

St Nicholas CofE (C) First School

Belvide Gardens, Codsall, Wolverhampton, WV8 1AN

Inspection dates 6–7 November 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' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school and enables the pupils to become caring and thoughtful young citizens.
- Children get off to a good start in the Nursery and Reception classes and become confident early learners.
- Pupils of all abilities make good progress as they move through the school, particularly in their reading.
- Pupils reach well above expected attainment levels in their work by the end of Year 2 and Year 4.
- Teaching is good. Staff use questions well to check what pupils know and understand. The team of skilled teaching assistants support learning effectively.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and they get on very well together. They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe.
- Senior leaders and governors have an accurate view of the quality of education provided. This informs school improvement planning well and leads to better teaching and gains in achievement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not consistently challenging enough for all pupils, particularly in mathematics.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage do not have free access to outdoor learning activities.
- Areas for improvement are sometimes not followed up swiftly enough once checks on pupils' learning have been made.
- A small number of parents and carers believe their concerns are not considered well enough.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed part of 18 lessons across the full age range in school. These were taught by 10 teachers and two teaching assistants sharing the teaching role. Several observations were conducted jointly with the headteacher. Inspectors also observed a school assembly and part of a whole-school pantomime workshop.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher as leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage, and the acting special educational needs coordinator. Discussions also took place with groups of pupils and representatives of the governing body. A discussion with a representative of the local authority took place on the telephone.
- Inspectors took account of the views of 57 parents and carers from the online questionnaire (Parent View). They also received a small number of communications from parents and spoke to several others at the start of the school day. Inspectors also spoke to most teaching and support staff about aspects of provision in the school.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents including data on pupils' progress, and planning and monitoring information. Inspectors also listened to individual pupils reading and scrutinised a sample of recent work. They also considered in detail records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding, including the school's risk assessments.

Inspection team

Sue Hall, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Enid Korn

Additional Inspector

Keith Brown

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-sized first school.
- Around 10% of pupils are from minority ethnic groups, which is much less than the national average. A very small number of these pupils speak English as an additional language.
- Around 14% of pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which is well below the national average. In this school this provides additional funding for those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is well below the national average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is about half the national average.
- Since the previous inspection there have been new appointments to all senior leadership posts. A new headteacher has recently been appointed to start next term.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teaching across the school is consistently good and increase the percentage that is outstanding by:
 - checking that activities are challenging for groups of pupils of different abilities and needs
 - ensuring that all pupils, develop the skills to solve mathematical problems speedily and accurately
 - making sure that children in the Early Years Foundation Stage can learn outside when they choose to.
- Make leadership and management outstanding by:
 - refining senior leaders' checks on what pupils learn to make sure that all areas for improvement are acted upon swiftly
 - checking that concerns raised by parents are acknowledged and, where appropriate, promptly addressed
 - ensuring that governors are well informed about pupil progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start in the Nursery with a range of early skills and experiences which are at least typical for their age and often above these targets. Many are confident and enthusiastic young learners who settle happily to school and want to do well. At the end of their time in Reception, most exceed the early learning goals in all areas of learning.
- Pupils across the school make good progress. At times this is outstanding, as seen in Reception and Year 4. For example, pupils in Year 4 made excellent progress in understanding how to sort data because the task was explained well, with very good pace, challenge and the effective use of praise. Many hands shot up to answer the teacher's questions of what should be recorded in different parts of the diagrams used.
- By the end of Years 2 and 4, standards are well above the expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics. A very good proportion of pupils reach the higher levels in their work. However, data show that pupils consistently do better in reading and writing than in mathematics.
- Pupils throughout the school read well, and many do so confidently and fluently. The school has secure procedures to teach pupils about letters and the sounds they make. This is reflected in pupils' above average results in the national phonics screening check at the end of Year 1. Many pupils are able to work out unfamiliar words and are supported well in their reading at home.
- Pupils also write well with a good range of reasons to write across the range of subjects. This is seen, for example, in their writing about evacuees in the Second World War and in work in geography, religious education and science.
- While standards in mathematics are often well above national averages, pupils do not do as well in this subject as others. Many pupils have a secure understanding of numbers but they do not have speedy mental mathematics skills and often solve number problems quite laboriously. Sometimes even the more-able pupils struggle to explain how they have worked out an answer.
- The early identification of pupils' needs and the good provision made for them helps disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs achieve well. The small number of pupils speaking English as an additional language makes similar progress to their classmates. The work of the skilled teaching assistants is effective in helping pupils who are vulnerable to develop positive attitudes to learning.
- The small number of pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding receive additional support in different areas and do better than similar pupils nationally in English and mathematics. There have been recent changes to the way in which this funding is used in school to provide an even sharper focus on addressing individual pupils' needs.
- Pupils' achievements in sport are good. The school has targeted the recent government primary school sport funding to develop the role of pupil sports leaders and adult coaches. Pupils now have increased access to different sports including at lunchtimes.

The quality of teaching is good

- Lesson observations and samples of pupils' work show that teaching is good, with a few

examples of outstanding teaching. Senior leaders accurately evaluate the quality of teaching and learning but do not always follow up minor inconsistencies rigorously enough.

