

St Nicholas Church of England Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113437
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	357351
Inspection dates	13–14 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Mark Lindfield

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	332
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jean Salt
Headteacher	Paul Walker
Date of previous school inspection	14 October 2010
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two ♦♦♦♦♦ additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 26 lessons and part lessons, and 14 teachers. They held meetings with parents, groups of pupils, governors and staff and looked at the school's improvement plans, monitoring records, assessment data, minutes of meetings, local authority visit reports, safeguarding arrangements, examples of pupils' work and 146 parental questionnaires.

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

- The current rates of progress of all groups in each year cohort, especially the progress in mathematics of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The effectiveness of the school's intervention strategies in improving the rates of progress of underachieving pupils.
- The accuracy of the school's self-evaluation in terms of raising pupils' attainment and in increasing rates of progress.

♦ The impact of the school's community cohesion plan.

Information about the school

The school is larger than average for a primary school. Almost all of the pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who have statements of special educational needs is larger than average, as is the proportion who have less severe special educational needs and/or disabilities. A small proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language.

The school has achieved the Healthy Schools Award and Artsmark Gold.

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

Main findings

The school provides a satisfactory education within a strong Christian ethos. It has a welcoming school environment created by polite and courteous pupils and a friendly staff team. In the words of one parent, which are representative of the views of many, 'The children are very respectful and I think this is greatly helped by the staff.' Pupils' understanding of healthy lifestyles is outstanding. They are enthusiastic participants in physical exercise, eat healthily and show good levels of confidence and self-esteem. They make an outstanding contribution to improving the lives of other people in the school and wider community. They are good ambassadors and are proud of their school; in return the local community are complimentary about their good manners and conduct in public. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. In particular they recognise that their children enjoy coming to school and this is borne out by their children's increasingly high levels of attendance.

While pupils' attainment in reading and writing when leaving Year 6 is above average, their attainment in mathematics is average. The school's latest results and assessments show that pupils' overall progress in mathematics is weaker than in other subjects. In 2009 the school's test results showed that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities made progress in mathematics that was significantly below average. While the school's tracking data show that their progress has improved, they make less progress in mathematics than in other subjects. This is because teachers' subject knowledge is less secure, lessons do not consistently build on pupils' mathematical knowledge and skills and pupils do not have enough opportunities to apply their mathematical learning in other subjects.

The quality of teaching and learning varies across the school so that pupils' progress is inconsistent. It is more rapid in Years 5 and 6. Pupils' progress in writing is more consistent across the school and has resulted in improvements in pupils' levels of attainment in English from the previous year. Where teaching and learning are good or better, pupils are set work closely matched to their different abilities. Where progress is slower this is because introductions to lessons take too long or because the same task is set for pupils of all abilities.

The school's self-evaluation is broadly accurate. Leaders and managers have made improvements in promoting pupils' well-being and adapted the curriculum to ensure that it links learning across subjects and promotes pupils' interests. Subject leaders have worked closely with leaders and managers to improve pupils' progress and attainment in writing. These actions provide confirmation that the school has a satisfactory capacity to make further improvements. While the school's improvement plan has identified appropriate areas for development, the extent and range of the actions are too numerous so that

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monitoring and evaluation by senior leaders, the governing body and subject leaders are not consistently focused on the key priorities.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching in Years 3 and 4 so that it is consistently good or better by:
 - matching work to the different needs and abilities of pupils
 - increasing the pace of learning by keeping introductions to lessons short and focused.
- Raise pupils' attainment and progress in mathematics, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, by:
 - increasing teachers' subject knowledge so that they deal confidently with pupils' misconceptions
 - using assessments to ensure that lessons build on pupils' prior learning
 - providing opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills and knowledge in other subjects.
- Ensure that key priorities are more prominent in improvement planning, so that the governing body, senior leaders and subject leaders can monitor progress towards them more effectively.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils arrive in Year 3 with broadly average attainment and leave the school in Year 6 with attainment that is broadly average. However, the progress that pupils make between these two points is inconsistent. Pupils make more rapid progress in Years 5 and 6 so that they are able to compensate for previous underachievement in Years 3 and 4. A recent focus across the school on pupils' writing has successfully accelerated their progress in this area. Teachers now have a clear understanding of appropriate expectations and how to build pupils' skills and understanding from one year to the next so that pupils make more consistently good progress in writing.

The progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is satisfactory overall but also lacks consistency. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are making good progress in reading and writing. Pupils who are vulnerable due to their circumstances are well supported so that they make good progress in their personal development. The school's published test results for 2009 show that the progress of a small minority of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities was significantly below average in mathematics. The school has taken actions to address this weakness with additional support sessions so that the progress of this group of pupils is improving but remains slower than for other pupils.

The school's strong spiritual atmosphere helps to provide pupils with a well-developed sense of right and wrong and to be reflective and thoughtful in their actions. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the school and the wider community. They actively help to improve the lives of others through their considerate approach to raising funds for charities, engaging in recycling and environmental projects and in making decisions on the

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themes they will study over the term. Pupils' enjoyment of school is good as are their feelings of safety, as seen in their increasingly high levels of attendance, although a very few pupils found the playground at lunchtimes crowded and a little intimidating.

The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles is outstanding; almost all pupils speak knowledgeably about being healthy. Pupils show a good understanding of healthy eating, they participate enthusiastically in a wide range of physical exercise on a weekly basis and many arrive on bikes and scooters, or walk to school. Close to the playground, adults within the 'Stable' classroom help pupils to improve their emotional well-being and self-confidence. An apposite summary was provided by a pupil during a conversation, saying: 'We try to keep healthy in body and mind.'

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
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	3
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?

The quality of teaching and learning varies across the school. Teaching is characterised by the good relationships between staff and pupils, resulting in pupils showing positive attitudes in lessons. Teaching and learning are good in Years 5 and 6 and broadly satisfactory in Years 3 and 4, where, occasionally, too much time is spent introducing lessons and opportunities are missed to increase the pace of learning. Where learning and progress are good or better, teachers use assessments well to set work which matches the needs of the different abilities of pupils. In the teaching of writing, pupils' progress is good because teachers show a clear understanding of the next steps in pupils' learning and of

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age-appropriate levels of pupils' skills and knowledge. Teachers' subject knowledge in mathematics is weaker in Years 3 and 4 and their understanding of appropriate expectations is less secure. As a result, work is not matched to the abilities of all pupils so that they do not make the progress of which they are capable.

Well-organised arrangements are in place to develop pupils' personal skills and behaviour and promote high levels of attendance. The school's recent revisions to the curriculum are successfully linking learning across subjects. This and seizing opportunities to use visitors and participate in trips enhances pupils' interest and enjoyment. Pupils appreciate their involvement in choosing half-termly themes. These links are used well to promote pupils' writing skills in other subjects but opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their mathematical skills in other subjects are less well developed. The school has improved the range of reading resources and teaching assistants provide well-organised support for pupils' reading.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive good support in helping to develop their behaviour and personal skills. The school's care, guidance and targeted support for specific groups of pupils help them to make significant gains in their personal safety, confidence and emotional well-being. Parents provided several examples where this support has been responsible for improving their children's attitudes and behaviour. Pupils who speak English as an additional language receive encouragement and support to develop their reading and writing from teaching assistants and pupils.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and senior leaders continue to place a strong emphasis on encouraging pupils' good spiritual, moral and personal development. All staff provide a stable and supportive environment in which pupils develop a thoughtful and considerate approach to adults and to each other. Senior leaders have adopted a proactive approach to safeguarding pupils and make good use of links with other agencies to improve pupils' safety. The school has completed a thorough audit of the contribution it makes to the community both nationally and globally and there is evidence of developing links with a school in London, although the school's initiatives have yet to have their full effect.

