

# St Nicolas CofE Junior School

Locks Hill, Brighton, BN41 2LA

**Inspection dates** 20–21 November 2012

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- There is not enough good teaching because the approaches that senior leaders expect are not used consistently by all staff. Pupils do not always know if they have succeeded, and teachers do not always adapt their plans as the lesson moves on.
- Teachers spend too long explaining what pupils need to do which limits the time pupils have to do their work.
- Not enough pupils make good progress, particularly in writing and mathematics, because they do not have targets to show them what they need to do next. Not all teachers check that pupils respond to the comments in their books.
- More-able pupils do not reach the highest standards they are capable of because they are not given hard enough work.
- The vision of the senior leadership team is not yet fully realised because subject leaders do not make sure that the agreed methods are being used in every lesson.
- Monitoring activities by leaders have been focused on what teachers do and not sufficiently on the progress pupils make.
- Governors do not always check well enough how well groups of pupils are doing. They do not always understand fully what the data show about pupils' standards and progress.

### The school has the following strengths

- The dip in standards in 2011 has been addressed and standards rose considerably in 2012.
- The topics chosen for pupils to cover the full range of subjects are exciting and pupils like the work they are given to do.
- Good relationships between adults and pupils mean pupils like being at school and attendance is high.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are well supported and make good progress.
- Pupils are confident, behave well and feel safe and well cared for because the values of the school are well defined and strongly promoted.
- The headteacher and senior leaders have a good grasp of what the data show about the performance of groups of pupils, and an accurate view about what needs to be improved.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 20 lessons taught by 10 teachers, as well as some sessions which were led by teaching assistants supporting groups of pupils. Some of these observations were done together with senior leaders.
- Inspectors held meetings with leaders at all levels, as well as with teachers, pupils, governors and a representative from the local authority. There were also informal discussions with pupils and teachers during the school day.
- Inspectors reviewed the work pupils were doing in lessons and over time, listened to pupils read, and talked to them about how they know what they need to do next in their learning.
- The school's documents, showing the work of the school and about keeping pupils safe, were also reviewed. Inspectors looked at records about how well pupils are doing and the records of monitoring done by leaders.
- Some parents spoke to inspectors informally at the start or end of the school day. Inspectors also considered the 29 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's on-line survey, as well as correspondence received during the inspection.

## Inspection team

Andrew Saunders, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Christine Taylor

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This school is of average size for a junior school. There are two classes in each year group.
- From September 2013, the school will become a primary school, starting with two Reception classes. There is currently building work going on to provide extra classrooms for the expansion.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium additional funding is above average. This includes pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children looked after by the local authority.
- Most pupils are of White British origin. There are a few pupils from a wide range of minority ethnic groups. A very few of these pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is average. The proportion of those supported at school action is average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The leadership of the governing body has changed recently, with experienced members taking over the roles of Chair and Vice-Chair. The governing body is currently looking to increase its numbers.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

