

# St Nicholas' CofE Middle School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	116861
<b>Local Authority</b>	Worcestershire
<b>Inspection number</b>	358045
<b>Inspection dates</b>	24–25 March 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Anna Coyle

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>	Middle deemed primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	9–12
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	283
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Gary Robinson
<b>Headteacher</b>	David Snell
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	29 January 2008
<b>School address</b>	Main Street Pinvin, Pershore WR10 2ER
<b>Telephone number</b>	01386 554196
<b>Fax number</b>	01386 556272
<b>Email address</b>	office@st-nicholas.worcs.sch.uk

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 25 lessons involving 13 teachers. Discussions were held with staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors, and groups of parents, carers and pupils. The inspectors looked at pupils' books and viewed a wide range of documentation including: school policies and monitoring information; curricular planning; self-evaluation information; improvement planning; safeguarding arrangements; and tracking and assessment data about pupils' progress. They also analysed questionnaires from 139 parents and carers, 85 pupils and 18 staff.

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

- How well boys achieve in writing in Years 5 to 7.
- Whether teachers' planning takes sufficient account of pupils' targets, and whether expectations are high enough for boys and girls in Year 5.
- The effectiveness of the leadership and management of English?

## Information about the school

This average-sized middle deemed primary school is set in a rural location and serves the surrounding villages. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and a few are from minority ethnic families. A small proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language: the main languages spoken at home, other than English, are Polish, Hungarian, Ukrainian and Bulgarian. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is similar to the national average. The school has achieved the Artsmark Gold and Eco Schools awards and it has Healthy Schools status.

**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

This is a good school which provides an effective education for its pupils. It has improved considerably since the last inspection under the excellent leadership of the new headteacher. There is a strong commitment to the achievement of pupils within a very welcoming and friendly ethos in which equality and diversity are celebrated effectively. The headteacher has a very clear vision for the future of the school and an outstanding sense of ambition and drive. He is supported well by the dedicated deputy headteacher, the enthusiastic senior management team and the good governing body. Because its record of raising achievement is successful and self-evaluation is accurate, the school is set to build on its strengths and has a good capacity to improve further.

Staff have been highly successful in raising standards in mathematics since the last inspection so that attainment is currently above the national expectations in Year 7. Lesson observations and the school's impressive range of tracking data confirm that this upward trend is continuing. Attainment is also above the expected levels in reading and science. This represents good achievement by pupils of all abilities and minority ethnic backgrounds. The school has accurately identified that, although girls attain above the expected levels in English, the achievement of boys is too variable in writing: the inspection findings concur, and confirm that weaknesses include inconsistencies in handwriting, spelling and grammar. The school does not have a handwriting scheme to help pupils improve their writing.

The quality of teaching has improved well and is now good. This is having a strong impact on pupils' learning, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language. Teachers set challenging targets for pupils and they use assessment information effectively to check progress and pinpoint where extra support is necessary. However, there are some inconsistencies in the deployment of teaching assistants in lessons and teachers' planning does not always specify what different groups are to learn. In a few lessons, introductions are too long and activities lack pace. This has an adverse effect on the learning of boys, who sometimes become disengaged and lose interest.

Levels of attendance are outstanding. The very large majority of pupils enjoy school where they benefit from an attractive and supportive learning environment. They behave well and show polite respect to their peers, adults and visitors. Pupils take pride in the responsibilities they are given, such as being members of the school council. They say that they feel safe at school and have a good understanding of how to live healthy lifestyles.

The school is an inclusive environment in which partnerships with parents and carers are outstanding and links with the local, national and international communities are promoted well. Members of staff know the pupils well and provide good levels of care and guidance for them. This is recognised by parents and carers: the overwhelming majority who replied

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to the inspection questionnaire expressed a considerable level of satisfaction with the school and their children's experiences. One comment summed up the views of many: 'The school provides a happy, caring environment. The classrooms have a buzz and the children appear purposeful and work together well.'

