

St Nicolas CE Primary School

Boxhill Close, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, OX14 1HB

Inspection dates 19–20 November 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.

- Most pupils now achieve well throughout the school. There is a picture of improved, and now good, progress which starts in the Reception class. This is leading to higher standards.
- Teaching has improved from satisfactory to good since the last inspection. Teachers use their knowledge of what pupils already know to plan interesting and challenging learning activities and high quality extra support. This leads to pupils making good progress.
- Pupils know how to improve their work because of the high quality of teachers' feedback and marking.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school and know how to stay safe outside school. They are polite and courteous and their behaviour and attitudes help them to focus on their learning and make progress.
- Leadership and management have improved from satisfactory to good since the last inspection. There is now a clear focus for all leaders and governors on raising pupil achievement through appraisal, training and high quality evaluation activities.
- Pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness supports every aspect of their learning.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not yet consistently challenge all pupils in all lessons to promote outstanding progress.
- There are not yet enough opportunities for all pupils to engage in extended writing to fully support their progress.
- School leaders are not yet clear enough in setting urgent deadlines for improvement in achievement for all groups.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons in all classes and visited 25 lessons. The headteacher shared in the observation of six lessons.
- Inspectors held discussions with pupils, parents, teachers and the headteacher, representatives of the governing body, and a local authority officer. They also analysed responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). Information on the school’s website was also reviewed.
- Account was taken of 38 staff questionnaires returned to inspectors.
- Inspectors looked at records of pupils’ achievement and heard pupils read. They looked at pupils’ work, judgements made by leaders about the quality of teaching, and the training activities supporting development.
- Attendance was checked, along with safeguarding records, records of pupils’ behaviour, and the use of the pupil premium (additional funding provided by the government to support groups of pupils, including those known to be eligible to receive free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority) and the use of extra government funding for physical education.
- Plans for improvement were examined against the self-evaluation carried out by school leaders.

Inspection team

Lynne Bradbury, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Anna Majcher

Additional Inspector

Peter Thrussell

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Nicolas Primary School is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils eligible to be supported by the pupil premium is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and there are a few pupils from a wide variety of other groups.
- The school meets the government's floor targets which set minimum expectations for progress and attainment.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' achievement to become outstanding by:
 - making sure that all pupils have an appropriately high level of challenge across all lessons
 - increasing the opportunities for extended writing for all pupils.
- Increasing the effectiveness of leaders to raise achievement further by:
 - ensuring that targets set for staff are more rigorously and frequently monitored.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join the Reception classes with skills which are generally typical of their age group. Staff quickly get to know what the children can already do and plan exciting learning activities which help them to make good progress. The indoor and outdoor environments are organised well to create interest and enthusiasm in learning.
- Most pupils in Year 1 apply their good phonics learning (linking letters and the sounds they make) in their reading and writing. In the phonics screening in 2013 more pupils than those nationally achieved the expected standard.
- In 2013, pupils in Year 2 achieved levels broadly in line with those nationally.
- Pupils develop their reading confidently as they move through the school, and enjoy a broad range of reading material including Roald Dahl, Julia Donaldson and Michael Morpurgo. They show increasing understanding and enjoyment as they get older.
- In 2013, achievements were low at the end of Year 6. Very difficult staffing issues over the previous two years limited pupils' progress. In spite of the better progress made in their final year, they were not able to make up the ground they had lost.
- Current school results and the work in pupils' books show that pupils, particularly in Years 4, 5 and 6, have been making much more rapid progress over the last eighteen months and there are similar improvements for all groups of pupils, including the more able.
- Literacy, calculation and mathematical skills are developed well across all subjects. There were particularly high quality opportunities for pupils to undertake investigation and problem solving in the older age groups.
- Pupils use their 'steps to success' to guide their learning activities and, in some classes, they have the opportunity to match their work to success criteria to help them to measure their own learning. Most pupils know their learning targets and this focuses their learning.
- The pupil premium supports very high quality extra support for those who are eligible for the funding. This takes the form of one-to-one tuition, small group work, support for visits, clubs and school equipment including uniform. Tracking data in school show that this has been very successful in raising the achievement of these pupils.
- Those entitled to the funding in Year 6 in 2013 overtook the progress of their peers in school and nationally. Their attainment was two and a half terms behind their peers in mathematics, two terms behind in English spelling, punctuation and grammar, but they were a term ahead in reading and writing. These pupils in other year groups have closed the gaps in attainment with their peers.
- The progress of pupils who have special educational needs is improving because the quality of extra support addresses their needs effectively. There is a need to develop the challenge for their learning further within class lessons.
- The extra funding for physical education has been used to employ a specialist physical education teacher to train and develop other members of staff and to improve the opportunities for all pupils in sport. Pupils talk about their great enjoyment of physical education and demonstrate healthy attitudes.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good and there are examples of outstanding teaching in some classes.
- In the Reception classes, staff create warm and caring relationships with children and their parents so that children come to school happily and confidently. They plan learning which meets the needs of children and supports good progress.
- Teachers in all year groups have a good understanding of what their pupils already know, and plan new learning based upon this. For most pupils this is very effective in ensuring good

progress.

