

St Nicholas Primary School

Raymund Road, Old Marston, Oxford, OX3 0PJ

Inspection dates 1–2 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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.

- Strong leadership by the headteacher together with rapid development of good leadership skills in senior leaders and the governing body has accelerated improvement since the previous inspection.
- Effective management of teachers' performance together with good leadership of teaching and learning have ensured that teaching is at least good and some is outstanding.
- All groups of pupils, including pupils who benefit from pupil premium funding, those learning English as an additional language and those who find learning more difficult, make good progress because they are interested in their learning and want to do well.
- Pupils and parents appreciate the school's caring attitude, which ensures that everyone is included.
- Pupils feel safe and enjoy coming to school. Behaviour is good because all pupils have a positive attitude towards their learning.
- Staff and senior leaders ensure that subject areas are well organised to give pupils a broad range of experiences that promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in a highly effectively way.
- Members of the governing body know where the school's strengths and weaknesses lie. They hold the school to account and work well in partnership with the headteacher and staff to drive the school forward.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The proportion of teaching which is outstanding is not high enough to ensure all that all pupils make exceptional progress in their learning.
- Boys do not do as well as girls in writing.
- Teachers do not always make enough checks on pupils' learning throughout the lesson and learning is not always related to real life situations.

Information about this inspection

- During the inspection, 30 lessons were observed.
- Ten joint observations of teaching and learning were conducted with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, members of the governing body, the local authority, staff and groups of pupils.
- The inspectors listened to pupils read.
- The inspectors spoke to parents and took account of two letters and the 50 responses to the online Parent View survey.
- The inspectors observed the school’s work, scrutinised pupils’ workbooks and looked at school policies, including those relating to safeguarding and equality, minutes of meetings of the governing body and planning documents.
- The inspectors took account of the 61 questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Barbara Atcheson, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Colin Lower	Additional Inspector
Robert Arnold	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Nicholas Primary School is a larger-than-average sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils come from a White British background, the remainder are from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. The largest groups are from any other White background and Pakistani.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for extra funding provided for looked after children, pupils eligible for free school meals and children of service families (pupil premium) is below the national average. In this school it provides extra funding for pupils eligible for free school meals and those in care.
- The proportions of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs who are supported through school action and those who are supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs are above the national average.
- The school met the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in 2013.
- The school runs a breakfast and after-school club for its pupils.
- A local authority Autism Resource Base (ARB) adjacent to the school caters for 13 pupils, all of whom have a statement of special educational needs. Many of the pupils who attend the base join main school classes for part of the time.
- Some of the Year 6 pupils were on a residential visit at the time of the inspection.
- A new deputy headteacher was appointed in January 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make more teaching outstanding so all pupils make rapid and sustained progress by ensuring that all teachers:
 - keep a close watch on the progress of all groups of pupils throughout a lesson by making regular checks on their learning
 - create a language rich environment to improve pupils' talk for writing, particularly boys
 - relate learning to real life situations.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Over the last three years, achievement has increased year-on-year so that in 2013, by the end of Year 2 pupils reached above expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics for the first time. By the end of Year 6 pupils who started school with levels of language which were well below those expected reached expected standards in reading and above expected standards in writing and mathematics.
- Good and outstanding teaching, together with well-targeted extra support has ensured all groups of pupils, including those from the autism resource base, pupils who benefit from pupil premium funding, those learning English as an additional language and those who find learning more difficult, make good progress.
- Boys' progress is slower than girls in writing and they know this. They point to the school's plan for improvement, which is on the wall and say 'We are up for the challenge.'
- More able pupils made rapid progress in 2013 to reach standards above those expected by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Checks on pupils' progress show that pupils who benefit from the extra support provided by the pupil premium funding make similar progress to their classmates to reach similar standards in writing and mathematics. Gaps are closed quickly and so that even though many learn English as an additional language, they are just one term behind their classmates in reading. Only a very small number were supported by the pupil premium funding in Year 6. They made rapid progress to reach standards that were well above the expected level.
- Accurate identification of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and a wealth of effective extra support ensure that most of these pupils make the same rate of progress as their classmates. The positive learning attitudes of pupils together with teachers' high expectations of good behaviour and the consistent application of the behaviour management policy ensures that pupils from the autism resource base settle quickly and also make similar progress to their classmates.
- Pupils learning English as an additional language get an effective level of support and often make the same progress as others. However, key words are not always explained and this can slow their progress in reading and writing.
- Children, many of whom are in the early stages of learning English as an additional language, enter the Nursery and Reception classes with levels of language development which is well below the typical level for their age. However, fast moving, exciting activities, which capture the children's interest, ensure that they make a good start to their schooling.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is typically good and the proportion of outstanding teaching is increasing. Imaginative activities excite and motivate pupils to succeed. For example, all of the Nursery children took great delight in punching the air up high or down low as they counted carefully from one to ten. Even though it was the end of the morning and very early in the school year they put every effort into the task.
- Pupils' learning is well structured because teachers use their own good subject knowledge well to ask searching questions which make pupils stop and think and reconsider their answers.
- The pace of learning is rapid because teachers plan work that is at the right level for each pupil. Skilled teaching assistants make an important contribution to pupils' learning by helping pupils to become independent learners.
- Pupils know the level of their work and what they have to do to reach the next level because teachers share this information with them. Pupils know how to improve their work because there is a consistent marking policy across the school and teachers give pupils time to make

improvements.

