

St Nicholas CofE VA Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120227
Local Authority	Rutland
Inspection number	358723
Inspection dates	19–20 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Lois Furness

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	91
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Deborah Oakes
Headteacher	Barbara Crellin
Date of previous school inspection	11 June 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out two additional inspectors. Eight lessons were visited and three teachers seen. Inspectors held meetings with members of the governing body, groups of pupils and staff. The school improvement plan, safeguarding documentation, assessment records, planning documentation and the School Improvement Partner's reports were scrutinised, as was pupils' work in lessons, in books and on display. In total, 41 parents' and carers' questionnaires were analysed and 14 staff and 42 pupil questionnaires were also considered.

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

- Inspectors checked the evidence for above-average attainment by the end of Year 6, and the good learning and progress of all pupils throughout the school.
- Inspectors explored what is needed to make good teaching outstanding and whether the curriculum provides sufficient challenge for all groups of pupils.
- They checked how rigorous self-evaluation is in identifying key improvement points in order to improve achievement and provision.
- Inspectors explored how well the governing body challenges the school's work.
- The team explored pupils' understanding of multicultural Britain.

Information about the school

In this much smaller than an average-sized primary school almost all pupils are White British. There are no pupils at the early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average, although the proportion of those with a statement of special educational needs is well above average. The number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. Provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage is provided in a Reception class. During the inspection, the Years 1, 2 and 3 pupils were on a residential visit and therefore were not directly observed. The Year 4 pupils were also on a residential visit, but returned to school for the second day of the inspection. In September, following the retirement of the substantive headteacher, the school is to be federated with a nearby local school. Already the two schools have been working together closely. The school has a number of externally accredited awards including Healthy Schools Status, Investors in People, and the Rutland Quality Mark for Early Years.

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

This school provides a satisfactory quality of education. It is a happy and friendly place, with a caring atmosphere. Parents and carers value the school's central place in village life and its family values. One parent commented, 'I can not say strongly enough how this school helped my child to become more confident and happy. I couldn't have asked for more.' Staff form strong and trusting relationships with pupils. Therefore pupils feel safe, free from bullying or harassment, knowing adults will always help them. Pupils work well together in lessons, sharing ideas and resources. Responsibilities such as road safety officers, school councillors and playground 'friends' are examples of how pupils contribute effectively to the school community. These tasks provide pupils with good opportunities to help each other. Although the school makes pupils aware of different cultures within the school, local and international communities, it does not promote the diversity of cultures found within the United Kingdom well enough.

By the time pupils leave in Year 6, attainment is broadly average which shows a marked improvement from 2009, when attainment in English and mathematics was low. While teaching is satisfactory and some good features of teaching were seen, there is not enough of this good practice to ensure pupils make consistently good progress throughout the school. Progress is satisfactory rather than good, because the use of assessment information is not rigorous enough to ensure activities are always suitable for pupils of all abilities. Assessments are not consistently accurate and although staff use national assessment guidance to help develop both consistency and accuracy, application of this guidance is at an early stage of development. All teachers mark work conscientiously, but the quality of marking varies and some pupils are not clear enough about where they need to focus their efforts to improve. Untidy work is too often accepted and pupils do not have a neat, legible style of handwriting. While in all classes there are good examples of written feedback, time for pupils to respond to these useful comments is insufficient.

Leaders and managers have a broadly accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses, but self-evaluation is far too generous. The scrutiny of teachers' planning, pupils' work and meetings to review pupils' progress are not sufficiently frequent to enable staff, particularly those with leadership responsibility, to rectify any emerging underachievement quickly. Middle managers and subject leaders have not had sufficient training in how to monitor and evaluate provision. Staff are not held to account sufficiently to ensure they assess pupils' attainment accurately and then use this information to ensure the good progress of pupils. The governing body is supportive and enthusiastic but it has not focused well enough on pupils' achievements or on the impact of actions to raise attainment. However the rise in attainment over the past two years, satisfactory progress and pupils' good attitudes towards learning, alongside the already good partnership working with the federated school, indicate the school has satisfactory capacity to improve further.