- A key strength across the school is the strong working relationship between adults and pupils. Staff make particularly effective use of open questions. They not only check pupils' understanding but also use follow-up questions to demand more detailed and higher-level responses. Teaching assistants are a skilled group of practitioners who provide good support to pupils. In Reception, the quality of this support is excellent at times.
- On occasions, teaching in Year 4 and Reception is outstanding particularly through the use of questions to encourage everyone to think of alternatives in their work. This was seen, for example, when Reception children identified 'wow' words related to fireworks and started to learn to read them. Through the use of questions they then independently improved their sentences so, for example, 'the fireworks were good' became 'the fireworks were many colours'.
- While teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good, children's learning is adversely affected by the layout of the facilities and the organisation of activities. This means that, at times, children do not have free access to the outdoors which restricts their participation in a full range of learning opportunities.
- Where teaching in the school is less effective this is often because tasks are not challenging enough for all pupils, including the more able. For example, when constructing block graphs pupils occasionally spent too long colouring in the graphs at the expense of working with higher numbers or a wider and more challenging range of data.
- Staff provide a good level of verbal feedback to pupils about the quality of work they are producing. Teachers generally mark pupils' work conscientiously but targets for improvement are not widely displayed in books and not all pupils know what they need to improve.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is consistently good and at times, such as when moving around the school and when joining together, it is outstanding. For example, in a whole-school assembly pupils listened with clear attention and concentration. Pupils enjoyed singing and joined in with both control and enthusiasm resulting in high quality melodic performances.
- Pupils' behaviour in the playground is good and they know how to play safely together. Behaviour in the dining hall is also good and this results in a pleasant lunchtime experience when pupils happily chat together. Pupils enjoy additional activities such as the pantomime workshop and, even when quite excited, behave well. Pupils like taking on responsibilities including as the recently appointed sports leaders.
- All of the pupils spoken to during the inspection said they feel safe. They believe they are well looked after by adults in the school. For their age they have a good understanding of the different forms of bullying. They know that calling each other names is not acceptable and can explain what cyber bullying is.
- While a very small number of parents indicate they believe there is some misbehaviour and bullying in school, discussions with children, staff and governors, alongside school records indicate a very harmonious school community.
- While behaviour is good overall it is not outstanding because a small number of pupils do not

have strongly positive attitudes to their learning. Occasionally, some do not make much apparent effort to join in discussions, offer answers, or work really hard to produce their best work.

- Attendance is around the national average but scrutiny of absence data shows this is affected by holidays in term time. The school makes clear statements about this in line with government requirements and stresses the impact of absence on pupil progress.

The leadership and management is good

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher work effectively together and ensure the many pastoral strengths of the school have been maintained. The school has an accurate understanding of the quality of education provided. Senior leaders have worked hard to help the school move forward and adapt to the many changes in recent years.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning is helping teachers to raise their expectations of pupils, but there is still some inconsistency in the level of challenge provided. Subject leaders have an accurate view of provision in areas for which they hold responsibility. However, senior leaders do not always follow-up areas for improvement swiftly enough to make sure they have been addressed promptly. Decisions on pay rates are based on whether teachers meet appropriate targets and demonstrate measurable progress in their pupils' learning.
- The management of performance is linked to training which has been particularly successful in enabling teaching assistants to develop their effectiveness. The school has good links with local schools and the diocese. The local authority provides light-touch support for what is seen as a successful school. The school also works closely with other external groups to maintain a focus on continual improvement in teaching.
- All the parents and carers spoken to during the inspection were very pleased with the quality of care and education provided for their children. However, other information shows that a small number have concerns about leadership and organisation of the school. Several believe the school does not value their opinions sufficiently. Discussions with staff and governors indicate that some of these issues have not been raised with the school. For example, while some parents are concerned about changes in staffing, the governing body has taken appropriate steps to fill vacancies as soon as possible.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development extremely well. Pupils have numerous opportunities to learn about the lives and experiences of others, and involve themselves in supporting those less fortunate than themselves. The school provides an interesting range of subjects and extra activities which are appropriate to the ages and stages of development of the pupils.
- Following very recent action, procedures to safeguard pupils now meet current requirements. Staff ensure that pupils have equal access to activities and the school fosters excellent relationships and tackles any discrimination.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are highly supportive of the school and very much value its long-standing strengths. They work conscientiously to help manage school finances to provide a broad and balanced range of learning experiences for the pupils. They are well informed about school expenditure and are actively developing procedures to ensure that additional funding, including the pupil premium and sports premium funding, is used effectively and that the

impact of such expenditure can be measured. The governing body is informed about the quality of teaching and supports the headteacher in managing teachers' pay and performance, including tackling any underperformance. However some governors are not well informed about all aspects of school life at first hand. Several are dependent on staff for information and have not made best use of the data available, including about standards and progress, compared to other schools nationally. They are now keen to further develop their links with parents so that they are better informed should issues be raised.

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	124243
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	429048

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary Controlled
Age range of pupils	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	356
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jill Gollins
Headteacher	Tim Moule
Date of previous school inspection	17 March 2009
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