

St Nicholas Priory CofE VC Junior School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 121093 |
| Local Authority | Norfolk |
| Inspection number | 358926 |
| Inspection dates | 14–15 July 2011 |
| Reporting inspector | Nick Butt |

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

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| Type of school | Junior |
| School category | Voluntary controlled |
| Age range of pupils | 7–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 375 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | James Wright |
| Headteacher | Mark Adams |
| Date of previous school inspection | 30 June 2008 |
| School address | St Nicholas Road Great Yarmouth NR30 1NL |
| Telephone number | 01493 843552 |
| Fax number | 01493 858710 |
| Email address | head@st-nicholaspriory.norfolk.sch.uk |

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspection team observed 24 lessons or part lessons taught by 26 teachers. Inspectors held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at a selection of documentation including safeguarding policies and procedures; planning; evidence of monitoring records, including the school's lesson observations; analyses of pupils' work; and other assessment information. The inspection team scrutinised inspection questionnaires returned by 72 parents and carers and by staff and pupils.

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

- Why has attainment not risen significantly in the past three years?
- Is teaching consistently good enough to accelerate pupils' progress and raise attainment from low levels?
- How accurate and effective is school self-evaluation in driving improvement?
- What impact have leaders and managers at all levels had in bringing about rapid and sustained improvement?

Information about the school

St Nicholas Priory is larger than most junior schools. It was reorganised from a middle school to a junior school in September 2008, losing Year 7 and gaining Year 3. The large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds, with a small minority from other ethnic groups, mainly of Eastern European or Portuguese origin. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is high. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is also high. The school has gained national Healthy School status and the Activemark award. It achieved Investors in Families accreditation earlier this year. The governing body manages a daily breakfast club for the school's pupils.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

4

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

Pupils' achievement is inadequate because attainment in English and mathematics has been persistently low for the past three years and has shown no significant improvement. Results from this year's national tests are no exception. Although leaders can point to some improvements in 2011, for example in the proportion of pupils attaining Level 5 in mathematics, the rate of pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics is too variable. While progress is satisfactory overall, it is not good enough to secure the rapid acceleration in learning required to raise pupils' attainment above the minimum expected targets set by the government. Attainment, therefore, for large numbers of pupils, is too low.

The school's self-evaluation is too generous and does not inform strategic planning accurately enough. As a result, key priorities lack challenge and are not focused sufficiently on improving the quality of teaching and raising attainment. Although actions have been taken to improve pupils' progress, they lack urgency and are not applied consistently enough to secure rapid improvement. Recently-introduced school initiatives have been monitored by leaders. However, the impact of actions taken has not been evaluated rigorously to adapt planning so that the needs of all pupils are met. While teaching overall is satisfactory, there is too little good teaching and some inadequate teaching. Work is not always matched to pupils' abilities and sometimes lacks sufficient challenge. Consequently, the pace of learning is impeded. Teachers' expectations of the amount of work pupils can produce vary within year groups and presentation, especially handwriting, is untidy and inconsistent. There are examples of good practice, when teaching engages pupils well and actively involves them in their learning but this is not consistent. The quality and impact of marking is uneven across the school and between subjects. Pupils seldom respond to comments made and the extent to which they act upon advice varies. There has been a concerted effort to make the curriculum more appealing, and this has started to have a positive impact upon pupils' personal development and their enjoyment of school. Teachers are beginning to make useful links in literacy across subjects but there are fewer opportunities for pupils to practise their numeracy and information and communication technology skills (ICT) across the curriculum.

The pastoral care of pupils is good. A large team of support staff helps pupils and their families when difficulties arise, with nurture groups and a range of interventions supporting those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. The school engages

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parents and carers well and has set up reading and mathematics 'cafes' for them to share learning with their children. Pupils say they feel safe in school, a view supported by parents and carers, and have plenty of people to turn to if they have a problem. They have a good understanding of keeping healthy, a number choosing to cycle to school.

