	6	5	4	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	54	45	52	44	7	6	4	3

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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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](http://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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.**



19 November 2010

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of St Nicholas Church of England (Controlled) Primary School, New Romney TN28 8BP**

Thank you for being so friendly and welcoming when we visited your school. We were especially impressed with your artwork on display around the school. We worked very closely with your headteacher and also spent time talking to your teachers and the governing body. As a result of the inspection we have judged that, although there are some good things about your school, there is much that needs to be improved.

You told us how much you like your school and we were very impressed with how much you know about keeping fit and healthy. However, you do not make as much progress in your learning as you should, so we have given your school a 'notice to improve'. The progress you make, the standards you attain at the end of Year 6, and the behaviour of the small minority who disrupt lessons need to be improved. This means that inspectors will visit again to check the school is improving. We have asked your headteacher and the governing body to take the following steps to make your school better, increase your progress and raise attainment:

- improve your lessons by making sure that your teachers use what they know about the progress you are making to give you work that challenges you to do the best you can
- plan starter activities well and make sure you are able to move on to your own work quickly
- mark your work so that it is clear how you can improve and what you need to learn next
- make sure that learning time is not lost because of the silly behaviour of a few pupils in lessons
- give you more chances to improve your literacy, numeracy and ICT skills by applying them regularly in other subjects.

You can all help by always behaving well in lessons and in the playground, working hard and doing your best. We wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Norma Ball

Lead Inspector

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