

# St Nicholas Church of England Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	123147
<b>Local authority</b>	Oxfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	380607
<b>Inspection dates</b>	23–24 April 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Mike Capper

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>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	84
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Yvette Ford
<b>Headteacher</b>	Margaret Kelly
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11 November 2008
<b>School address</b>	Sarajac Avenue East Challow Wantage Oxfordshire
<b>Telephone number</b>	01235 763858
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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	23–24 April 2012
<b>Inspection number</b>	380607



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## Introduction

Inspection team

Mike Capper

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed 11 lessons taught by four teachers. Each of these observations was carried out jointly with the headteacher. Discussions were held with parents and carers, members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. The inspector took account of the responses to the online survey (Parent View) when planning the inspection. He observed the school's work and looked at school documentation, including teachers' planning, assessment information, safeguarding policies and samples of pupils' work. The inspector analysed 35 questionnaires received from parents and carers.

## Information about the school

This is a smaller than average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, who are supported by school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs, is broadly average. The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a separate Reception class.

The school does not meet the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. There is a private nursery on the school site. This is not managed by the governing body and was not inspected.

**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

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>4</b>

## Key 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.
- This is not a satisfactory school because attainment is low and the quality of teaching is inadequate. This means that pupils do not make enough progress in improving their literacy and numeracy skills in Key Stages 1 and 2. Leaders have been unsuccessful in their efforts to halt the decline in pupils' attainment levels and they have failed to ensure that all pupils behave well and feel safe.
- Pupils' achievement is inadequate. After making good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where adults meet children's differing needs well, inadequate teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2 means pupils' progress is too slow. In lessons, teachers make too little use of assessment information to plan work that is pitched at the right level of challenge for all pupils. Phonics (letters and sounds) are not taught well enough in Key Stage 1, especially for the less able. The inadequate curriculum does not support the systematic development of key skills.
- Pupils do not always feel safe at school and too frequently low-level disruption disturbs pupils' learning. The school does not follow closely enough its own procedures for tackling bullying, and some pupils feel adults do not listen well enough when they have concerns. Pupils are sociable and articulate but weaknesses in teaching mean that teachers do not always harness the pupils' generally positive attitudes to good effect.
- Leaders at all levels have not brought about sufficient improvement in the school's performance and, despite extensive help from the local authority and a nearby academy, support and challenge to improve teaching has had limited effect. The monitoring of lessons does not focus closely enough on how well pupils are

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learning and this means self-evaluation lacks rigour. Middle managers have only a limited role in monitoring provision and outcomes for pupils. They do not have the skills to model good practice and to ensure that the quality of teaching improves more quickly.

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

In order to improve pupils' achievement in literacy and numeracy in Key Stages 1 and 2, the following actions must be taken.

- Strengthen leadership and management and build the school's capacity to improve as a matter of urgency by:
  - developing the skills of leaders at all levels to improve their role in monitoring the impact and effectiveness of the school's work, so there is a shared understanding of what needs improving and how this should be achieved
  - ensuring the monitoring of lessons focuses on how well pupils are learning
  - using the information gathered to identify and then follow up key development points for teachers to improve the quality of their teaching.
- By December 2012, improve the quality of teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2 so that it is consistently good or better in all lessons by:
  - ensuring teachers make effective use of assessment information to plan work that is pitched at the right level of challenge for all pupils
  - providing teachers with further training in how to teach phonics effectively and ensure phonics lessons in Key Stage 1 are organised so less able pupils are supported to make better progress
  - ensuring pupils read more regularly to teachers.
- By July 2012, improve pupils' behaviour and the extent to which they feel safe by:
  - ensuring the school's anti-bullying policy is applied consistently and is fully understood by all staff
  - ensuring teachers have consistently high expectations of pupils' behaviour in lessons so learning is not disrupted.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Pupils' achievement is inadequate. Most pupils start school in the Early Years Foundation Stage working at the levels expected for their age. From these starting points, their attainment rises and is generally above the level expected for their age by the end of the Reception Year. This good start is not built on successfully in the rest of the school and pupils' attainment falls to low levels by the end of Year 6. In Key Stages

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1 and 2 there is an over-reliance on the additional support from teaching assistants and teachers from another school in order to help pupils to catch up. This approach is ineffective and is not good enough to compensate for the pupils' previous underachievement or to narrow the gap in relation to the performance of all pupils nationally.

Most parents and carers feel their children make good progress. However, national test data, the school's own analysis of current performance, observations of learning in lessons and sampling of pupils' work confirm pupils' progress is too slow across the school. In Key Stages 1 and 2 pupils do not acquire new skills quickly enough in lessons. In a numeracy lesson, where pupils were learning about proportion and ratio, the work lacked challenge for some pupils and was too hard for others. This meant that their progress was too slow. In a literacy lesson, where pupils learnt about riddles, progress slowed because they did not behave well enough and as a result they were unclear about what they were supposed to be doing.

In Key Stages 1 and 2 pupils make inadequate progress in improving their literacy skills, and attainment in reading is low by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. In Key Stage 1 phonics are not taught well enough and, in particular, less able pupils are not developing the skills they need to help them read with confidence. Most pupils read regularly at home and in 'guided reading' sessions in groups when at school, but not all read individually with teachers with sufficient regularity. This makes it difficult for teachers to monitor progress or to intervene when additional support is needed.

Children make good progress in lessons in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They typically show interest and engagement and are keen to investigate and to explore their own ideas. For example, in a numeracy lesson where achievement was good, pupils were fully engaged in their learning and made rapid progress in improving their counting skills as they explored different ways of adding objects.

There is no significant difference between the learning and progress of girls and boys or of pupils from differing backgrounds. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make inadequate progress and do not learn well enough in lessons. They do slightly better when being supported in small groups outside lessons because work is matched more closely to their particular needs.