- A sack full of real objects such as a horn, an embroidered cushion and a wooden chest fired the imagination of Year 4 pupils who were learning to plan and retell a paragraph about Eric the Viking. It helped to enrich the language that pupils used as they had real examples in front of them. Where pupils do not have the benefit of pictures or real examples, learning is not so secure and misunderstandings go unchecked.
- Pupils benefit when teachers keep a close check on how different groups are learning throughout the lesson. However, this is not always the case and on a few occasions pupils struggle unnoticed or miss a step in their learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The school motto, 'Live, love, learn and be happy' is central to all of its work. Pupils, including those with challenging behaviour have positive attitudes to school. Pupils attend regularly and parents say that pupils love coming to school.
- Pupils quickly settle to work and respond to their teachers' high expectations of good behaviour. Pupils know that there are some pupils who have difficulty in managing their own behaviour but say that the teachers are very good at dealing with these situations and learning is not interrupted. It is a great credit to the school that behavioural difficulties are not obvious, because pupils are so interested in and engaged in their learning.
- There are a few times when pupils' concentration wanders or they get so excited about what they are doing that they overstep the mark. Although this is quickly brought into check it means that behaviour is good rather than exemplary.
- Pupils not only know the school rules, they own them because they have been part of formulating those rules. They talk very proudly about this and about their roles as playground buddies and how they help playtime to run smoothly.
- Events such as the International Day provide pupils and their families with a very rich and enjoyable opportunity to understand and appreciate how other people live, what they eat, what they wear and their beliefs.
- Pupils say they feel very safe. They know how to keep themselves safe and this includes a good knowledge about e-safety. Pupils say that bullying does not exist. They know about the different sorts of bullying and are clear that adults would help them if they were worried.
- All parents who responded to 'Parent View' said that their children were safe. Almost all said their children were happy and that they would recommend the school to another parent.
- Parents appreciate the benefits of the school's breakfast and after-school clubs and pupils enjoy the companionship and games.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is enthusiastic and passionate about improvement. She has high aspirations for the school and its pupils and conveys her expectations convincingly to all staff, governors and senior leaders. This has resulted in rapid improvement since the last inspection. The pace of this improvement has quickened as a result of the impetus given by good quality support and training from the local authority.
- Senior leaders work extremely well as a team and this gives a high level of consistency across the school. They share the headteacher's enthusiasm. The high level of trust that the headteacher places in senior leaders inspires confidence. They share good practice and check the impact of improvements closely so that only the most effective are selected.
- Subject leaders lead their areas well. They observe lessons, scrutinise work in books and check pupils' learning carefully. This gives them a good understanding of how to improve standards in their areas of responsibility.
- Arrangements for managing teachers' performance are good. Teachers have performance

targets linked to the progress of the pupils they teach and to the school's priorities. Teachers value the support and training they are given.

- All teachers are held to account for pupil progress at regular meetings, where the school's accurate tracking system highlights any underperformance. This, together with the school's good care and guidance for all pupils, ensures the school's provision to secure equal opportunities and to tackle discrimination is good.
- The school has planned carefully and spent the new primary sport funding wisely. It has hired specialist coaches to train teachers in dance and athletics. Money also goes towards ensuring that every class has two hours of gymnastics or sport each week. Swimming lessons ensure that most pupils leaving Year 6 will be confident swimmers.
- A rich curriculum is effective in supporting pupils' good progress. There are strengths in science, the arts and sport and well-planned opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The school works in purposeful partnership with a group of schools to share good practice, learn from each other and provide good quality extra-curricular activities, particularly for the more able.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The members of the governing body play a significant role in the strategic direction of the school and the rapid improvement that the school has made since the previous inspection. They have benefited from good-quality local authority training in order to improve their skills. As a result they have an accurate view of the school's performance including the quality of teaching and how pupils' test results compare to those of other similar schools. They realise that more work has to be done to increase the proportion of outstanding teaching. They understand about the management of teachers' performance and how it must be used to improve the quality of teaching if pay rises are to be awarded. Governors are fully involved with setting targets for the school and hold it rigorously to account. They ensure that statutory duties such as safeguarding are met and that financial resources are managed well. They know that pupils known to be eligible for extra funding are beginning to close any gaps they may have in attainment because money allocated for this purpose is used appropriately.

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	123021
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	428886

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	451
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Shilpa Bhatt
Headteacher	Rachel Crouch
Date of previous school inspection	22–23 March 2013
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