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Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure pupils make good progress year-on-year in English and mathematics by:
 - making certain assessments are accurate by holding regular meetings whereby teachers discuss and agree pupils' attainment
 - ensuring accurate assessment information is used rigorously to plan activities that match the learning needs of all pupils
 - holding termly meetings to check pupils' progress and swiftly taking any necessary action to rectify any underachievement
 - raising teachers' expectations of the quality of pupils' handwriting and presentation of work
 - ensuring marking clearly identifies strengths and areas for improvement and giving pupils time to respond to the useful feedback given.
- Strengthen the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - establishing a rigorous cycle of scrutiny of planning, lesson observation and book analysis which focuses on pupils' learning and ensures staff are held accountable for pupils' progress
 - providing all leaders and managers with the skills and expertise to take responsibility for pupils' performance
 - developing the governing body's role of challenging the school, including evaluating the impact of actions taken.
- Broaden pupils' understanding of community cohesion by:
 - establishing links with communities within the United Kingdom which represent cultures different from those found within school and in the local community
 - regularly monitoring and evaluating the impact of these links on pupils' attitudes, values and cultural development.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Good behaviour means minimum time is wasted during lessons and pupils try hard to complete their work. They have good attitudes towards learning and their enjoyment of school is confirmed by above-average attendance. Progress is at least satisfactory and is good in some lessons, for example, when Year 4 pupils learnt about life during World War II. In another lesson for Years 5 and 6, pupils made good progress in learning how to record information in a pie chart. Some pupils found this quite challenging, but through perseverance they explored how a protractor would help them to construct accurately the components of the chart. However, when considered alongside pupils' work in books and the school's tracking data, achievement is satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers, although when given one-to-one support, progress is good. There is no significant difference in attainment between boys and girls.

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Pupils' moral and social development is a strength. Their understanding of right and wrong is secure and they are very considerate of each other's needs. Strong links with the local church increase pupils' awareness of spirituality and religious concepts and reinforce the school's values. Although pupils engage enthusiastically in artistic and sporting activities, they have too few opportunities to develop their understanding of the multicultural society in which they live. They have a good understanding of the needs of others through their work in supporting different charities such as collecting money for the Haiti disaster. Pupils are enthusiastic about how they make the school and village environments more attractive, for example, by explaining how the gardening club looks after a village flower bed. Pupils speak knowledgeably about eating healthily and the importance of exercise. Healthy Schools status and the achievement of Activemark show the school's commitment to encouraging this aspect of pupils' development. Pupils know how to keep safe, recognising, for example, the possible dangers of railways, fire and electricity. Pupils' secure basic skills and good social skills prepare them satisfactorily for the next stage of education.

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	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	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
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?

A vibrant curriculum, centred on giving pupils exciting, real-life learning experiences, enables teachers to plan imaginative activities that link well to pupils' interests. Good partnership working, frequent off-site visits, including residential trips, and visitors to

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school provide good enrichment. Information and communication technology is used effectively as a resource, for example, for research. Additional adults are usually deployed well and provide effective support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, at times, too many adults in the classroom limit pupils' independent learning and thinking skills. Also the curriculum does not always match pupils' learning needs, as information about pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding is not used carefully enough to ensure all pupils make consistently good progress. This is particularly evident in writing, when work in pupils' books shows that too often pupils carry out the same activity regardless of their prior attainment. Pupils are becoming more involved in their learning as lesson objectives are shared with them and strategies, such as 'thinking thumbs', are used to give all pupils time to think about their answers. Marking and feedback, although satisfactory, does not impact sufficiently well on improving pupils' progress.

All adults are fully committed to the support they give to pupils and this is central to the pupils' good personal development and well-being. As a result, all pupils, particularly those whose circumstances at times may make them vulnerable, feel safe, confident in the knowledge that adults will help them. One pupil, who had experienced some bullying at his previous school, confidently stated 'there is no bullying here.' All parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire agree their children are kept safe. Induction procedures are good and pupils new to the school settle quickly. The before- and after-school clubs are well attended and provide a range of enjoyable activities.

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?