- Extensive training and development have led to improvements in teaching, which has moved from satisfactory to good, with some elements of outstanding teaching.
- In an example of outstanding teaching in mathematics, there was an excellent level of challenge for every pupil and a high level of independence from adults for all ability levels. Pupils supported and challenged each other's thinking as they worked on problem solving using apparatus to extend their thinking.
- Across all age groups, pupils are actively engaged in learning through speaking and listening, sharing ideas and assessing their own success. Where teaching is most effective this assessment uses success criteria to show what successful learning looks like.
- Most teachers use marking and feedback very effectively so that pupils know how to improve their work, and this is developing across all year groups. Where pupil progress is improving most rapidly, pupils are given the opportunity to follow this up quickly.
- The special educational needs coordinator is working with staff to ensure that groups and individuals with special educational needs are receiving good quality extra support outside lessons which is helping them to improve their progress.
- Teaching assistants are very skilled in delivering extra support outside classes, and most are used effectively across the year groups to support the progress of all pupils.
- The staff use rewards and sanctions well to ensure that pupils focus on their learning. They have established good relationships so that most pupils enjoy working hard.
- There are still some lessons where the level of challenge is not stretching all pupils (particularly lower ability pupils), and there are not enough opportunities for pupils to write longer pieces of work in the lower age groups.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to work are good and help pupils to make good progress. They have the ability to work in pairs or teams to solve problems or to undertake investigations independently of the teacher, and to support and challenge each other's thinking when they are given the opportunity.
- While there are a number of pupils with significant behavioural difficulties, these are managed well, and disruption in lessons is rare.
- Case studies show that pupils who experience behavioural difficulties are supported well so that they can continue to make progress.
- Outside lessons, pupils are polite and courteous and have a good understanding of how to stay safe. They show respect for each other and adults and they move around the school sensibly. They play happily and undertake many tasks to help the smooth running of the school.
- They understand the various forms that bullying can take, say that bullying is very rare in school, but say that staff deal with any problems very effectively. They understand safety issues around new technologies.
- The majority of parents and pupils say that behaviour is good in school because teachers manage this well through the many rewards offered.
- Adults in the Reception classes establish role models for behaviour and relationships which lead to pupils developing positive attitudes from an early age. This is built upon as the children move through the school.
- Attendance is above average and there are good systems for supporting or challenging those whose attendance falls below what may be expected. Punctuality issues have been successfully addressed through the breakfast club which operates every day.
- Pupils have great enthusiasm for the broad range of curriculum topics and after-school clubs offered.

The leadership and management are good

- Complex staffing problems limited the ability of leaders to make effective improvements in the school over a two-year period. Once these were resolved, leadership at all levels developed well so that there has been a very positive effect on pupils' achievement over the last eighteen months.
 - Many members of the governing body have been appointed in the last two years, and an extensive range of training has developed their ability to hold the staff to account for pupil achievement. They have close involvement with the life of the school and have a greater focus upon monitoring and making judgements which lead to improvement activities.
 - Very focused training and development for staff at all levels, based upon needs identified in pupils' results, have been effective in raising pupil achievement. However, leaders are not yet monitoring the targets set for staff frequently enough to ensure that achievement is more quickly improved.
 - The local authority gave good support for developing leadership within the school and these leaders have now shown their ability to continue to lead and challenge others. They use increasingly rigorous monitoring to inform action plans to constantly improve teaching and learning.
 - There is a clear understanding of the link between pupil achievement and salary progression, and more is expected of those on the upper pay scale.
 - The learning environment offers many aspects of support for learning. These include working walls developed as pupils learn, and these remind them of how they developed particular skills so that they can use them in other contexts. There are many vibrant celebrations of pupils' work.
 - The school has built strong relationships with the majority of parents and most express great confidence in the school.
 - The school's strong commitment to tackling discrimination and promoting equal opportunities is demonstrated in the improving achievement of most pupils.
 - The good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is seen within the wide range of experiences offered. During the inspection, pupils were observed taking up the opportunities offered by the prayer room, run by members of the local church. There is a great deal of evidence of the wide range of cultural experiences enjoyed by all pupils.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governors have shown commitment to raising achievement for all pupils by undertaking extensive training in order to develop their roles and make informed judgements about the work of the school. Governors ensure that all statutory duties, including safeguarding, are fulfilled effectively, and that all resources, including the school budget, staffing, the pupil premium and the extra funding for physical education, are used effectively to raise achievement. They have developed rigorous monitoring, and link pupil achievement data to staff salaries through appraisal. They establish well-focused development plans and opportunities for staff training based upon their extensive monitoring of teaching and learning.
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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	123166
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	426502

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	429
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rhonda Oliver
Headteacher	Richard Furniss
Date of previous school inspection	2–3 November 2011
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