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

- Ensure that teaching is consistently good or better by:
  - letting pupils get on with their work more quickly and following up with more explanation when they need it
  - making sure all pupils are clear about how they will know if they have been successful during each lesson
  - ensuring that all teachers use the agreed strategies to check how well pupils are doing and adapt the lesson in the light of their observations.
- Increase the consistency of progress across the school in writing and mathematics, especially for the more-able pupils, by:
  - giving more-able pupils harder tasks and the opportunity to work things out for themselves
  - making sure all pupils have clear targets and know exactly what they need to learn next
  - giving pupils time to respond to the teachers' comments in their books.
- Ensure that subject leaders bring about improvements by:
  - giving them more opportunities and training to check whether agreed strategies are being used in all lessons for their subject
  - senior leaders monitoring how well these jobs are being done
  - focusing all lesson observations and other monitoring closely on the progress pupils make.
- Provide training to members of the governing body so that they can hold the school to account by asking informed questions about how well it is doing.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- The school's data about how well pupils are doing, lesson observations and the work pupils have done in their books show that progress is uneven through the school. Particularly in Year 3 and 4, some pupils do not do as well as they should. There is not enough good or outstanding teaching and pupils are not always sure how well they have succeeded during each lesson.
- After a dip in 2011, standards at the end of Year 6 returned to be average in 2012. Overall, most of these pupils made the expected progress from their starting points, although their progress accelerated in Year 5 and Year 6. Their slower start means that their achievement from their starting points was not good over their time in school.
- Progress in reading is good, but is slower in writing and in mathematics. Both writing and mathematics have been the focus of recent training for staff, and some improvement is evident in lessons and pupils' books.
- In the best lessons, pupils are given clear statements showing what they need to do, and how they will know if they have achieved these. In such lessons progress is rapid. However, even in these lessons, teachers often spend too long explaining what the pupils need to do, and consequently pupils have too little time to do the tasks set for them.
- Occasionally, more-able pupils get the chance to work on exciting projects which challenge and excite them, such as writing a book of poems and short stories which was published. However, their work in lessons is not always hard enough and so they do not make as much progress as they are capable of. They are also expected to sit through explanations they do not always need, when they are ready to do the tasks set for them, and this limits the amount of time they have to get on with their work.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs benefit from carefully chosen approaches which help them in the particular areas they most need. Consequently, they make good progress and reach higher standards in their work than similar pupils elsewhere.
- The school makes sure that boys and girls participate fully in lessons, and the gap between these two groups is closing. For example, a girls' mathematics club, and a boys' reading club have both been very popular and have had an impact on the standards reached.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because the methods that have been agreed are not used consistently by all teachers. Some teachers do not give pupils 'success criteria' which tell them how they will know if they have made good progress during lessons, or set pupils targets so that they know what they need to do next. As a result, pupils are not always aware of how well they are doing.
- The enthusiasm of the teachers, their good subject knowledge and the good relationships with pupils mean that pupils enjoy their learning and like the topics they study. In the best lessons, teachers make sure there is a sense of urgency by setting deadlines and reminding pupils regularly how much time is left. These teachers regularly check that all groups of pupils are working hard and get support if they need it.
- Teachers use the school's systems showing how well pupils are doing to plan different work for pupils of different abilities. However, the work set for more-able pupils is too often not hard enough, and they do not get enough opportunities to get on with their work on their own.
- Senior leaders discuss the data about pupils' performance with teachers to decide which pupils need more support and to set targets for pupils. However, the setting of targets has taken too long and pupils are unsure of precisely what they should be trying to learn or practise next, particularly with their writing and their mathematics.
- Teachers ask good questions which probe how much the pupils understand. Some teachers increasingly use the information gathered to decide how the lesson should carry on. However,

other teachers are not confident enough to change what they have planned to do, even when they realise that pupils are finding the work either too easy or too hard.

- Marking in books now follows an agreed format, 'tickled pink' and 'green for growth' and teachers are using this well. However, pupils do not get enough opportunities to respond to the comments teachers make and so they miss chances to make the most progress they can.
- The teaching of reading is a strength of the school, because teachers model a love of reading themselves, and use a consistent approach to learning how to link letters and sounds (phonics). Pupils develop a great love of reading; the reading area is very popular during break times. One inspired pupil said, 'Just imagine if I could actually fly away on a magic carpet!'
- Teaching assistants make a good contribution to help pupils learn because they are given lots of training, and because they make sure that pupils do the work for themselves. They are knowledgeable and caring and go to great lengths to understand the specific needs of the particular pupils they may be supporting.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- Pupils usually behave very well during lessons and when they have free time during breaks. They are keen to please and have great respect for their teachers, who make learning fun, they say. Behaviour is not yet outstanding because, in a few lessons, pupils become distracted and have to be reminded about the expectations of the school.
- The ways in which staff manage behaviour have been carefully developed and are usually applied consistently so that pupils know exactly what is expected of them.
- The school's ethos is neatly summed up in their 'Secrets to Success', a good tool for promoting positive attitudes to learning, independence and cooperation. This is displayed around the school and is also promoted well in personal, social and health education lessons and through school assemblies. Pupils like it and can readily talk about what it means for them.
- Pupils are very positive about participating in preventing bullying and understand some of the different forms that bullying might take. They say it does not usually happen at this school but, that when it occasionally does, it is dealt with quickly. They do not tolerate any racist comments and all groups of pupils get along very well.
- There are a few pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The school manages their behaviour well so that lessons are rarely disrupted. The additional support available, as well as the caring ethos and opportunities to speak to an adult if pupils are worried, means that pupils are helped to contribute positively. A very few pupils with very challenging behaviour are supported particularly well so that they learn to behave well. The school has had some impressive success with these pupils.
- Teachers give pupils good opportunities to think about the world around them, both during lessons and in assemblies. Pupils know what they can do to help keep themselves safe, for example on the roads and at the seaside, because of the training they have had. They are also aware of some of the things they should or should not do to stay safe when using the internet, although there is more work to be done developing their understanding of cyber bullying.
- Pupils love the great variety of interesting clubs and activities that are available during and after school. They get the chance to run some of these clubs themselves, which gives them a chance to be responsible.

