

St Nicholas' Church of England Infants' School and Nursery Class, Wallingford

St Nicholas Road, Wallingford, OX10 8HX

Inspection dates 10–11 July 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	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.

- Pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. From low starting points, pupils leave at the end of Year 2 having achieved the national average standards in all subjects.
- Concerted action to raise standards over the past two years has been successful. The proportion of pupils achieving above the expected levels in reading and mathematics is increasing.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work together closely to provide good support for all groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.
- Pupils feel safe in school and are keen to learn. They behave well and are proud of their school.
- The headteacher, well supported by staff and governors, is successfully leading improvements in the quality of teaching.
- The governing body is very effective and confidently holds leaders to account for the school's performance.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always plan sufficiently demanding tasks that meet the learning needs of all groups of pupils, especially the more able.
- Pupils are not given enough opportunities to write for a range of purposes and audiences.
- There is not enough emphasis on the development of pupils' handwriting and punctuation skills.
- The literacy and numeracy leaders are not yet fully involved in identifying and tackling weaknesses in their areas of responsibility.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 13 lessons, of which two were seen together with the headteacher, and made a number of other short visits to lessons and learning areas. The inspectors also listened to groups of pupils in Years 1 and 2 reading.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, school leaders and other staff, a group of pupils, and four governors.
- A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of 49 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 21 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- They looked at the school's policies, teachers' plans, school improvement planning and records on behaviour and safety. They also looked at information on individual pupils' progress and teachers' performance.

Inspection team

Tusha Chakraborti, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Peter Lawley

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than most primary schools, although the number of pupils has increased over the past year.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who are of minority ethnic heritage or who speak English as an additional language is below the national average. Very few are at the early stage of speaking English.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below average. This is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those in local authority care and pupils with a parent in the armed forces.
- The proportions of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action, and through school action plus or a statement of special educational needs, are below average.
- The headteacher joined the school in September 2011. The school has experienced several changes in staffing over the past two years. Staffing is now stable.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching to raise achievement in reading, writing and mathematics further by making sure that:
 - teachers make full use of assessment information in the planning of lessons so work is suitably challenging for all groups of pupils, particularly those capable of reaching higher levels
 - greater emphasis is placed on the development of pupils' punctuation and handwriting skills
 - pupils are given more opportunities to write at length for a range of purposes and audiences
 - staff with leadership roles are more fully involved in identifying and tackling weaknesses in their areas of responsibility.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start school with skills and knowledge that are often well below the levels expected for their age, particularly in language and numeracy. Staff have a good understanding of children's needs and plan a wide range of activities that enthuse and engage them well in their learning. As a result children make good progress, and by the time they enter Year 1, most achieve age-related expectations in all areas of learning.
- By the end of Year 2, pupils achieve average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. These standards represent good progress when skills on entry are taken into account. Following a dip in 2012, standards have risen because the school has successfully improved the quality of teaching and the checking of pupils' progress. School information on the attainment and progress of pupils currently in Year 2, supported by the work seen in their books and lessons, shows that pupils have made much faster progress over the past year, especially in reading and mathematics.
- Reading is given a high priority. From an early age, children enjoy reading and sharing books. They apply their knowledge of phonics (the sounds that letters make) well to read unfamiliar words. This was observed, for example, in a Reception class where children moved around the classroom to read information they needed to complete their tick charts. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 read with confidence and are keen to discuss whether their chosen books are fiction or non-fiction. The lunchtime book swap encourages and motivates pupils to read widely. This is further strengthened by the school's 'World Book Shop' event making pupils aware of local bookshops and libraries as resources for reading.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to their classmates. Because teachers and teaching assistants provide effective individual support and monitor their progress consistently, these pupils are making good progress and the attainment gap between these and other pupils is narrowing.
- The additional funding the school receives for pupils through the pupil premium is used to enhance provision through, for example, additional support staff and support for individual pupils. In Year 2 in 2012, these pupils were on average about three terms behind their classmates in reading, writing and mathematics. Because the support has been effective, the gap in attainment has narrowed. They are now two terms behind others.
- The progress and attainment of pupils who speak English as an additional language and those from different minority ethnic backgrounds are comparable to that of their classmates.

The quality of teaching is good

- The good quality of teaching has ensured good progress across the school. Teachers and other staff provide a positive and purposeful learning environment, and relationships across the school are consistently good.
- Children get off to a good start in the Nursery and Reception classes. They are given opportunities to pursue activities of their own choice, as well as those directed by adults, through a balanced indoor and outdoor programme of learning. Careful planning builds on children's previous learning. For example, after reading *The Hungry Caterpillar*, children observed the life cycle of a butterfly and, later on, the birth of the butterflies. They then

released the butterflies in the garden. These activities fully captured their imagination and extended their knowledge and understanding very well.

