

# St Nicholas Church of England Primary School

Nicholas Road, Blundellsands, Liverpool, Merseyside, L23 6TS

**Inspection dates** 23–24 April 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school.

- Pupils' achievement is outstanding. They make excellent progress, often exceeding the progress expected for primary age pupils across the country. They reach high standards of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Outstanding teaching means that after an excellent start in the Reception class pupils continue to build on their knowledge and skills, year by year, as they move up through the school.
- Teachers' high expectations bring out the very best in pupils. There is a well-judged balance between challenge and support in lessons and pupils are given excellent guidance on how to keep on improving their work.
- Pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs are supported extremely well, so that they can take part fully in school life and achieve to the best of their ability.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They contribute in many ways to making it a happy place for everyone, including acting as influential school councillors.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They feel extremely safe, they are happy and secure, and ready and able to learn and progress successfully. They have trusting relationships with the adults in school. Their attendance is above average.
- The headteacher's excellent leadership is strongly supported by an effective deputy headteacher, by very knowledgeable governors and by staff at every level in the school.
- Information gained from the reviews of pupils' progress that take place each term is shared, so that leaders, including governors, can measure how well the school is doing. However, it needs to be presented in a more concise form than the current, very detailed reports in order to make its use even more effective.
- There is a relentless pursuit of ongoing improvement and the school has continued to improve since it was last inspected, including pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching. Parents are highly appreciative of the excellent quality of education provided for their children.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 11 lessons, including a joint observation with the headteacher. They also carried out 'learning walks' which involved spending short periods of time in a number of lessons. They listened to pupils read in Years 1, 2 and 6 and held discussions with pupils about the books they have enjoyed and those they are currently reading.
- Meetings were held with four members of the governing body, with senior staff and subject leaders, with a group of pupils and with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors reviewed 20 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). They took into account the outcomes of a survey of parents' views conducted by the school in the spring term of 2013 and the views expressed in a letter received from a parent during the inspection. An inspector also met with a group of eight parents to hear their views about the school.
- Inspectors took into account the views that staff expressed in the questionnaires they completed.
- They observed the school's work. They inspected the written work in pupils' books and also looked at a wide range of school documentation, including safeguarding documents, the school development plan, records of pupils' current attainment and progress, and documents relating to pupils' attendance and behaviour.

## Inspection team

Diane Auton, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Christine Potter

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is similar in size to most other primary schools.
- Most pupils are White British, with English as their home language. A very small minority of pupils, from a range of backgrounds and heritages, speak English as their additional language. Currently, no pupils are at an early stage of learning English.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is below average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The on-site breakfast club and after-school club are managed by a private provider and are subject to separate inspection by Ofsted. Reports are available on the Ofsted website.

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

- Share information about pupils' progress even more effectively by ensuring that the summaries of the information from the progress reviews that are carried out each term are presented in a very clear and concise format.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### is outstanding

- Most children's skills are at typical levels for their age when they enter the Reception class. They make rapid progress, so that by the start of Year 1 many are working at levels above the usual expectations for their age. They have also gained the extremely positive attitudes to learning that pupils demonstrate all through the school.
- From these very good starting points pupils continue to make excellent progress in reading, writing and mathematics in Key Stages 1 and 2. As a result, their attainment soon exceeds considerably that of most pupils across the country.
- In 2012 the proportion of pupils in Year 1 who met the required standard in the new national check on phonics skills, which focused on their ability to identify letters and the sounds they make, was above average. Pupils' attainment in Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics has consistently been significantly above average for the past five years.
- After several years of high attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 the school experienced a small dip in standards in reading in 2012. Attainment in reading, although average, was not as high as in previous years and not as high as attainment in writing. School data for the Year 6 cohort in 2012 show that a small number of pupils developed some significant additional needs, including health issues, during Key Stage 2. This is likely to have contributed to the slight dip. Inspection evidence and the school's data confirm that there is no gap between reading and writing standards across the school in the current year. Pupils in Year 6 are securely on track for high attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 2.
- Across the school pupils' reading skills are developing very well. Systematic teaching of letters and sounds in the Reception class and Key Stage 1 are giving pupils the tools they need to become proficient readers. Attainment in reading is normally high by the end of Year 6 and pupils tackle difficult texts with confidence. From a young age pupils read clearly and expressively, showing great enjoyment and interest.
- The proportion of pupils achieving Level 6, which is the level most pupils should achieve by the age of 14, was similar to the national proportion in mathematics in 2012. In the current year an above-average proportion of pupils in Year 6 are on track to achieve this very high level in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The small number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals did not do as well as other pupils in assessments at the end of Year 6 in 2012. In the current year the attainment and the progress of those supported by the pupil premium are broadly in line with that of their classmates and above national expectations in both English and in mathematics. This is the result of the school's careful targeting of pupil premium funding and the positive impact of measures to ensure equal opportunities for all pupils.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make excellent progress because of the first-rate support and guidance the school provides for them. The achievement of the very small number of pupils with English as their additional language was outstanding in assessments at the end of both Key Stages 1 and 2 in 2012.

