

St Nicolas Church of England Aided Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125189
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	359859
Inspection dates	17–18 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Natalia Power

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	117
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Canon Andrew Norman
Headteacher	Kate Woodhouse
Date of previous school inspection	3 October 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors observed nine lessons taught by four different teachers and talked to parents and carers, members of the governing body, staff and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked in particular at its self-evaluation documents and plans for improvement, the data collected on pupils' progress, safeguarding information and the minutes of meetings of the governing body. They considered the responses in 80 questionnaires that had been returned by parents and carers.

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

- What is the quality of the teaching, and do the mixed-age classes meet the needs of all pupils?
- Does the curriculum provide pupils with sufficient opportunities to practise writing fluently on a range of topics?
- What is the school doing to raise attendance?
- How well does the school promote pupils' understanding of community cohesion, particularly in national and global contexts?

Information about the school

This school is smaller than average. There are four classes, one for children in the Reception Year only, one including both Reception and Year 1 pupils, one including both Year 1 and Year 2 pupils, and one for pupils in Year 2 only. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than usual. Around a quarter of pupils are from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds, and this proportion is typical of the country as a whole. Fewer pupils than usual speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is considerably lower than average. The governing body manages an Early Bird drop-in club for pupils arriving before the start of school.

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

- The hallmark of this good school is, in the words of one parent, 'its friendly and warm caring ethos'. In this secure environment, pupils develop good personal qualities. They are kind and considerate to one another, and polite to visitors. Pupils behave well and report that there is no bullying in the school.
- Children get off to a good start in the Reception Year and make good progress in their learning. Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 1 and 2, and this reflects the good teaching.
- The quality of care provided for all pupils, and particularly for those with physical needs or with special educational needs and/or disabilities, is good, enabling them all to succeed in their learning and to develop good personal qualities.
- The curriculum caters well for all pupils, including those in mixed-age classes. Teachers successfully plan topics over a two-year cycle to ensure that all pupils make good progress in their learning. The focus on basic skills is effective, particularly in promoting pupils' reading and mathematics. However, pupils are occasionally given too many worksheets to complete, and in these cases they have too few opportunities to write at length on a range of topics.
- As a result of energetic measures taken by the school, attendance has improved and is now high, after being average for a number of years.
- One parent commented, 'The school is a positive and nurturing community,' and this reflects its local popularity. The school uses its local resources fully. For example, pupils regularly go to activities in the linked church and the vicar takes frequent school assemblies. The school recognises that not enough is done to promote pupils' wider understanding of other people's faiths and ways of life, for example, by developing closer links with different kinds of communities and schools in this country and abroad.
- The headteacher and the governing body are ambitious for the school and continually seek ways of improving it. They have an accurate understanding of the school and their planning for the future is good. They have met the recommendations of the previous inspection. For example, they have improved the tracking of pupils' progress, and this enables teachers to match work accurately to pupils' needs, providing a good level of challenge to all, even when different year groups are taught within one class. These factors indicate that the school has a good capacity to continue to improve.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Extend pupils' wider understanding of different cultures and customs, for example by establishing closer links with schools in other countries.
- Ensure that, where worksheets are used, they provide pupils with as many opportunities as possible to practise fluency in writing on a range of topics, both factual and imaginative. Ensure that, where worksheets are used, they provide pupils with as many opportunities as possible to practise fluency in writing on a range of topics, both factual and imaginative.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils' achievement is outstanding, and they show their enjoyment of learning through their high attendance. One parent commented, 'My child looks forward to school each day and feels proud of her achievements.' With small cohorts in each year group, pupils' starting and leaving points tend to fluctuate. The overall pattern, however, is that children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and abilities above those expected for their age, and leave at the end of Year 2 with attainment significantly higher than national averages, especially in reading and mathematics. A scrutiny of pupils' work throughout the school supports these findings. All groups of pupils, including those who speak English as an additional language, and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress. This is because their needs are identified early and met through effective support. In lessons, the level of challenge is good and pupils rise to meet it. For example, in one fast-paced lesson for pupils in Year 2, pupils enjoyed using their reading of various Roald Dahl books to describe, and in some cases act out, the different characters. The lesson provided exciting opportunities for pupils to work independently and to share their enthusiasm with others through discussion.