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

- Accelerate the progress of boys in writing by:
  - ensuring that they are fully engaged and interested in learning
  - improving the standards of handwriting, spelling and the use of grammar
  - providing a consistent approach to the teaching of handwriting.
- Make all teaching good or outstanding by:
  - planning learning tasks that specify exactly what different groups are to learn and how teaching assistants will help them
  - ensuring that introductions are not too long so that lessons begin at a brisk pace and pupils get on with their work quickly.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**2**

Evidence from lesson observations and the work seen in pupils' books confirm that most of the pupils currently in Year 7 are already working at or beyond the levels expected for age. This represents good achievement from standards on entry to Year 5 that are broadly in line with the national expectations. The most able pupils rise to the challenging activities that are set for them and they attain high standards. However, the progress of boys is less consistent than that of girls in writing. This is because boys sometimes lose interest in lessons and there are inconsistencies in their use of grammar, spelling and handwriting. Nevertheless, the significant improvement in mathematics over the last two years reflects the school's very successful strategies for tackling the weaknesses identified at the time of the last inspection. This is borne out by the latest standardised test results for Year 6 and the school's own tracking data for Years 5 to 7. Pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language make good progress because they are integrated well and support is focused closely on their identified needs. Most pupils work well independently and collaboratively, especially when the teaching is challenging and exciting. This was seen in mathematics in Year 6, when pupils focused very well on developing their thinking and reasoning skills to come up with questions like, 'Does a triangular prism have more than four faces?' Similarly, pupils in Year 7 were very engrossed when using algebraic solutions to calculate the areas of two-dimensional shapes.

Pupils are extremely keen to attend lessons and are proud of their school. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good because pupils know right from wrong and are tolerant towards each other. Pupils enjoy learning and behave well. They are courteous and helpful to the adults who teach them, which results in a good rapport between them. Pupils have a good understanding of how to adopt a healthy lifestyle by taking plenty of physical exercise and eating a balanced diet. The school's eco award and its good focus on growing vegetables and composting waste benefits learning effectively. Pupils say that they feel safe at school and that any incidents of misbehaviour or bullying are dealt with

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promptly. They say that they know to whom they should go if they are worried about anything. The school council provides a good platform for pupils to express their views. Many contribute well to the school and wider community by taking on responsibilities such as acting as peer mediators, who are known as 'friendly fixers', and raising money for national appeals such as the Haiti Earthquake. They are prepared well for the next stage of their education.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</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>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	1
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</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 and pupils are respectful towards each other and there are excellent relationships between them. In the very best lessons, pupils make rapid progress because teachers have strong subject knowledge and excellent control and discipline. High expectations and skilful questioning are used to extend pupils' understanding very effectively. This was exemplified in a Year 5 poetry lesson on 'The Highwayman' in which pupils responded with tremendous enthusiasm. Superb, inspirational teaching led to a great sense of fun and enjoyment. This resulted in lots of discussions and all pupils made excellent progress because they were actively engaged from the outset of the lesson: one boy was inspired to come up with the phrase, 'deadly, dark and dangerous' to describe the thief. Planning is mainly good but not all teachers identify exactly what different groups are to learn or how teaching assistants will help them. In addition, the pace of learning is occasionally too slow at the beginning of some lessons when teachers talk for too long.

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This means that pupils have too little time to apply their skills independently. Even so, the quality of marking is very good. Pupils are provided with clear guidance on how to improve their work and effective use is made of assessment data to track pupils' progress towards their targets.

The school's good curriculum provides pupils with a wide range of learning experiences, which include religious education and French. Pupils' mainly good progress in English is underpinned by good opportunities for them to apply their literacy skills across the curriculum. The recently introduced 'Learning Journeys' and 'Theme' lessons have been a big hit with pupils, parents and carers alike: 'A fabulous way of engaging children' is just one comment that typifies parental views. The school's provision is good for mathematics, science and creative subjects, such as art, and classrooms are vibrant and colourful places in which to learn. The curriculum is enhanced well through local partnerships and a wide range of extra-curricular activities and clubs, such as those for writing, mathematics, computer skills, photography, choir and football. Pupils thoroughly enjoyed the science 'Forensic Day' and their visit to prepare them for a project on 'Night at the Oscars'. These contribute much to pupils' enjoyment, as do visitors, trips and residential visits.