### The quality of teaching

### is outstanding

- The quality of teaching is outstanding overall and never less than good.
- Typical features of the excellent teaching in the school are:
  - extremely well-planned lessons where learning moves along briskly and pupils' interest is sustained throughout
  - purposeful learning, with pupils given a clear understanding of what they are expected to do, of how the lesson links up to what they have already learned and of what they will be doing

next

- activities with a high level of challenge, indicating teachers' rigorous expectations of what pupils can achieve
  - effective teamwork between teachers and highly-skilled teaching assistants, ensuring that learners of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, are given the support they need to achieve their objectives.
- Vulnerable pupils, those with special educational needs and those who may be underachieving are identified promptly through regular assessments of their attainment and checks on their progress. The school has developed a range of strategies to provide the different levels of support and challenge that individuals or groups of pupils require. In Year 6, for example, pupils are taught English and mathematics in smaller groups of similar ability. This well-organised teaching strategy is contributing significantly to ongoing improvements in all pupils' achievement and, in particular, to this year's increase in the numbers of pupils who are working confidently at very high levels of attainment.
  - Outstanding teaching and a vibrant curriculum contribute extremely well to the excellent start children make in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Plentiful opportunities for investigative learning and problem solving, both in the classroom and out of doors, are planned exceptionally well and make learning great fun.
  - Expert guidance by teachers is giving pupils a very good understanding of how to improve their work. Pupils are made familiar with what successful learning looks like through the use of 'key points for success'. In an outstanding literacy lesson in Year 6, for example, pupils showed that they had a clear understanding of what they needed to do to raise the quality of their writing from good to outstanding. In partner work they helped each other to assess the quality of their writing and to think about how they could make it even better. In their writing they showed they could use a wide range of persuasive and stylistic techniques to very positive effect. They produced high-quality work as a result of their careful, well-structured planning and the excellent support they had been given.

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

- Pupils' behaviour, courtesy and attitudes to learning are exemplary. They feel very secure in school and they are confident that adults are always on hand to help if they have a problem.
- Parents' comments and questionnaire responses show they highly value the level of care and safety the school provides for their children.
- Pupils' understanding of issues around different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying and prejudice-based bullying, and how it should be dealt with, is impressive. They say bullying in school is very rare and staff always deal with it quickly.
- Pupils' excellent conduct in lessons is a key factor in their successful learning. They concentrate and apply themselves extremely well, readily share ideas with each other, use resources independently and require only minimal direction in organising themselves in the classroom.
- Pupils who are potentially vulnerable and those with additional learning, health, social or emotional needs are supported extremely well. The school's proactive Parent Support Adviser keeps a sharp focus on removing barriers to learning and this is helping pupils to do increasingly well in school. Parents speak highly of her work and the valuable support she provides, including the 'Hot Chocolate Club' for pupils dealing with bereavement or other stressful issues.
- Staff have established effective partnerships with a wide range of agencies that support pupils' well-being. Regular training on child protection and related issues is helping to keep staff skills and knowledge of best practice up to date.
- Pupils' attendance and punctuality are excellent, reflecting the strong partnership between home and school.

**The leadership and management are outstanding**

- The headteacher's drive and enthusiasm are fundamental to the success of the school. With the help of a very effective senior leadership group, all of whom lead by example, and with governors' support, she has created a strong and united staff team, with everyone sharing her high aspirations for the school. Areas of relative weaknesses, such as the slight dip in reading standards in Key Stage 2 in 2012, have been tackled quickly and decisively. Pupils' progress is continuing to accelerate and achievement is even higher than at the time of the previous inspection.
  - The school's strategic plan is based on accurate self-evaluation and rigorous analysis; it identifies well-chosen actions to help the school to continue to improve and it sets ambitious targets for improvement.
  - Regular and systematic checks underpin the excellent quality of teaching. Staff are clearly held to account through the performance management systems but are also very well supported by a comprehensive programme of professional training and development.
  - The overall quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved from good to outstanding since the school's last inspection as a result of successful actions taken by the school.
  - The school has continued to develop the very effective assessment practice identified at the last inspection. The information gained from regularly reviewing pupils' progress is used well to identify pupils who may need extra support or challenge and to help with planning the next steps. Information summaries from the reviews are shared with all staff and with governors; they are over-detailed, however, and this reduces their clarity and overall effectiveness to good rather than outstanding.
  - The school's broad and rich curriculum helps to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness outstandingly well. Subjects are brought together into topics that are interesting and relevant for pupils; many topics include visits to places of interest or visits from expert contributors, such as artists or musicians, all of which adds to pupils' strong motivation to learn. The curriculum is further enriched by residential visits, including trips for older pupils to the school's partner school in Spain, by opportunities to develop sporting, artistic and musical skills and by a range of well-attended after-school clubs.
  - The local authority provides light-touch support for this outstanding school.
  - **The governance of the school:**
    - Governors have an accurate overview of pupils' achievement because they take regular opportunities through the year to examine data on how well pupils are doing. The governing body receives regular reports on the quality of teaching and its impact on progress.
    - Governors hold the school to account assiduously and ask searching questions from a well-informed standpoint. They manage staff performance very effectively and are fully aware of the link between staff performance and salary progressions and use it to inform their decisions about staff pay.
    - The governing body ensures that the pupil premium funding is spent wisely, for example, to provide additional individual or small-group support. As a result, any barriers to learning are addressed successfully and pupils achieve increasingly well.
    - Governors carry out their statutory duties effectively, ensuring that safeguarding procedures are managed well and reviewed regularly. They ensure that equal opportunities are promoted vigorously and that discrimination is not tolerated in the school.
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## 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>	104922
<b>Local authority</b>	Sefton
<b>Inspection number</b>	412092

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	204
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	John Howell
<b>Headteacher</b>	Rebecca Woods
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	28 April 2009
<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 9241204
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