Pupils are articulate, confident and enjoy acting as ambassadors for their school. They understand the importance of taking exercise and eating a healthy diet, and one commented, 'The school gives us lots of vegetables to keep us healthy.' Pupils feel safe in school and know the adults will support them if they have any concerns. Behaviour is good in and around the school, and this reflects the pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They make a good contribution to the school and the wider community. For example, they took full advantage of the opportunity to support Comic Relief, and they all turned up in pyjamas on one day of the inspection to raise money for the appeal, as did their teachers. Pupils acquire excellent skills in literacy, numeracy and in speaking and listening, and this prepares them extremely well for the next stage of schooling.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	1
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	1
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 know their pupils thoroughly and manage their behaviour well, ensuring that they sit properly and pay close attention. They use questioning skilfully to stimulate pupils to think for themselves, and encourage them to discuss tasks with one another, so that in most cases they are fully engaged. In one science lesson for pupils in Years 1 and 2, the pupils were excited about learning which wrapping materials would most successfully prevent an egg from breaking when dropped. They enjoyed both the intellectual challenge of predicting the result of the experiment, and the practical task of carrying it out. In this case, worksheets were used skilfully to provide an appropriate challenge for each pupil. However, this is not always the case, and there are instances where worksheets provide too little challenge or opportunity for pupils to undertake and write up their own research.

In most cases, the pace of learning is brisk and the work is successfully matched to pupils' capabilities. There are occasional instances, however, where teachers do too much for the pupils and in these cases pupils sometimes become a little restless and fidgety. Pupils are given good opportunities to discuss and share ideas with their classmates. Marking is usually thorough, especially in English, where it offers helpful guidance to pupils on the next steps they need to take to improve. Occasionally, marking in mathematics books offers less guidance on improvement than it should. Teaching assistants give good support, enabling all pupils, whatever their aptitudes or needs, to make good progress. The curriculum has a good focus on developing pupils' basic skills, and provides good

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opportunities for them to use information and communication technology in a range of topics. Pupils report that they enjoy their clubs, trips and visits to places of interest, and the youngest children love exploring their own back yard to find mini-beasts.

Pupils with a range of additional needs are given good care and support, and children whose circumstance may make them vulnerable are given particularly good support. The school goes to great lengths to provide for them, for instance by ensuring that teaching assistants are well-trained and effective in supporting them. Each pupil is known and valued, and one parent commented, 'The school cares for my child and makes her feel special.' The Early Birds drop-in morning session is welcoming and provides the pupils who attend with a settled start to the day. Transition arrangements into the Reception Year are good, and Year 2 pupils are well prepared for their move to the next phase of schooling.

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 school has gone from strength to strength under the leadership of the headteacher.' This comment from a parent is typical of several which pay tribute to the leadership qualities of the headteacher. She communicates her ambition well, and has created a cohesive team, effectively managing changeover in staffing so that the school runs smoothly and standards are maintained. She demonstrates her drive to improve the school by her actions, for example by strengthening the quality of tracking of pupils' progress. The governing body shares her determination to improve the school. Its plans for its development are clear and cover the right areas. Governors are actively engaged in the life of the school and are ready to take the initiative in making improvements. For example, they regularly visit the school to check its policies for themselves and report their findings back to the school to ensure that improvements are made. The management of the quality of teaching and learning is good, and there is a good focus on how and what pupils learn. The school promotes equality of opportunity well, tackling discrimination by removing barriers to learning, as seen in the effective use of teaching assistants to support different groups, so that all pupils have the chance to succeed. The headteacher and governing body ensure that safeguarding procedures are robust and that pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Staff are well trained in child protection procedures and all adults are thoroughly checked and vetted before working in the school.

The school's promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory overall. The headteacher and governing body have created a cohesive school with a pride in its long history and prominent place in the local community. They have fostered good links with local

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organisations, for example with the community police, who play an important part in encouraging regular attendance. As yet, however, leaders do not sufficiently develop links with schools and communities in this country and overseas to ensure that pupils have a full understanding of other people's ways of life and systems of belief. Leaders and managers work in effective partnership with parents and carers, keeping them well informed about their children's progress and communicating well through the school's informative website and through regular newsletters.

