

St Nicholas' Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118050
Local authority	City of Kingston upon Hull
Inspection number	379529
Inspection dates	9–10 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Derek Pattinson

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	199
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Howarth
Headteacher	Caroline Skipper
Date of previous school inspection	12 February 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 13 lessons, observed nine teachers and held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and a group of pupils. They looked at the school development plan, the most recent headteacher's report to the governing body, the school's most recent analysis of national and school data on attainment and progress, safeguarding policies and records, assessment information, the latest attendance figures and pupils' work in all classes. The 113 questionnaires returned by parents and carers were analysed, as were those completed 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.

- The extent to which all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress as they move through the school.
- The extent to which teaching has improved from satisfactory to good, as the school now believes.
- The impact of new staff and the school's developing curriculum on pupils' learning, attitudes, motivation and the drive to secure school improvement, especially in Key Stage 2.
- The extent to which pupils know how well they are doing and what they must do to improve further.
- The extent to which new leaders and managers and the governing body drive improvement and evaluate the school's work.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average primary school. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision consists of a Reception class. The percentages of pupils from minority ethnic groups and of those who speak English as an additional language are close to what is typical nationally. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is a little above the national average. More pupils than in most schools enter and leave the school other than at the normal times. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The school holds the Basic Skills Quality Mark, Sport England, the Warwick Enterprise Award and Healthy School status. There have been considerable changes in staffing since the last inspection, including new senior leaders.

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

3

Main findings

This is a good school. Under the determined and dedicated leadership of the headteacher, increasingly well supported by new senior leaders, most areas of the school's work are good. For example, the good care, guidance and support the school provides help to explain why parents and carers hold the school in high regard. One rightly commented that 'this is a welcoming school where pupils can flourish, academically, socially and creatively'. Pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development underpins the school's work and helps to explain why the school is an extremely cohesive and harmonious community. The school is developing its good curriculum well and ensures that it increasingly uses first-hand experiences to motivate pupils and promote their learning. Almost all pupils like school because of these positive features. Nevertheless, despite the considerable efforts of senior leaders to promote the importance of good attendance and emphasise its contribution to learning, it is just satisfactory. Pupils know about the importance of a healthy lifestyle, feel safe and contribute in many different ways to the school and local community.

Children enter the Reception class with skills that are usually below, and occasionally well below, what is expected for their age. They get off to a good start because of the good leadership and provision. Consequently, they have made up lost ground when they enter Year 1. This good progress is maintained across Key Stage 1. As pupils move through the school, the academic achievement of most, including those for whom English is an additional language, is good. However, pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory rather than good progress because teaching assistants are not always used to best effect to promote learning. Nevertheless, these pupils' progress is starting to improve because an increasingly rigorous analysis of performance data is enabling leaders to identify where immediate support is required. Overall, teaching in the school is good, with many strengths evident. In Key Stage 2, the variable quality of teaching and learning is holding back the drive to build on the rising standards evident in Key Stage 1 and raise attainment further. Very occasionally, pupils' work is not at the right level or linked well enough to their targets to secure good progress; the more able are not always challenged enough. Sometimes teachers talk too much, which restricts the time pupils have for independent work. Sometimes pupils have too little time to share thoughts about the difficulties of the work undertaken.

The school's self-evaluation of the effectiveness of leadership and management is over-positive. All staff and the governing body share the headteacher's vision for the school. As a result, teamwork is strong and the school has identified the right priorities for development. The school makes good use of external partnerships to support pupils' development. Governance is good because the governing body is increasingly involved in setting the school's direction and holding it to account. Arrangements to safeguard pupils meet requirements. The school has addressed most issues from the last inspection. However, all senior leaders and some subject leaders are relatively new to their roles and their impact on improvement is at an early stage of development. At present, leadership and management are sound, but the monitoring of lessons is not focused sharply enough on pupils' learning in order to help improve teaching. The school's capacity to sustain improvement is therefore currently satisfactory.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure pupils' progress in Key Stage 2 is consistently good in order to raise attainment, especially in English and mathematics, by:
 - making sure that all teaching is good or better
 - checking that lesson content is always challenging and linked to pupils' targets, especially for the more able
 - restricting the time teachers spend on lesson introductions so that pupils have enough time to practice their skills and apply their knowledge
 - ensuring pupils always have opportunities to let teachers know about the difficulties they have had with their work in order to help planning for the next lesson
 - ensuring teaching assistants are always used effectively so that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress.

- Strengthen the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - focusing more clearly on the impact on learning when checking the quality of teaching
 - building on the work already started to develop the roles of new subject leaders to ensure that they are fully accountable for standards and progress.