The school's effectiveness has declined considerably since its previous inspection. Leaders and managers have not secured a sustained trend of improvement in attainment or raised the quality of teaching sufficiently to accelerate progress. As a result, pupils are not prepared well enough for secondary school, too many of them leaving without the expected basic skills. The governing body has not provided the necessary challenge for senior leaders or monitored the work of the school rigorously and systematically. Consequently, the school's capacity for sustained improvement is inadequate.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in English, mathematics and information and communication technology skills (ICT) by:
 - ensuring all pupils have a secure grasp of the basic skills, knowledge and understanding expected for their age
 - giving pupils more opportunities to practise their numeracy and ICT skills across the curriculum
 - building on the work to harness pupils' enthusiasm for reading
 - improving pupils' handwriting.
- Ensure teaching is consistently at least good in order to accelerate pupils' progress by:
 - pitching work to just above pupils' current level of attainment so that all pupils are challenged appropriately
 - having high expectations of how much work pupils can produce in lessons
 - ensuring that marking always helps pupils to improve through giving them opportunities to respond to advice.
- Increase the effectiveness of leaders and managers at all levels by:
 - accelerating the drive for improvement so that there is a real urgency in raising attainment
 - ensuring that the school's self-evaluation is accurate and based upon rigorous and systematic monitoring
 - ensuring strategic plans are ambitious and focus on what the school needs to do most to improve
 - ensuring that the governing body holds leaders fully accountable for the school's outcomes and gives them a clear strategic lead.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

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Attainment is too low for all groups of pupils. This is particularly the case in reading, where there are wide variations in the progress that different groups of pupils make. The

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school is unable to make significant inroads into closing gaps in attainment because progress is too inconsistent. In lessons observed, learning was generally satisfactory with some better examples. Occasionally, elements of inadequate progress were observed. The amount of work pupils produce varies according to the level of teachers' expectations. In a Year 5 lesson, pupils were concentrating hard on producing a newsletter for younger pupils about life in Year 5 and were all fully engaged. However, in a neighbouring class, pupils were chatting informally while completing a play script and were not clear what was required of them, which slowed their progress.

The progress made by different groups of pupils varies too much, reflecting the inconsistencies in the provision offered. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make uneven progress although it is satisfactory overall. Teaching assistants work hard to support pupils but their effectiveness is dependent upon how well they have been deployed by the teacher. Teachers identify and set targets for the pupils, with varying success. The school can point to specific interventions that have helped some individuals but others have not benefited from the support they have received. Appropriate induction arrangements for pupils who speak English as an additional language enable them to make satisfactory progress.

Pupils generally show consideration towards one another, although behaviour is sometimes boisterous over football in the playground, and restlessness sets in when lessons fail to engage pupils sufficiently well. Pupils, as play leaders, help to keep younger pupils busy and active. Pupils make healthy choices and grow their own vegetables. As house captains and members of the school council, pupils make a valuable contribution to the school and are involved well in the life of the wider community. They visit the church and local library on a regular basis and make lanterns to join the town's Christmas Lantern Parade. Attendance is broadly average and pupils work to win class awards. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, celebrating the different cultures represented in the school and having established a strong link with a school in Zimbabwe.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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|---|----------|
| Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning | 4 |
| Taking into account: | |
| Pupils' attainment ¹ | 4 |
| 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 | 3 |
| 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 | 4 |
| Taking into account: | |
| Pupils' attendance ¹ | 3 |
| 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 pace of some lessons is too slow because the teacher talks for too long or because expectations about how they should use their time are not made sufficiently clear to pupils. The level of challenge provided for pupils varies. While in some classes work is pitched appropriately to take into account pupils' prior attainment, this is not always the case. There are good relationships throughout the school and many teachers use success criteria to help pupils to understand how well they are learning in lessons. In the stronger lessons, pupils play a part in assessing their own work and that of others, entering into a dialogue about their learning. While teachers mark pupils' work regularly, it is rare for pupils to respond to advice or for teachers to check they have acted upon it. Pupils are involved in setting targets, but the extent to which they understand how to achieve them is uneven across classes, even within the same year group.

The assistant headteacher has been instrumental in improving the curriculum, especially in ensuring that pupils have more opportunities to develop their literacy skills across a range of subjects. For example, pupils have written stories based on the life of a young gladiator as part of work on the Romans and produced factsheets describing the life-stories of insects as part of a topic on mini beasts. This work has motivated them and increased their enjoyment of school. There are fewer opportunities for pupils to practise their numeracy or ICT skills in a similar way, thus limiting their preparation for secondary school. There is good take-up of clubs, and visits and visitors enrich the curriculum. The

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school cares for pupils well and a skilled and dedicated team works with pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. There has been good progress in improving attendance, with a rigorous approach to following up absence and working with families whose children miss large amounts of time in school. Pupils socialise together well in the breakfast club, which gives them a good cooked meal at the start of the day.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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| 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?

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 has been persistently low for the past three years and the lack of improvement has not been tackled by senior leaders with sufficient rigour. The school has struggled to adapt and improve since it became a junior school three years ago. Although leaders and managers at different levels have worked hard, there has been too little impact on improving the quality of teaching in order to raise attainment. Senior leaders have monitored the quality of teaching and identified relevant strengths and weaknesses. However, actions taken to improve practice have not been swift or rigorous enough to secure improvement. Too many inconsistencies remain in the implementation of agreed procedures across the school. Expectations about what pupils should achieve have not been high enough. Staff have not been held to account for the progress of their pupils until this year and the school's approach is too informal.