### **The leadership and management requires improvement**

- Leadership requires improvement because the actions of leaders have not yet resulted in consistently good teaching. Nevertheless, leaders have made improvements to teaching and ensured that the dip in standards in 2011 has been addressed. The school tries to ensure all pupils succeed, but there are still differences in the performance of different groups.
- Subject leaders are beginning to take on more of the responsibility for checking how well agreed

whole-school approaches are being used by other teachers. While they share the headteacher's vision for the school, they are not yet as confident in making it happen. The local authority is supporting their development and training, for example by providing a coach to work alongside them. The local authority has helped the school link up with another school, which has helped teachers to plan ways of improving writing and the use of different texts, for example.

- There is a systematic approach to checking how good teaching is, including how well teachers plan and mark. However, this has focused too much on the specific techniques teachers use and the behaviour of pupils, and not enough on the learning and progress of pupils. Senior leaders and governors take account of this information when they make decisions about teachers' pay.
- Together the leaders across the school have made sure that the topics and subjects that teachers plan for pupils are exciting and highly interesting for them. For example, Year 3 pupils began the year with the topic Shipwrecked. This started with an exciting experience, including learning to sail, was sustained when pupils learnt survival skills and camped at the school, and came to a fabulous finish with the pupils learning to do a Maori haka, performed to their parents.
- Such topics typically give pupils good experiences to write about, and widely varied situations to explore their mathematical skills across the curriculum, and help pupils to enjoy being at school. For example, boys improved their writing when they had the chance to write while in a forest. These strategies are helping to narrow the gap between the performance of girls and boys and help to ensure their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well catered for.
- The additional pupil premium funding available for pupils who are eligible is used carefully. For example, it provides a sports leader during lunch times which has reduced incidents between groups of pupils. It has provided training for teaching assistants so that their support has improved, and it has allowed these pupils to participate in school trips and clubs after school, helping them to become more confident. Consequently, these pupils reach standards which are above those for similar groups nationally.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors receive regular information from senior leaders about the work of the school, how well pupils are doing and the quality of the teaching. As a result of their request to the school, these reports are now more detailed and give the governors a better understanding of how effectively issues are being tackled. However, the governors are not yet confident in their own evaluation of what the data available show about how well the pupils are doing. Governors keep a close track of the finances of the school, including the pupil premium funding, to ensure that eligible pupils benefit fully. This now includes an evaluation of the progress of this group of pupils. Together with the senior leaders, the governors make sure that all the required policies and procedures are in place to keep pupils safe, and that the adults in the school are well trained to know how they contribute to this. Governors are beginning to ensure that teachers' pay progression is linked closely to the progress of their pupils.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	114560
<b>Local authority</b>	Brighton and Hove
<b>Inspection number</b>	401448

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	244
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Vanessa Neylen
<b>Headteacher</b>	Andrew Richbell
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	18–19 May 2010
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