- Improve pupils' attendance by:
 - working further with parents and carers to promote understanding of the importance of good attendance on learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Behaviour is good, underpinning pupils' work and play. As a result, pupils have good attitudes to their work, especially when memorable experiences interest and challenge them, when they are clear about what they have to learn, when work is pitched at the right level and when they have time to work at their own rate. For example, Year 1 pupils, led by their teacher dressed as a witch, learn about number bonds to ten as they added ingredients to snake soup; pupils in Year 5 were

motivated to write a diary following a visit from 'Mr. Incredible'; and pupils in Year 2, writing the opening to a story, considered what might have happened to untidy and overturn items in Percy's garden shed. As a result of the mostly good teaching, most pupils make good progress, especially in Key Stage 1. However, pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress because dedicated and well trained teaching assistants are not always used effectively. By the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment is generally average, although in the national tests in 2011, the attainment of a cohort of pupils with lower starting points was below average, especially in English. An analysis of performance data reveals progress since the last inspection has been slowest in lower Key Stage 2. Measures to eliminate uneven progress, such as the setting of challenging targets and providing increased support for pupils falling behind, are starting to bear fruit. Furthermore, good teaching by new staff in Years 5 and 6 is helping to accelerate progress across the key stage.

Pupils enjoy school and gradually make friends, learn to respect the rights of others and live in harmony. They have good knowledge of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle, know that vegetables are 'good for you' and are proud that the school has achieved Healthy School status. Their understanding is enhanced through after-school events which extol the virtues of regular exercise; high numbers make healthy school lunch choices. Pupils say they feel safe because of the many cameras around school and, through assemblies where safety is high priority, they know to 'report adults who do not wear badges'. They comment that most pupils behave well. They have a strong voice through the work of the school council which helps to make improvements, such as by providing a wider choice of fresh fruit. They willingly take on extra responsibility, such as by becoming playground buddies. They develop an awareness of citizenship by raising money for different charities, including the Sailors' Families Society. Pupils embrace new experiences eagerly. They have a very good insight into similarities and differences between their own and other cultures; they have well developed social skills and can talk about issues such as prejudice. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils' good progress in basic skills and knowledge of enterprise, such as that gained through the Warwick Award, equip them well for the next stage of their learning. Attendance is just average, despite the school doing a great deal to raise attendance levels, for instance by analysing attendance patterns and ensuring its promotion is high profile with activities such as weekly attendance assemblies. However, many pupils come from outside the immediate area of the school with long distances to travel; some are quite recently settled in Hull and attendance routines are not always well established.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
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	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2

¹The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Strengths in teaching strongly outweigh areas for development. Lessons are typified by very positive relationships, secure subject knowledge which is confidently presented, and effective control of pupils' behaviour. Teachers often use encouragement and praise to enhance self-esteem, which provides a successful platform for effective learning. However, teaching is better in Key Stage 1 than in Key Stage 2. Good planning ensures most work is matched carefully to pupils' varying needs, although very occasionally, such as in computation work in mathematics, work is too easy, especially for more-able pupils. Sometimes lesson introductions are too long, which restricts the time pupils have for independent work. Resources are used well to help engage pupils' interest and extend their learning. However, support staff are not always deployed effectively to help pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Most pupils know their targets and the level at which they are working and the school's marking policy increasingly helps them to improve. However, pupils are not always given enough time to share with their teacher how challenging they have found their work.

The well-organised curriculum provides pupils with a wide range of interesting activities. Literacy, numeracy, and information and communication (ICT) skills are well represented within a framework that increasingly breaks down barriers between subjects in relevant and exciting ways. This leads to pupils gaining a well-rounded understanding of the themes they study. The curriculum makes a positive contribution to pupils' personal development. There is a strong international dimension, such as through links with schools in India and Ecuador, that fosters well pupils' knowledge of other cultures and the wider world. Enterprise activities are high profile, such as through the participation of older pupils in the Christmas fayre. Partnerships, for example, with the Children's University, benefit pupils well. Visits, visitors and a good range of well-attended after-school activities, as in sport, cookery and the arts, and the teaching of Spanish and French, extend their learning and enrich their experiences.

Parents comment on the 'warm, caring and encouraging environment for learning', 'the nurturing ethos', 'supportive staff' and 'strong family atmosphere'. Indeed, providing good quality care, guidance and support is at the heart of the school's work. Staff know pupils well and give much time to their care and pastoral support. For example, the school has established strong partnerships with outside agencies which help to ensure that pupils whose circumstances might make them vulnerable are well supported. Transition arrangements ensure that the move pupils make into and out of school is smooth and seamless. The school has a very good range of strategies to encourage pupils to attend regularly, some of which involve parents and carers.