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	2
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Good links with local nursery schools help the children settle quickly into their new routines in the Reception Year. The school builds and maintains good relationships with parents and carers. Adults promote children's welfare well. They provide firm but kind support and, as a result, the children develop good social and emotional skills. They play together peacefully and are ready to share and take turns. The school has carefully thought about the needs of all the Reception children, including the older ones in the mixed-age Year 1/Reception class, and all Reception children play together and share the same activities each morning. The attractive indoor and outdoor areas provide them with many opportunities to learn about the world around them and to develop good literacy and numeracy skills. There is a good balance of child-initiated and teacher-led activities. The adults are ambitious for the children's learning, and introduce them to quite sophisticated concepts, such as how to use a reference book. In the best activities, adults develop children's interest through questioning to promote higher-level thinking, asking the children, for instance, such questions as 'How do you know that?', rather than taking the child's first response as sufficient. Occasionally, however, opportunities are sometimes missed to extend the children's language skills through sufficiently well-targeted questioning. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed. The new

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coordinator has acted quickly to provide a stimulating outdoor environment, with plenty of opportunities for children to experience wonder and awe at living creatures, and the excitement of growing flowers and vegetables. Leaders plan well to provide focused activities for children with a range of capabilities and to ensure that children are kept safe.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

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

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parents and carers who returned questionnaires was considerably higher than usual. All parents and carers who returned questionnaires or who spoke to inspectors agreed that the school keeps their children safe. Nearly all agreed that their children enjoy school and that it keeps them healthy. Inspectors found that the school manages these aspects well. Nearly all parents and carers felt that the school takes their views into account. Inspectors found that the school engages well with parents and carers. A few parents and carers felt that their children were not prepared well for the next stage of schooling or making enough progress. The findings of the inspection are, however, that these aspects are good. Parents and carers were nearly unanimous in being happy with their children's experience at the school. One commented, 'This is a lovely caring environment for learning, and my child is very happy here.'

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 Aided Infant 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 80 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 117 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	59	74	20	25	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	60	75	20	25	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	27	34	50	63	3	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	39	49	35	44	4	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	43	54	34	43	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	36	45	40	50	3	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	35	44	44	55	1	1	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)	30	38	39	49	3	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	38	48	37	46	4	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	38	48	33	41	3	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	37	46	42	53	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	50	63	24	30	2	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	56	70	22	28	1	1	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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 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.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

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

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



21 March 2011

Inspection of St Nicolas Church of England Aided Infant School, Guildford GU2 4YD

Dear Pupils

Do you remember when two visitors came to your school recently to watch you learn and play? Thank you for making us so welcome, and telling us your views. You are fortunate to go to a good school. Here are some of the things your school does well.

- The adults look after you well, and you are happy at school.
- Your school keeps you safe and healthy.
- You behave well and pay close attention in lessons.
- You are polite and respectful to visitors.
- You enjoy taking on responsibilities at school, and those of you on the school council really loved designing a perfect school playground.
- You are keen to come to school every day, unless you are unwell.
- Your teachers teach you well, and you leave school with results which are a great deal higher than those of pupils in the country as a whole. with results which are a great deal higher than those of pupils in the country as a whole.
- Your parents and carers like your school as much as you do, and value the way everyone is treated like a member of the family.

Here are ways in which your school could become even better.

- We know how special and important your school is in your local community. Now we want the adults to tell you even more about how people live and worship in other countries. know how special and important your school is in your local community. Now we want the adults to tell you even more about how people live and worship in other countries.
- We know you love writing, so we have asked your school to give you fewer worksheets and more opportunities to write on a wide range of interesting topics. know you love writing, so we have asked your school to give you fewer worksheets and more opportunities to write on a wide range of interesting topics.

All the adults are working very hard to make your school better and better. All of you can play your part by working hard, too, and keeping up your school's wonderful record of attendance.

Yours sincerely

Natalia Power

Lead inspector

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