

# St Nicholas CofE Primary

Kilmersdon Road, Radstock, Bath, BA3 3QH

**Inspection dates** 9–10 July 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

- Although by the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment is average, boys' attainment is lower than that of girls. There have been some improvements in attainment and progress during the last year and progress is now similar to that of other pupils nationally. Achievement requires improvement; in particular, boys' achievement regularly lags behind that of girls.
- Teaching requires improvement. Teachers do not always set high enough expectations and the pace of learning can be too slow. The questioning of pupils is sometimes imprecise and this leads to work not being challenging enough for all pupils.
- The checks the school makes on teaching and other school activities are regular and detailed but areas of concern are not followed up rigorously enough. As a result, while some teaching is good, there are too many inconsistencies and achievement has only just started to improve.
- The governing body is very supportive of leaders and managers and has a developing understanding of the school but members do not challenge the school sufficiently to raise pupils' achievement.

### The school has the following strengths

- Pupils are very well cared for. Teachers and pupils rightly consider behaviour to be good and pupils are well managed. The school is safe, has a positive atmosphere and there is virtually no bullying.
- The work of leaders and managers has started to slowly raise achievement and has brought about improvements in assessment, marking and the support given to pupils facing learning and other difficulties.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage provides children with a good start to their education, particularly in developing their reading, writing and social skills.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 13 lessons taught by eight teachers and undertook five joint observations with senior staff.
- Inspectors held discussions with pupils, teachers, the headteacher, senior managers, representatives of the governing body and a local authority officer.
- Inspectors examined numerous school documents, including policies, assessment information, planning documents and records of all kinds.
- The views of 55 parents were analysed through the Parent View website.

## Inspection team

John Carnaghan, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Sheila Rowan

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding for looked-after children, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those from service families) is below the national average.
- Almost all pupils are White British and almost all pupils speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also above average.
- The school does not use any alternative provision (lessons that take place regularly away from school) for its pupils.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Extensive building repairs disrupted the school from 2010 to 2012.

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

- Improve the standard of teaching through:
  - setting high expectations so that there is an urgency to learning and pupils fully understand what is expected of them
  - ensuring all lessons have good pace throughout
  - developing questioning skills so that teachers continuously check how well pupils are learning and ensure all groups are fully challenged.
- Raise achievement, especially for boys, by:
  - reviewing the topics and subjects studied to ensure they promote pupils' enthusiasm
  - engaging boys more in their learning by using teaching strategies that encourage them to take a full part in lessons
  - raising the profile of boys when achievement is celebrated.
- Build on the developing capacity of leaders, managers and governors so that they increase their focus on driving up achievement and eliminating underperformance.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Children enter the Reception class with attainment that is below what is expected for their age. Good teaching and a well-organised Early Years Foundation Stage ensure they make good progress in Reception, particularly in social development. They move into Year 1 with attainment levels a little below average but thoroughly prepared for later school life and the National Curriculum.
- Attainment at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 has been similar to national averages for a number of years. Boys' attainment lags a little behind the national average for their gender, whereas that of girls is far closer to the average. This gap has not closed this year.
- Attainment in 2013 has risen, notably in mathematics, where pupils' progress has benefited from more rigorous subject leadership. The proportion of pupils gaining higher levels in mathematics national assessments has risen strongly this year.
- Pupils' progress requires improvement. Again, boys' progress is slower than girls'. There are indications that overall progress has risen a little this year, particularly in mathematics, after a long period when it was stubbornly at the national average. This slow improvement is because assessment is being used in a more targeted fashion and additional help for pupils is more effective.
- The school has developed a comprehensive and effective programme of interventions and individual help for pupils in the last year. Thorough assessment enables early identification of pupils who are having difficulties. The school acts quickly on this information, selecting from a range of programmes to ensure the right one for each pupil. Skilled teaching assistants, patient and sympathetic, usually make a big difference to individuals, enabling them to achieve similarly to their peers. In this way, the school promotes equality of opportunity and ensures no discrimination.
- The gap in attainment between pupils in receipt of the pupil premium and other pupils at the school widened in 2011 and 2012. The school has developed thorough methods to gather accurate data on the progress and attainment of this group in comparison with other pupils at the school. It analysed the reasons for the gap and carefully re-focused the distribution of resources. This has had a big impact on both the progress and attainment of this group. The attainment of these pupils in both English and mathematics, as reflected in national assessments, is now similar to all others in the school.
- Attainment in reading is similar to the national average. The school provides adequate opportunities for pupils to read a variety of books and keeps careful records of pupils' progress but sometimes books chosen for pupils do not stretch their capabilities enough.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Teaching does not promote good progress as it is inconsistent. This is because the checks that leaders and managers make on the quality of teaching are not rigorously followed up to address areas of concern.
- Typically, where teaching requires improvement, teachers do not set high enough expectations so there is a lack of ambition and pupils are uncertain what they should achieve in the lesson. The pace of learning is sometimes too slow, with an absence of deadlines to inject a sense of urgency.
- Much teaching does too little to address boys' underachievement and encourage their whole-hearted participation in learning activities. Assemblies celebrate pupils' learning successes but do not particularly stress the need for boys to do better.
- The way teachers question pupils can be imprecise so pupils occasionally have to guess what the teacher is thinking rather than develop a spirit of enquiry. Weaker questioning provides teachers with limited information about what pupils know and understand, so staff are unable to adjust

what they are doing to meet pupils' learning needs as the lesson progresses. As a result, some lessons do not offer the right amount of challenge to all groups.