The school has developed good partnerships which have helped to develop pupils' enjoyment, knowledge and skills in a range of areas. Partnerships with other schools have increased provision and enjoyment of physical exercise, links with a range of professional agencies have helped to support pupils' emotional and social development and a closer partnership with the education welfare officer has resulted in improved attendance. The

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governing body is highly involved in the school's close partnership with the church, which helps to develop pupils' strong spiritual and moral outlook.

Senior leaders and governors have successfully tackled key weaknesses and have a satisfactory capacity to make further improvements. The school's improvement plan contains numerous actions aimed at addressing a wide range of areas. While this has led to improvements, most noticeably in writing, the breadth of the plan deflects from maintaining a clear focus and rigorous monitoring on the key priorities, such as raising attainment and progress in mathematics. More rigorous tracking of pupils' progress now provides the school with a more accurate picture of the levels of underachievement in mathematics. The school is concerned to promote equal opportunity for all its pupils. It is effective in relation to their personal development but has not yet been fully successful in ensuring that those with special educational needs and/or disabilities fare as well as others. The school's latest assessments provide evidence of more rapid progress and confirm that the progress of groups of pupils is becoming more consistent.

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	3
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	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

The very large majority of parents and carers were positive about the school and an overwhelming majority agreed that their children enjoy school and that the school keeps their children safe. Many that inspectors spoke to expressed the view that their children were well looked after. Parents and carers of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities said they had noticed improvements in their children's attitudes and confidence and felt that staff provided good support. The very large majority of parents and carers agreed that the school keeps their children healthy and helps them to support their learning. A few parents felt that their children were not making enough progress at

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the school. A very small minority of parents and carers felt that the school does not take account of their suggestions and concerns.

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 Junior 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 146 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 332 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	80	55	62	42	3	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	97	66	46	32	3	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	47	32	88	60	10	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	40	27	80	55	16	11	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	58	40	81	55	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	47	32	83	57	8	5	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	51	35	88	60	4	3	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)	49	34	79	54	8	5	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	49	34	76	52	8	5	3	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	45	31	80	55	9	6	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	38	26	75	51	13	9	5	3
The school is led and managed effectively	49	34	83	57	9	6	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	67	46	68	47	5	3	1	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

	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). 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.



15 October 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Nicholas Church of England Junior School, Sidmouth EX10 9XB

We would like to express our gratitude for the warmth of your welcome and for your polite and friendly approach to us. You clearly enjoy coming to school because you rarely miss the chance to attend. We found that you have an excellent understanding of how to keep healthy, and as one of you told us: 'We try to keep healthy in body and mind.' We noticed that many of you ate healthily, took part in regular physical exercise and kept fit by cycling or walking to school.

You make an outstanding contribution to the life of your school and to others outside of the school. You raise funds, recycle and show a good awareness of the environment. Many local people and businesses have written to the school to congratulate you on your behaviour and politeness. In particular, you have a thoughtful and reflective approach in your prayers and during assemblies and display a good understanding of right and wrong.

Your school provides you with a satisfactory education. As a result, you make satisfactory progress in developing your skills and understanding from the time you arrive to the time you leave. However, the progress you make is slower in Years 3 and 4 and faster in Years 5 and 6. We have asked the school to make sure that you make good progress at all times and in all years. You make better progress in developing your writing because you are expected to use your writing skills in different subjects. Both you and your teachers are clear how to build your writing skills and knowledge from year to year. Your progress in mathematics is slower than in other subjects. We have asked the school to help all of you to make quicker progress in mathematics by copying what helps you to do well in your writing.

The headteacher, governors and senior members of staff have produced a plan to make the school better. We have asked them to streamline their plans so that they can see more easily whether they are making a difference to you.

Yours sincerely

Mark Lindfield

Her Majesty's Inspector

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