The vast majority of parents and carers are pleased with their children's experiences. The school is an inclusive and harmonious community in which staff work together as an effective team to promote pupils' personal development. Close attention is given to supporting pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Good transition arrangements help pupils to move up from the local first schools into Year 5 and then transfer to the high school when they have completed Year 7.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The headteacher is pivotal to the success of the school. His outstanding vision and ambition has been the driving force behind the school's improvement since the time of the last inspection. Staff, governors, parents and carers all agree that he has made a 'great impression' on the school, and typical comments include, 'There have been massive improvements under the new headteacher.' Senior managers and subject leaders work together effectively as a team and the leadership of both English and mathematics is good. As a result, the school is firmly set on an upward path. Through the rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning, together with careful tracking of pupils' progress, the school is very aware of its strengths and the areas to develop. It has identified and tackled its weaknesses effectively with good use of a detailed school development plan and a

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tightly focused plan for raising achievement. Close links with external agencies help the school to support pupils with individual needs and target any gaps in learning, such as those of boys in writing. This is underpinned by the school's good commitment to promoting equal opportunities and tackling discrimination.

The governing body fulfils its statutory responsibilities well and provides the school with good support and challenge. Safeguarding procedures are good and all staff and governors are checked to make sure that they are suitable to work with children. Parents and carers are highly valued as partners in their children's education. They are provided with a wide range of information which is enhanced by the school website. The school promotes community cohesion effectively and has good links with the church and a community in Zambia. It is developing further links to enhance pupils' knowledge and understanding of national and global perspectives. The school provides good value for money.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<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>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Views of parents and carers

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers who returned questionnaires are very happy with the school. They agree unanimously that the school is led and managed well and that their children are safe. They also agree that the school has a supportive and friendly atmosphere and that their children make good progress. A very small number of criticisms were mentioned and these were discussed, anonymously, with the headteacher. The inspectors found that there were no particular trends in the very few negative comments received.



## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Nicholas' CofE Middle 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 139 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 283 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	68	49	69	50	2	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	83	60	56	40	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	49	35	83	60	6	4	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	46	33	86	62	5	4	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	60	43	75	54	3	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	42	30	88	63	6	4	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	50	36	85	61	2	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)	51	37	80	58	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	43	31	89	64	7	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	45	32	81	58	8	6	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	41	29	92	66	3	2	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	81	58	55	40	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	77	51	66	47	2	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](http://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"><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.**



28 March 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of St Nicholas' CofE Middle School, Pershore, WR10 2ER**

Thank you for the help you gave us with the recent inspection of your school and for the friendly way you received us. We spoke to many of you and you were really helpful. Here are some of the things we found out.

You go to a good school where the teaching is good.

Levels of attendance are outstanding and the vast majority of you told us that you really enjoy school and are keen to learn.

You behave well and make good progress in learning, especially in mathematics.

You understand the importance of being healthy by eating sensibly and taking part in physical activities regularly.

You do a lot to help the school, especially those of you who are involved in making decisions through the school council and the 'green team'.

Adults look after you well so that you are safe and happy.

Your headteacher is an excellent leader. He and all the other staff and the governing body are determined to make things even better.

We have asked the school to do a few things to improve.

Help the boys to do better in writing by making sure that they have interesting lessons to improve their skills in spelling, grammar and handwriting.

Ask the teachers to plan work that says exactly what different groups are to learn and how teaching assistants will help them, and ensure that introductions to lessons are not too long so that you can all get on with your work quickly.

We hope that everyone will work together to do these things and that you will want to play your part by working hard and making sure that your handwriting is always neat and tidy.

Yours sincerely

Dr Anna Coyle

Lead inspector

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