Self-evaluation is over-optimistic and does not inform strategic planning effectively. Plans do not include challenging success criteria to provide the necessary drive for improvement. Although monitoring systems are in place to check that agreed actions have taken place, evaluation is not sufficiently rigorous to measure their impact and identify the next steps required. Consequently, the school has been unable to establish an improving trend in pupils' attainment. The governing body is failing in its duty to hold the school to account because governors rely too heavily upon what the headteacher tells them and do not challenge the school's lack of progress. Their monitoring is too informal and no records are kept of their visits.

The effectiveness with which the school promotes equal opportunities for its pupils is inadequate. This is because of the inconsistencies in the quality of provision across year groups which mean that gaps in attainment are not closing at a rapid enough rate. Consequently, too many pupils leave at the end of Year 6 without the basic skills necessary to succeed at secondary school.

The school has been effective in engaging parents and carers in the life of the school. The management of safeguarding procedures is a strength with outstanding practice in child-protection arrangements. Meticulous records are kept and staff work extremely closely

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with other agencies. However, aspects of monitoring health and safety monitoring are not as strong. The school promotes community cohesion well, reaching out effectively to its local community as well as establishing a link with a school in Zimbabwe that staff have visited and with which pupils are in regular communication. The school celebrates the diverse cultures represented in its community well.

These are the grades for leadership and management

| | |
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| The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding a ambition and driving improvement | 4 |
| Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning | 4 |
| The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met | 4 |
| The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers | 2 |
| The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being | 3 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination | 4 |
| The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures | 2 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion | 2 |
| The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money | 4 |

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of questionnaires returned by parents and carers was relatively small for the size of the school. Parents and carers were generally happy about the provision and felt their children were kept safe. The confusion caused by part-time teaching arrangements was raised. In one Year 3 class, pupils are taught on alternate days throughout the week by different teachers. Inspectors looked into this and concluded that inconsistencies in the provision have a greater detrimental impact on pupils' education than the part-time teaching arrangements. Parents and carers welcome the opportunity to attend reading and mathematics cafes with their children.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Nicholas Priory CoFE VC 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.

| Statements | Strongly agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|---|-------------------|---|
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| My child enjoys school | 40 | 56 | 30 | 42 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| The school keeps my child safe | 38 | 53 | 32 | 44 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| My school informs me about my child's progress | 38 | 53 | 32 | 44 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school | 37 | 51 | 32 | 44 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| The teaching is good at this school | 41 | 57 | 31 | 43 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning | 39 | 54 | 31 | 43 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle | 27 | 38 | 41 | 57 | 2 | 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) | 33 | 46 | 38 | 53 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs | 32 | 44 | 36 | 50 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour | 20 | 28 | 44 | 61 | 4 | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns | 20 | 28 | 43 | 60 | 4 | 6 | 1 | 1 |
| The school is led and managed effectively | 28 | 39 | 41 | 57 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school | 42 | 58 | 28 | 39 | 2 | 3 | 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.



18 July 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Nicholas Priory CofE VC Junior School, Great Yarmouth, NR30 1NL

Thank you for making us welcome and sharing your views with us. We have judged that your school needs extra help, because it is not providing you with a good enough standard of education, we call this being in 'special measures'. Inspectors will visit regularly to check how it is doing. Here are some of the stronger points about the school.

You feel safe and get on well together.

You know about keeping healthy and take plenty of exercise.

You help out around the school and are involved in your local community.

You have a good understanding about other cultures other than your own.

The school cares for you well.

However, we judged that you are not making quick enough progress during your time at school. As a result, you don't make the progress you should in English and mathematics. We have asked your teachers to make sure they give you work that challenges you. We think some of you could produce more work and that your handwriting could be neater. We have asked your teachers to give you opportunities to use your numeracy and ICT skills in lots of different ways. When your teachers mark your work we want you to respond to their advice and follow it, so that you learn more rapidly.

We have asked your headteacher and other leaders and managers to make sure they are clear about where the school needs to improve quickly. We have also asked the governing body to keep a much closer eye on how things are going and to make sure that everybody is helping the school to improve. Inspectors will visit again to check on the progress your school is making.

All of you can help by concentrating on your activities, presenting your work neatly, and responding to the marking in your books.

Yours sincerely

Nick Butt

Lead Inspector

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