- Teaching assistants have benefited from extensive training in recent years so they have the skills needed to support disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs as well as others who find learning difficult. Small-group and one-to-one sessions are notably successful and have quickly narrowed the gap in achievement between these groups (including those eligible for free school meals) and all others in the school.
- Pupils are well managed and teachers foster good relationships. They are courteous role models, so behaviour in lessons is invariably positive.
- There is good practice in teaching, with some more effective lessons. Teaching is consistently strong in the Early Years Foundation Stage, so these young children learn well.
- A good Year 6 English lesson exemplified some strengths in teaching. As an introduction to writing poetry the teacher read and showed a haiku to the class; this led to interesting, challenging questions, such as 'What is the purpose of poems?' that elicited thoughtful and mature discussion amongst pupils. This provided a good foundation for some very successful attempts by pupils to write their own haiku.
- Leaders and managers have introduced a new marking system. This has been adopted by all staff. Pupils' books are thoroughly marked and contain very helpful advice on how to improve, as pupils themselves confirm, one Year 6 boy saying, 'Marking means a lot to us'.

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

- Pupils are happy at school and recognise it as a safe, caring environment. Their warm relationships with adults and one another are a positive feature and contribute to a pleasant, harmonious environment. As one older pupil reported, 'Everyone gets on very well.'
- Behaviour around the building and play areas at playtimes and lesson changeover is mature and calm. Older pupils take responsibility for the welfare of younger ones as a matter of course, keeping a watch on the 'friendship stops' on the corridor and playground to make sure no-one is lonely or unhappy.
- In lessons, pupils are generally keen to learn. From the youngest age, their behaviour is firmly and consistently managed by all adults, so pupils quickly learn what is acceptable and what is not. Pupils adopt good learning habits, showing courtesy and good sense in most lessons. There is a positive atmosphere with very little disruption to learning; just occasionally, if teaching is less than interesting, pupils can become too talkative.
- Personal, social and health education and other lessons provide pupils with valuable information about how to stay safe in their everyday lives. They understand the potential risks of the internet and are aware of cyber-bullying and what they should do if it happens. In reality, all forms of bullying, including racist bullying, are very unusual at the school. Pupils know what to do if it starts and are confident in the school to quickly quash any potential incidents.
- The school ensures that absences are rigorously followed up and attendance at the school is similar to the national average.

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

- Leaders, managers and governors diverted much of their energy to cope with the disruptions arising from extensive repairs undertaken in the school from 2010 to 2012. Now that the process is finished, leaders and managers are focusing all their efforts on improving achievement but this has not yet had a significant impact.
- The school runs a comprehensive programme of checks on teaching, planning and marking. These identify areas for improvement and have had some successes, especially in implementing more thorough marking across all classes. There has been insufficient rigour in following up areas of concern in teaching so that, although the school knows who its most and least effective

teachers are, it does too little to promote good practice and tackle teaching that lacks energy and ambition.

- The mixture of activities the school offers does not do enough to interest and engage boys. The school does not full take advantage of the opportunities provided by trips and other such experiences to develop pupils' skills in English and mathematics.
- The subjects and topics taught meet requirements and provide some interesting experiences through study of a range of engaging topics and a wide programme of visits to places of educational interest, such as Lyme Regis. There are a number of after-school clubs, which are popular.
- There are good opportunities for pupils to develop social and moral understanding. They enjoy taking responsibilities and older ones are more than happy to care for younger ones on the playground and around the building. Assemblies regularly offer pupils a chance to reflect on wider spiritual issues and pupils organise themselves to raise funds for such good causes as 'Children in Need'.
- A number of the new initiatives have been introduced this year, such as improving the way assessment data are used and improving support for pupils who find learning difficult, and these have started to have some impact, especially on achievement in mathematics. Plans for the future are precise and relevant and the school demonstrates the capacity for continuing improvement. The local authority provides good support to the school in its efforts to improve.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Members of the governing body have good links with school staff and visit lessons regularly. This gives them a good grasp of teaching standards and the way teachers' performance management is linked to their pay progression. The governing body is developing its understanding of assessment information and pupils' achievement and how it compares with national averages. However, members do not challenge the school sufficiently to raise achievement. Governors have been closely involved in allocating pupil premium funds and reviewing their effectiveness. This has led to a rapid improvement in this group's performance this year. Members of the governing body undertake regular training to develop their skills. Safeguarding checks are systematic and thorough, helping to ensure that the school's procedures in this respect are comprehensive and rigorous.

## 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>	134238
<b>Local authority</b>	Bath and North East Somerset
<b>Inspection number</b>	413053

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 controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	215
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Jill Webb
<b>Headteacher</b>	Gillian Sutcliffe
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	25–26 November 2009
<b>Telephone number</b>	01761 432101
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