

St Nicholas Church of England VC Primary School

The Leaze, Bromham, Chippenham, SN15 2EY

Inspection dates 3–4 October 2012

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|--------------|----------|
| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Satisfactory | 3 |
| | This inspection: | Good | 2 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Good | 2 |
| Quality of teaching | | Good | 2 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Good | 2 |
| Leadership and management | | Good | 2 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Significant improvement in the quality of teaching since the previous inspection means that pupils now make good progress in their learning in both English and mathematics and achieve well. Strategies to raise attainment in writing have been particularly successful and as a result nearly all pupils reach the levels expected for their ages.
- Teaching is consistently at least good. It motivates and excites the pupils. Activities are planned well to match their differing needs and interests.
- Behaviour is good across the school and pupils have good attitudes towards their work. They enjoy taking responsibility and maturely run activities such as 'fit-nic'. Pupils say they feel safe and their attendance is high.
- The curriculum is creative and vibrant. Literacy is well incorporated into all subjects. Teachers plan imaginative 'starters' to each term's topics which ensure that pupils are motivated and excited by their learning from the start.
- Leaders and the governing body monitor the work of the school very effectively. They understand how well it is doing and what needs to be done for it to further improve. Teachers' performance is carefully evaluated and training provided as appropriate in order for it to move on further.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although pupils' writing is creative and imaginative, they do not always pay enough attention to the basic skills of spelling, grammar and punctuation. This hinders some pupils from reaching a higher level of attainment in their work.
- Pupils have a good knowledge of basic mathematics skills. However, they do not always have enough opportunities to use and apply these in problem solving and investigative activities relating to real-life situations.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed eight lessons or parts of lessons as well as observing five groups where more individual support was provided. A joint observation with the headteacher was carried out. In addition, the inspector heard pupils from Years 2 and 6 read as well as examining pupils' work and discussing it with them.
- The inspector held meetings with the school's teaching staff as well as representatives from the governing body. A telephone conversation was held with the school improvement advisor from the local authority.
- The eight responses to the questionnaire on the Parent View website were considered as well as the results of a recent survey of parents and carers conducted by the school. Incidental discussions were also held with individual parents and carers.

Inspection team

Christine Huard, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Nicholas is much smaller than most primary schools. It serves the village in which it is situated but pupils also attend from further afield.
- The school has a lower proportion of pupils supported through school action than most other schools. The proportion of pupils supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is similar to the national average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is lower than the average.
- The school meets the government's floor standards which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- There is an independently managed pre-school on site which was not part of this inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of writing across the school by ensuring that there is a stronger focus on the acquisition and use of the basic skills of grammar, spelling and punctuation in order for attainment to rise still further.
- Extend the use of problem solving and investigative activities in mathematics to real-life situations and contexts in order to raise attainment to higher levels.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Children's attainment when they start at school varies from year to year as there are such small numbers in each year group. Data show that children's communication, language and literacy skills are consistently at lower levels than in other areas. They respond very positively to the wide range of exciting activities provided for them both indoors and outside, and as a result make good progress.
- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 do well in reading, writing and mathematics. This is because activities are matched very closely to their individual needs. Tasks are very practical and appealing which means pupils are keen to learn. Pupils in Year 1 made good progress with learning their number bonds to 10 through playing a matching cards game.
- Pupils in Key Stage 2 make good progress. The last two years have seen all the Year 6 pupils making at least the two levels expected progress in both English and mathematics since Year 2. Progress is consistent across the school, with very little difference in the progress of different groups of children.
- The school has successfully focused on improving pupils' attainment in writing. A range of strategies has been introduced and these have had very positive results in stimulating pupils' creativity and imagination. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 demonstrated this with their letters to the authorities and courtroom dramas in which Ali Baba and Aladdin were both accused of burglary.
- Nevertheless, pupils do not always pay sufficient attention to spelling punctuation and grammar when they are writing and this prevents some from reaching the higher levels of attainment.
- Pupils make good progress in mathematics and pupils have a good level of basic skills. Some good opportunities are provided for pupils to use their skills in investigative and problem solving activities but there is scope for these to be extended further in real-life activities in order to extend pupils' thinking further.
- The pupils in Year 1 did very well in their screening test at the end of last year. The school has introduced a structured phonics programme (linking letters and the sounds they make) for the pupils in Reception through to Year 4. As a result pupils' reading skills are developing well alongside those in writing.
- Pupils' reading is good and they read confidently. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 benefit from guided reading sessions which they say they greatly enjoy as it gives them a chance to discuss and explore in greater depth the texts they are reading with an adult.
- Pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs achieve well and benefit from well-targeted support, often in small groups. These groups change as pupils' need for support changes. Pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium achieve well because the school has thought carefully about their specific needs and carefully targeted support to meet these.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The school has worked hard to improve the provision it makes for pupils. Teaching is typically good and sometimes outstanding. Teachers know their pupils well and try very hard to plan topics and lessons which appeal to pupils' interests and will motivate and excite them.
- Teachers plan very effectively for the wide range of age groups and abilities in each class. Teachers and teaching assistants work very closely together to ensure a consistency of approach and ensure that the needs of all pupils are met.
- The pace of lessons is generally good. No time is wasted. Teachers' initial input is kept to a minimum to allow for more individual support as the lesson progresses. Explanations are clear and questions well targeted to ensure that pupils understand their learning.
- Teachers have high expectations of what their pupils can achieve. Pupils are expected to work independently and take responsibility for their learning. However, this sometimes means that in writing, although pupils are free to demonstrate their creativity, not enough emphasis is placed on the accuracy of spelling, grammar or punctuation.