Leaders and managers have a satisfactory focus on raising attainment and on ensuring pupils' good personal development. Also there is no doubting their success in making the curriculum fun and interesting for pupils. However, self-evaluation is not rigorous enough and target setting is only adequately challenging. The system for tracking pupils' progress does not enable school leaders to halt any underachievement quickly enough. This is improving but there is still some way to go before all leaders ensure pupils' good achievement. The governing body shows considerable commitment to the school and at the time of the inspection, all safeguarding procedures were securely in place. However, its effectiveness in challenging the school is underdeveloped and, therefore, governance is satisfactory. Much effort has been put into ensuring the good pastoral care of pupils. While this work has done a great deal to ensure equal opportunities for those with specific needs, it has been less successful in providing consistently good progress for all.

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There is good engagement with parents and carers, and with partners such as other local schools and the local church, to support pupils' learning and well-being. Community cohesion is strong within the school and the local community and any form of discrimination is not tolerated. Satisfactory links are made with international communities such as those made with a school in Kenya and one in Australia. However, links with other communities within the United Kingdom that are different to the school and village community are less secure. As yet, the school does not evaluate the impact of its work on promoting community cohesion on pupils' attitudes, values and cultural development.

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

The vast majority of children enter the Reception class with skills and abilities that match those expected for their age, although this varies considerably with small cohorts. Good liaison with parents and carers, alongside a welcoming and stimulating environment, ensure that children settle quickly and enjoy their learning. Behaviour is good. They make good progress, especially in their personal, social and emotional development. A structured programme for teaching letter sounds and their names is ensuring good progress in reading and writing. By the end of Reception, children's attainment is above average. However, although children make good progress, the provision is not always suitable for children of reception age. At times children spend too long listening to adults and there are not enough opportunities for them to initiate their own meaningful activities using rich and varied resources. Play activities are not planned carefully enough with a focus on specific learning needs. The leader of this key stage is enthusiastic, but is inexperienced in leadership. Although she willingly follows advice, at the present time leadership is only satisfactory because monitoring and evaluation are not rigorous enough. However, adults work well together, children feel safe and welfare requirements are met.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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

Around 45% of parents and carers responded to the Ofsted questionnaire. All of them agreed their children enjoy school, are kept safe and the teaching is good. There were no areas of significant concern identified in the questionnaires. During the inspection, inspectors found that pupils enjoyed school and felt safe knowing adults would always help them. Teaching was evaluated as satisfactory.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Nicholas CoFE VA 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 41 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 91 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	30	73	11	27	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	32	78	9	22	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	23	56	17	41	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	21	51	18	44	2	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	24	59	17	41	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	28	68	11	27	2	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	29	71	11	27	1	2	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)	22	54	13	32	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	24	59	14	34	3	7	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	21	51	17	41	2	5	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	23	56	16	39	1	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	22	54	16	39	2	5	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	29	71	11	27	1	2	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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.



23 May 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Nicholas CofE VA Primary School, Cottesmore, LE15 7DL

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed meeting all of you and seeing you at work and play. We learned a great deal about your school and this letter is to tell you what we found. Your school is providing you with a satisfactory education because there are some things that are good and others that could be better.

Some of the good things we found included your good behaviour and the way you are all so willing to help each other learn. All of you are so polite and friendly and your parents and carers must be proud of your good manners. It is good to know you all feel safe, because the adults in your school will always listen and help you. Some of you are very willing to help others as members of the gardening club, school councillors, road safety officers and playground 'friends.' We think you all do a really good job. You have a good understanding of the importance of eating healthily and taking regular exercise. Some of you told me why it is important to eat fruit and vegetables everyday and not to eat too many chips, chocolates and biscuits.

At the moment your progress is satisfactory. We have suggested that teachers need to use information about what you know already to make sure the activities they give you are hard enough. We also think you need to be clearer about what you are learning and how you can improve; teachers can help you to do this through improving their marking. Teachers should help you to present your work neatly and to improve your handwriting skills. We have also suggested that leaders and governors closely check you are all learning as much as you can. Finally, although you know a lot about life in school and your local community, we think you need to learn more about different communities within the United Kingdom.

You can all help by continuing to work hard and by asking your teachers to give you helpful hints about how to improve your work. We wish you all the best for the future and thank you again for your help.

Yours sincerely

Lois Furness

Lead inspector

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