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 headteacher and deputy headteacher work very closely together to secure school improvement. Key features of their complementary skills include the ability to enthuse others, to establish and sustain high morale and to support professional development. The new senior leadership team spearheads the drive to improve teaching and learning and uses a variety of mostly effective systems to monitor provision and outcomes. For example, systems to track pupils' academic achievement are thorough. They help to highlight difficulties pupils may be having and to identify priorities for improvement. As a result, most targets are now realistic and challenging. Although school improvement planning mostly sets a clear and effective steer for the school's work, some plans are in the early stages of implementation. Some subject leaders are new and are at an early stage in establishing what works well and what needs improvement through the monitoring of provision and outcomes. Furthermore, checks of teaching by senior leaders are not fully effective in helping teachers to improve because the focus is on how teachers teach rather than the impact on how well pupils learn. As a result, the school's own evaluation of its performance is inaccurate. The governing body has a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development through closely monitoring its work. It is effectively holding the school to account for what it achieves.

The school successfully draws upon the expertise of outside agencies to benefit pupils. It promoted positive links with parents and carers, who are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. There is a strong emphasis on trying to ensure that pupils of all backgrounds and abilities have good opportunities for success, although at present the progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is not as good as most others. Discrimination is not tolerated and pupils are helped very well in how to treat others with respect. Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. The promotion of community cohesion is a very positive feature of the school's work. As a result, the school is a strongly cohesive community, with very good relationships evident within school, locally and through firmly established international links with schools in India and Ecuador.

These are the grades for the 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	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	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage is successful in laying down secure foundations for future learning. Most children start in the Reception class with skills, knowledge and understanding that are below what is typical for their age, especially in communication, language and literacy. However, most make good progress in all areas of learning because of the good leadership and provision. As a result, children are closer to what is expected for their age when they move into Year 1, although language skills are often still below average.

Good induction arrangements ensure that children, including those who will require most help and those for whom English is an additional language, settle quickly into well-established routines. Teamwork is strong and relationships between adults and children are warm and friendly. As a result, most children are happy, behave very well and are keen to learn. However, very occasionally adults do not communicate often enough with children to help promote their spoken language. Children know how to be safe; one child said, 'I have to keep my hands down when I jump!' Good teaching is based on regular and effective assessment arrangements. Children's learning needs inform planning and ensure that most activities are well matched to children's needs. The curriculum interests and often excites children through a stimulating range of activities, both in- and out of doors, which captures their interests, encourages them to make choices and helps them learn. There is a good balance between activities led by adults and those chosen by children. Parents and carers appreciate the welcoming, safe and stimulating environment and communication with them is regular and productive. As a result, they are fully involved in their children's learning.

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 in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers who responded to the questionnaires are overwhelmingly positive about the way their children are educated and nurtured in school. Negative responses were very few. Inspectors found no evidence to support the view, expressed by a very small number of parents and carers, that the school does not deal effectively with unacceptable behaviour or that the school does not help them to

support their children's learning. Inspectors found much evidence to support the views of almost all parents and carers who returned the questionnaire that the teaching is good and that the school takes account of suggestions and concerns. Most believe the school is well led. However, inspectors judge the leadership and management to be satisfactory at present.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Nicholas' 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 113 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 199 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	76	67	36	32	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	82	73	30	27	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	46	41	63	56	3	3	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	50	44	56	50	4	4	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	66	58	46	41	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	54	48	52	46	5	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	77	68	36	32	0	0	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)	52	46	51	45	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	62	55	46	41	5	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	49	43	56	50	6	5	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	40	35	69	61	1	1	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	66	58	44	39	2	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	72	64	40	35	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 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.



11 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Nicholas' Primary School, Hull, HU6 7RH

Thank you for your friendly welcome and for sharing your views of the school by talking to the inspectors and returning the questionnaires. We thoroughly enjoyed our visit. You told us that you go to a good school and we agree with you! Here are some of the positive things about your school.

- Most of you make good progress.
- You enjoy your lessons and behave well.
- You know a lot about staying healthy and how to stay safe.
- The curriculum is good with lots of interesting things for you to do.
- Most teaching is good and your teachers provide interesting lessons.
- All staff take good care of you and your school is a happy place.
- Your headteacher, other leaders and the governors of the school know what needs doing to make your school better.

Here are the most important things that we have asked your headteacher and teachers to do to help you to make even faster progress, especially in Key Stage 2.

- Ensure that all lessons are at least good by making sure that teachers give you enough time to work on your own, that work always challenges you and helps you achieve your targets, and that they ask you about how difficult you are finding the work. Also, that all adults work hard to ensure that those of you who find learning difficult always make the best possible progress.
- Ensure all leaders know as much as possible about what needs doing and for them to check more closely on how much you are learning in lessons.
- Talk to your parents and carers about ways to make sure that you all attend school regularly.

I wish you all the best and hope you continue to try hard and enjoy your learning.

Yours sincerely

Derek Pattinson

Lead inspector

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