

# St Nicolas Church of England Junior School

Link Road, Newbury, Berkshire, RG14 7LU

**Inspection dates** 14–15 May 2013

| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>   | Previous inspection: | Good                        | 2        |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
|                                | 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

- Teachers are not making sure that pupils are always given hard enough work so that they can learn quickly and make good progress.
- The skills of the teaching assistants are not used fully during whole class discussions.
- Pupils are not consistently expected to follow advice from teachers' marking so that they can improve their work straight away.
- Leadership and management are not rigorous enough in checking that teaching is consistently good or better.
- Information collected on how well pupils are doing is not used fully so that appropriate support can be provided .
- Governors are not ensuring that money spent is having enough impact on improving the progress of all pupils.

### The school has the following strengths

- Attainment is above average in English and mathematics. Pupils are particularly good at reading and this subject is promoted well.
- Pupils behave well and feel safe at school. They enjoy the wide range of creative activities provided, especially in art.
- The provision made for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. As a result, pupils are polite and considerate, and are keen to help others.
- Leaders have a clear vision for the school and understand what needs to be done to make the school good. Consequently, the school is improving following the recent dip in achievement.
- Parents and carers are pleased with the school and are happy to recommend it to others.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 15 lessons with four lessons being observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, teachers, pupils, members of the governing body and representatives from the local authority.
- The inspectors took into account 64 responses to the on-line Parent View survey and held informal discussions with a sample of parents and carers.
- The inspectors considered the views expressed in 29 staff questionnaires.
- A range of information supplied by the school was scrutinised, including the school's own information about how well pupils are doing, planning documents, checks on the quality of teaching, the school development plan, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and safeguarding documents.

## Inspection team

Alison Cartlidge, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Christopher Crouch

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is of average size.
- About one in eleven pupils is disabled or has special educational needs and is supported through school action, and a further one in twelve pupils is supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs. These figures are broadly average.
- Approximately a sixth of the pupils is eligible for the pupil premium (additional money provided by the government for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, looked after children and the children of service families). This is broadly the national average. The school has no pupils from service families.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- There have been several changes in senior leaders and in the governing body over the last two years.

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

- Increase the proportion of good or better teaching and accelerate pupils' progress across the school, by:
  - raising teachers' expectations for the quality of pupils' work and ensuring that teachers always provide work with the right level of challenge for all pupils
  - making good use of teaching assistants during whole class discussions to help move learning forward
  - providing greater opportunity for pupils to take swift action to further improve their work in the light of advice given through teachers' marking.
- Develop leadership and management so that they secure consistently good or better teaching and learning, by:
  - increasing the rigour in monitoring teaching so that weaknesses are rectified quickly
  - making more effective use of information about how well groups of pupils are doing to pinpoint support needed more accurately, including for pupils in receipt of the pupil premium and disabled pupils and those with special educational needs
  - carrying out an external review of governance in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because attainment and progress dipped in 2012, especially in mathematics. Leaders have started to make better use of information on how well the pupils are doing to target support, but are not yet securing good progress across the school. Pupils do not always make enough progress because they are not consistently expected to complete work that is sufficiently challenging. For example, in some lessons all pupils start with the same work, when more-able pupils could move on to something harder more quickly.
- Pupils join the school in Year 3 with above average attainment and attainment remains above average by the end of Year 6. Pupils do better in reading than in writing. Pupils enjoy books, read with expression and use their knowledge of the sounds letters make to help read unfamiliar words. In writing and mathematics pupils are not expected to tackle hard enough work and avoidable errors are not consistently checked straight away.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs requires improvement because these pupils do not all do well enough, especially in mathematics. The school has started to improve support for these pupils in this subject so that it mirrors the good help they are given in English.
- Pupils in receipt of the pupil premium do not make enough progress to enable them to attain as well as other pupils at the school. Consequently, they were about a year behind their peers in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6 in 2012. Recent additional activities are starting to have a positive impact on their achievement, but it is too soon for the full benefits to be measured.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because pupils are not always given work that is challenging enough or are expected to do their best. Nevertheless, there are examples of good teaching in all year groups and signs that teachers are taking on board advice from the new senior leadership team. For example, teachers are promoting subject specific vocabulary well following a whole school focus and are helping pupils to have a better understanding about what they are learning in each lesson. For example, in mathematics in Year 5, teachers talked about 'factors', 'arrays' and 'divisibility' when helping pupils to find ways of arranging seating on an imaginary ferry boat.
- Teaching assistants provide valuable support when working with small groups of pupils, but their time is not always used effectively during whole class discussions where they often just sit and listen with the pupils.
- Teachers frequently provide written advice on how pupils can do better next time, but tend to be over positive in their comments and do not ensure that pupils rectify mistakes quickly. As a result, some pupils make similar avoidable errors week after week, preventing them from making quick progress.
- Teachers form good relationships with the pupils and use praise well to encourage them. The management of behaviour is fair, timely and appropriate. Clear instructions and routines enable pupils to understand what they are to do and to get on with their work quickly.
- Pupils and their parents are positive about teaching at the school. The particular strength of providing tasks that engage the pupils' interest and making pupils want to learn is especially appreciated. For example, in Year 3, pupils enjoyed pretending to be characters from books and asking and answering questions in these roles.