- Teachers use questions highly effectively to investigate the depth of pupils' knowledge and understanding and to extend their thinking further. As a result tasks are very carefully matched to pupils' abilities. For example, some pupils in Years 3 and 4 were learning how to recognise and check that an angle was a right angle, while the most able could explain how to calculate the angles both in a straight line and a circle after probing questions from the adult working with them.
- Pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs are well provided for and make good progress. They receive well-targeted, additional support for as long as they need it, which may be only a few weeks but sometimes much longer.
- The curriculum is inspiring and exciting. It motivates the pupils and makes an outstanding contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are encouraged to reflect and be thoughtful; they sing with a mature depth of feeling and a joy that has to be heard to be believed. They are respectful of different cultures and beliefs.
- Teachers mark pupils' work thoroughly and talk it through with them. Teachers clearly explain to pupils what they do well and how they can improve. Pupils are encouraged to assess their own work and explore how they think they can improve.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' attendance is high and this reflects their evident enjoyment of school. Their behaviour is typically good both in lessons and around the school. The school's behaviour logs faithfully record all incidents and show that when these do occur they are handled well and consistently.
- In lessons, pupils are enthusiastic learners. They respond eagerly to questions and are well motivated and interested in their learning. They listen well to each other, share ideas and collaborate well together.
- When asked, pupils were adamant that there is no bullying in the school. They have a good knowledge and understanding of different types of bullying, including cyber bullying. They understand what they should do if bullying were to occur.
- Pupils have good opportunities to play a part in the running of their school. Those currently holding positions such as sports leaders or school ambassadors do so responsibly and with a maturity beyond their years. They engender the respect of other pupils so that, for example, the sports leaders run the 'fit-nic' sessions every day with all pupils behaving well and fully participating.
- Parents and carers spoken to or contributing to the Parent View website are confident that their children are safe in school and no concerns about their safety were raised.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides strong leadership for the school and his drive and commitment to improvement are shared by all staff members. Staffing at the school has remained stable since the last inspection, and teachers have responded very well to the challenge of moving the school forward so that its performance is now good. The quality of teaching, learning and leadership has improved significantly since the previous inspection demonstrating the school's capacity for further improvement.
- All teaching staff hold leadership responsibility, and they work hard together to monitor and evaluate the work of the school. They review the curriculum on an ongoing basis to ensure it fully meets the interests and needs of the children. They track pupils' progress meticulously to ensure they are making at least expected progress and build in additional support where it is required.
- The local authority has provided good support for the school since the previous inspection. The school chose to enter the county's school improvement programme when it was opened to all schools, not just those requiring improvement. The school has found this invaluable in helping it to fine-tune its practice, particularly in improving the quality of teaching and learning.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body has a good understanding of the strengths of the school and where it needs to further improve. They challenge the work of the school effectively and know the right questions to ask of school leaders. They manage the performance of the headteacher effectively, setting and monitoring progress towards testing targets rigorously.
- They monitor the finances of the school well and ensure that the money from the pupil premium is used effectively to support these pupils in a range of ways, for example, by providing small social skills groups to raise self-esteem and confidence.
- Safeguarding is of high priority in the school and the governing body ensures that all statutory requirements are met. Governors promote equal opportunities ensuring that all pupils have the same opportunities and there is no discrimination. As a result there are minimal differences in the progress pupils make.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| Grade | Judgement | Description |
| Grade 1 | Outstanding | An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| Grade 2 | Good | A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| Grade 3 | Requires improvement | A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection. |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate | <p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> |

School details

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| Unique reference number | 126307 |
| Local authority | Wiltshire |
| Inspection number | 406356 |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary controlled |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 91 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Peter Wallis |
| Headteacher | Paul Bacon |
| Date of previous school inspection | 20–21 January 2011 |
| Telephone number | 01380 850391 |
| Fax number | 01380 850391 |
| Email address | admin@st-nicholasvc.wilts.sch.uk |

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