### **Quality of teaching**

The quality of teaching is inadequate, although most parents and carers feel that teaching is good. In Key Stages 1 and 2 teaching does not meet the needs of different groups well enough. Weaknesses in teaching significantly impede the rate at which pupils' reading, writing and numeracy skills improve. Teachers' expectations are frequently too low and they do not always ensure that all pupils behave sensibly in lessons. In phonics lessons in Key Stage 1 pupil groups are too large and work is not well matched to their different learning needs, especially for the less able. In guided reading sessions pupils who are working with the teacher make steady progress, but the rest of the class spend their time looking at books without enough support and

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guidance. In numeracy lessons too little account is taken of pupils' prior learning and as a result their work is either too hard or too easy. There are wide variations in the quality of marking and target setting. Some pupils say their teacher gives them clear guidance about how to improve but nearly half the pupils in Key Stage 2 say they do not always know how well they are doing. The teaching of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is inadequate. Although skilled teaching assistants help these pupils make steady progress in small group work outside lessons, the work they are given in lessons is often too difficult.

The best teaching was seen in the Early Years Foundation Stage where adults work together effectively to plan exciting activities that are matched well to differing needs. All adults are involved in planning work and assessing learning and this means they are confident about intervening at the right time to move learning on. Early reading skills are taught well, and children quickly improve their knowledge of letter sounds.

Older pupils say some topics are repeated without any additional challenge, and the inspector agrees that curriculum planning does not ensure that basic skills develop systematically in Key Stages 1 and 2. In the Early Years Foundation Stage subjects are linked together well but this is less strong in the rest of the school. Teaching adequately promotes many aspects of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, but pupils do not develop a clear enough understanding of the importance of good behaviour. Nonetheless, many pupils learn to cooperate satisfactorily through group work and they have a secure knowledge of different faiths and cultural traditions.

**Behaviour and safety of pupils**

The school does not do enough to ensure pupils feel safe and behave well consistently. There are too many occasions when learning in lessons is slowed by low-level disruptions such as pupils calling out and generally behaving in an immature way. Pupils say they feel their learning sometimes 'suffers because other children are being naughty'. The school has clear strategies to promote good behaviour but pupils say these are not always applied consistently. Inspection findings support the pupils' views. The best behaviour is seen in the Early Years Foundation Stage where children get on well together and behave sensibly.

Several parents and carers and about a third of the pupils in Key Stage 2 are worried about bullying and feel that, although it does not happen often, when it occurs the school does not deal with it effectively. While activities such as a recent 'Anti-Bullying Week' help pupils to learn about cyber-bullying and other types of bullying, the school does not follow the guidance in its bullying policy on how to follow up and record such behaviour. This means pupils do not always feel safe.

There are some areas of strength in pupils' behaviour. Older and younger pupils play together happily and most are eager to learn. They are keen to take responsibility, with the 'play leaders' in particular fulfilling their role very sensibly at break times. However pupils are very clear that behaviour at these times is not always harmonious.

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## Leadership and management

Leaders have not done enough to develop and strengthen the school's capacity to improve and too many pupils continue to underachieve. While the school has received extensive external support this year, strategies to tackle the fall in attainment and to improve teaching have been ineffective and key areas of improvement from the previous inspection have not been addressed adequately.

Middle managers play a very limited role in driving improvement and there is very little good teaching to support others to improve. The monitoring of teaching and learning currently carried out by the headteacher does not focus clearly enough on how well different groups of pupils are learning. Leaders and managers identify the correct priorities but there is a lack of clarity about how they might be achieved. Similarly staff are unclear about how the outcomes of monitoring might be used to improve their work. There have been some well-targeted opportunities for teachers' professional development, but this has had too little effect on improving provision and outcomes for pupils. In some areas, such as the teaching of phonics, teachers still lack key teaching skills and their subject knowledge is not good enough.

The governing body has a growing awareness of what needs to be done but does not do enough to look beyond information provided by other leaders to hold the school to account. They ensure that safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. The vetting of staff is particularly thorough although inconsistencies in the application of bullying policies mean that not all pupils feel safe. Leaders ensure there is no discrimination. They focus strongly on promoting equality of opportunity and different groups of pupils are included well in all activities. However, rates of pupils' progress remain too uneven and are inadequate overall.

The curriculum is generally broad and balanced but it does not always meet pupils' needs well enough. It supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development but it does not ensure that all understand the value of good behaviour sufficiently well. Cultural awareness has improved since the previous inspection and the school council helps pupils learn how to take responsibility, although this learning is not transferred sufficiently well in lessons.



## 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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**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.**



25 April 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of St Nicholas Church of England Primary School, Wantage  
OX12 9RY**

Thank you for being so welcoming and talking to me during my recent visit. I found some positive things about your school but there are also some major things that need to improve. The school needs special help so it can improve quickly and inspectors will come back to check that this is happening. We call this 'special measures'.

These are the best things about your school.

- You make good progress in the Reception class, where adults make learning fun and meet your needs well.
- You said in discussions, and in the questionnaire, that you enjoy school and I could see most of you are keen to do well.
- You take on responsibilities. When talking with me I found you very polite and courteous and you look after each other well at play and lunch times.

These are the things I have asked your school to do next to help it improve.

- Make sure the teachers in Years 1 to 6 expect enough of you and plan work that always meets your differing needs.
- Tackle your worries about bullying more carefully and ensure your learning is not disturbed by poor behaviour.
- Ensure leaders are doing the right things to help you learn more quickly and give better support to teachers to help them improve.

You can help your teachers by concentrating in lessons, doing your best and behaving sensibly all of the time.

Yours sincerely

Mike Capper  
Lead inspector

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