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

- Pupils' good attitudes towards learning are evident in most lessons and around the school. Pupils particularly value and enjoy lessons that encourage them to develop their creativity or provide them with the opportunity to work as part of a team. For example, in mathematics in Year 3, pupils worked well in pairs asking questions to find the mystery number. Occasionally, when work is not well suited to the pupils' abilities, pupils become restless and do not do their best.
- Pupils understand and appreciate the school's behaviour policy and consequently behaviour is good. Worthwhile additional activities are provided for the few pupils who need extra help in learning how to socialise, so that they can access the same range of opportunities as other pupils. Most parents and carers and their children agree that behaviour is good at the school. Pupils say that playtimes can be a bit 'lively', but that children are just 'having fun', and they are happy that they can sort out minor disagreements for themselves.
- Pupils are genuinely caring and carry out kind acts without being prompted by adults. For example, during the inspection, an older pupil shared her snack when a younger pupil accidentally dropped his on the floor.
- Pupils say that they feel safe at school. They say that bullying is rare and when it occurs it is dealt with efficiently by members of staff. Pupils are knowledgeable about how to stay safe and talk confidently about dangers of cyber bullying and how to avoid danger. For example, in Year 5, pupils knew that they needed to take care not to injure themselves or others when using sharp needles and scissors in design and technology.
- The above average rates of attendance demonstrate how much pupils enjoy coming to school.

**The leadership and management require improvement**

- Leadership requires improvement because leaders are not monitoring teaching and the progress of groups of pupils rigorously enough to ensure that progress is consistently good across the school and to tackle dips in progress as soon as they arise.
- Suitable systems are in place to check up on how well all teachers are doing and targets for improvement are focused correctly on individual and whole school needs. These are starting to have a positive impact and teaching is improving steadily. Teachers are pleased with the training they are receiving to develop their work.
- Leaders have a clear understanding of what the school needs to do next to improve, although self-evaluation has been too generous in the past. The local authority has worked with the new senior leadership team to help bring about the necessary changes, although it is too soon for the full impact of some improvements to be measured.
- The local authority provided light touch support following the last inspection and appropriate additional support since the dip in attainment in 2012. Leaders at the school have demonstrated that they have the capacity to improve the school. They worked with the local authority to check where improvements needed to be made and, consequently, pupils in the current Year 6 are on target to make at least the expected progress.
- The curriculum is broad and interesting but is not ensuring that pupils are always completing work at a level that is right for them. There are considerable strengths in the way the creative arts are promoted. For example, during the inspection, pupils in Year 6 were crafting imaginative shoe designs for a range of purposes.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a key strength and the school promotes equal opportunities and eliminates discrimination. Contrasting faiths and cultures are explored in depth across subjects and pupils gain a keen awareness of the importance of valuing differing views. A special area is available for pupils who want time for quiet reflection.
- Safeguarding arrangements are robust and meet requirements. Members of staff are fully trained in keeping pupils safe and are checked for their suitability for working in school.
- Parents and carers are positive about the school and all who responded to the Parent View survey agree that behaviour and safety are good. Parents commented especially about the 'very

caring and nurturing atmosphere’ and the fact that the school is ‘welcoming and inclusive’.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governance requires improvement because governors are not measuring the impact of funding (including pupil premium) on the progress of all groups of pupils . The largely new governing body has evaluated its effectiveness and this has helped governors to know what further training they need and how to develop their roles. They know the school’s strengths and areas for development and how achievement at the school compares with others nationally. They understand the processes involved in rewarding good teaching and supporting and challenging teachers when necessary.

## 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> | 110013         |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | West Berkshire |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 412197         |

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> | 254                          |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body           |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Tim Renouf                   |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Keith Harvey                 |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 11 November 2008             |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 01635 41282                  |
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