- In most lessons, teachers make sure pupils are fully involved in their learning by asking searching questions that make them think hard as well as assessing their understanding of what they have already learnt.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. They focus well on improving pupils' writing skills through a range of activities. Pupils in a Year 2 lesson, for example, were observed analysing 'funny poems' and exploring the use of language and ideas in order to write their own poems. In a Year 1 lesson, pupils were seen to recount their experiences of a visit to a local farm. However, pupils are not consistently given enough opportunities to write at length for different purposes and for different audiences in subjects other than English.
- Guided reading sessions are used well to deepen pupils' understanding of a range of stories, analysing the impact of key events and characters. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 develop good understanding of fiction and information texts and know how to use a glossary to find information.
- Teachers usually plan tasks that are well matched to the learning needs of pupils, but this is not consistently so. In a few lessons the planned work is not always closely enough matched to pupils' attainment levels. When this occurs, opportunities are missed to challenge and extend skills and understanding of all groups of pupils, particularly higher ability pupils.
- Pupils' work is marked regularly. Teachers use the marking guidance well to provide a clear record of what pupils have been asked to do and how well they are doing. This helps pupils to move forward to the next stage in their learning. However, not enough emphasis is placed on the development of pupils' punctuation and writing skills.
- Homework is set regularly and is used well to support the topics pupils are learning in school. The use of the newsletters explaining homework for each year group involves parents well in their children's learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' behaviour is good. This contributes well to a calm and safe environment where pupils flourish. Pupils respond very well to the school's positive approach to behaviour and grow as confident learners.
 - Pupils are polite and welcoming both in class and around the school. Good relationships between the staff and pupils promote a culture of mutual respect where pupils feel valued.
 - Pupils feel safe at school. They have a good understanding of various types of safety issues such as internet safety, fire and road safety. They know how to keep themselves and others safe because the school includes issues about safety in lessons and work with parents.
 - Pupils say that incidents of bullying are rare, and are confident that adults deal with them fairly and effectively. Most parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire said that behaviour was good and their children are kept safe at school.
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- Pupils take on responsibilities enthusiastically. Through the school council, pupils select three charities each year for which they raise funds.
- Attendance is average but improving because of the school's rigorous monitoring system.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides strong and purposeful leadership. He, and other senior leaders, communicates high expectations and a clear sense of direction to staff and pupils. Leaders and governors ensure that strong Christian ethos underpins all aspects of the school's work and supports pupils' all-round development.
- The quality of teaching is regularly checked and challenging targets are set for staff. Well-planned training has improved the quality of teaching and raised achievement. The headteacher manages the performance of staff well, and there are clear links between pupils' progress and pay and promotion.
- Because of staffing changes in over the past two years, the literacy and numeracy leaders are not, as yet, fully involved in checking teaching and learning or guiding improvement in their subjects. Leadership of the Nursery and Reception classes is very effective in ensuring that children settle quickly and make good progress.
- An appropriate emphasis on the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills in the taught subjects is helping to raise standards. Visits to places of interest and a range of clubs and events in school make pupils' learning exciting and meaningful and promote their personal development. Pupils enjoy using the school's 'enchanted wood' area where they go for quiet reading and for their astronomy club, where they 'star gaze' with binoculars. School events such as Science Day deepen pupils' understanding of the application of science in daily life. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through the teaching of different subjects, including religious studies.
- The local authority has provided 'light touch' support. This has included, for example, support for raising achievement in mathematics.
- The school works in close partnership with parents. The Parents' Association is actively involved in raising funds for school trips and in improving the outside area of the school building, for example by funding and developing the 'enchanted wood'.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors provide very effective leadership and support the school well. They set challenging objectives for the headteacher and have full confidence in his ability to move the school forward. Governors receive regular reports on the quality of teaching and visit the school to check the progress being made on the priorities identified in the school development plan. They make sure that staff pay and promotion are justified by the impact of teaching on pupils' progress. They ensure that the income received through the pupil premium is used for the purposes intended and check the impact on pupils' progress. Governors challenge leaders and ask searching questions about how any underperformance is tackled. They understand how the school performs in comparison with other schools. Governors ensure that national requirements for safeguarding and safe recruitment of staff are fully met.

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

Unique reference number	123163
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	412398

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	196
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Hindle
Headteacher	David Jackson
Date of previous school inspection	11 October 2007
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