

St Nicholas' CofE Middle School

Main Street, Pinvin, Pershore, WR10 2ER

Inspection dates 9–10 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
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:

- Pupils make slower progress in Year 5 than in Years 6 and 7, because the work teachers provide for this age group does not take sufficient account of what pupils can already do or have achieved.
- Progress in writing is slower than in mathematics and reading. Lost ground is not being made up quickly enough.
- Boys do not do as well as girls in reading and writing. Although the new 'learning journey' approach to teaching subjects is beginning to have a positive impact and the gap is closing more rapidly now, it is still too wide.
- Teachers do not use marking effectively to help pupils improve the standard of their work.
- Pupils are not challenged to achieve the very best they can. This is because teachers do not always stretch them through the work they provide in lessons.
- Leaders and managers do not check teachers' marking and feedback closely to make sure they have a positive impact on pupils' progress.
- Senior leaders do not ensure that teachers have the highest possible expectations of what all pupils can achieve, especially in Year 5.
- Since the last inspection, leaders and governors have not done enough to rapidly improve the quality of teaching or pupils' achievement, particularly in writing.

The school has the following strengths

- Behaviour is good. Pupils take pride in their work, their uniform and their environment, and treat one another with kindness and respect.
- The school is a very safe environment. Relationships between teachers and pupils are positive.
- Questioning is used skilfully to make pupils think harder.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 23 lessons, of which four were joint observations with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with two groups of pupils, members of the governing body and school staff, including middle and senior leaders. A telephone conversation took place with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 55 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and one letter from a parent.
- The inspectors observed the work of the school and looked at a number of documents, including records of governors' meetings, information about the management of staff performance, records relating to attendance, behaviour and checks on the quality of teaching, and documents relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered the 17 staff questionnaires received.

Inspection team

Simon Blackburn, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Helen Owen

Additional Inspector

Carol Deakin

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This middle school for pupils aged 9 to 12 years is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is above average, as is the proportion supported through school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium (extra government funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, looked after by the local authority or from service families) is below average.
- The vast majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds and the proportion of pupils identified as speaking English as an additional language is below the national average.
- Pupils take the Key Stage 2 tests during their time at the school and their results meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision on other sites.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, particularly in writing and in Year 5, by:
 - ensuring that teachers have a keener awareness of pupils' strengths and use this to set pupils hard enough work
 - using marking and feedback effectively to help pupils improve their work.
- Continue to implement the improvements to the curriculum to improve the achievement of boys by providing activities and learning experiences that inspire and challenge them at all levels.
- Improve the checks leaders and managers make on the work of the school, especially on:
 - the quality of teachers' marking and feedback
 - teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils **requires improvement**

- Pupils enter the school in Year 5 with standards that are broadly in line with national expectations for their age in reading and mathematics, and below those expected in writing. Their progress through the school is too variable. Pupils' progress in writing is slower than in reading and mathematics, and boys make less progress than girls in reading and writing.
- Pupils' progress in Year 5 is slower than in the other year groups because teachers' expectations of what they can achieve from when they join the school are too low. Pupils are not challenged enough in lessons. When setting work, teachers do not take enough account of what pupils have already achieved.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics and reading improves in Years 6 and 7 as they become more confident in their basic skills. They leave Year 7 with attainment that is generally at or above the expected level for their age group in these subjects. Attainment in writing lags behind and boys' attainment in writing is well below that of girls.
- Progress in other subjects varies because the quality of teaching is inconsistent within and across subjects. Pupils make good progress in some science and physical education lessons and in most of their cross-curricular themed lessons. This is because teachers plan activities that are interesting and challenging.
- By Year 7 pupils are confident readers. They read fluently and have many opportunities to read different kinds of writing across the school. Most pupils who read to inspectors had a good understanding of the text, but some were unable to interpret more sophisticated themes.
- The school's own information from assessments shows that more pupils are now exceeding nationally expected progress than previously was the case. This is because the school has made great efforts to reshape the way a large number of subjects are taught in order to make them more interesting and exciting, particularly for boys. For example, a study of the geographical environment of Mumbai and the challenges it faces involved pupils in using tablet computers to select appropriate data to illustrate their accounts.
- The resources made available from the pupil premium funding are being used to fund 10-week support projects or 'booster' groups in reading, writing and mathematics. This additional funding is also being used to provide additional help to pupils and their families through a learning and behaviour support worker. The Year 6 test results in 2013 show that eligible pupils were about two terms behind other pupils in English and mathematics. The school's own data show that gaps are narrowing in the current Years 6 and 7, and eligible pupils are progressing at least in line with other groups.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make progress that is broadly similar to other pupils. They are generally well supported with reading and mathematics by well-trained adults. This is not always the case in writing.
- The most able pupils make good progress in most lessons, but in a small number of lessons observed these pupils were not sufficiently challenged. Occasionally they sat and waited while others were helped to catch up, rather than being occupied productively on further tasks that could interest them and help them to practise and sharpen their skills.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching is not consistently good enough to secure good progress in all subjects and for all groups of pupils in the school. There is too much variability within subjects and year groups, resulting in different rates of progress.
- Where teaching is less successful, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low. As a result, pupils do not learn at a fast enough pace. This is the case in Year 5, where the work in pupils' books shows that they were not challenged when they first entered the school. This has not been sufficiently well addressed.
- Teachers do not always provide work that stretches pupils sufficiently. For example, teachers do not provide additional, harder tasks for the most able pupils, so they occasionally lose interest in the work.
- The use of marking is not effective across the school. Some work is not marked frequently enough to make sure pupils know how well they are doing. Teachers do not give pupils detailed feedback that effectively moves their learning on. Pupils' books show that some teachers fail to follow up on the extra work or other comments they make, so errors and misconceptions are repeated.
- Stronger elements of teaching include the way teachers ask questions and the relationships they have with their pupils. The learning atmosphere and interactions between pupils and staff are very positive. This leads to well-motivated pupils who are keen to ask questions and develop their own ideas. The most effective learning takes place when teachers use questions well to both judge the degree to which classes are progressing and to probe how well individual pupils understand the work.
- The curriculum has been organised so that pupils can practice their writing skills in other subjects. The 'igniter day' for the Year 6 'Hollywood vs Bollywood' learning journey involved pupils in doing their own research about Mumbai, food tasting of Indian cuisine and how a saree is worn, all of which involved opportunities for extended writing. This is beginning to have a positive impact on the quality of pupils' writing.
- Pupils' learning is particularly successful when they solve problems and develop their ideas in pairs and groups. This is the case in many mathematics lessons. In one Year 5 lesson, pupils worked very well to construct challenging problems for one another based on sequences of numbers.
- Teaching assistants work well with pupils who need extra help, including pupils with disabilities or other special educational needs. Inspectors observed lessons where the teacher and teaching assistant clearly planned together to ensure that all pupils could make good progress, but this was not always the case.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They have good attitudes to learning, take pride in their work and follow teachers' instructions quickly. In most lessons that inspectors observed, pupils' good behaviour enhanced learning and contributed to their progress.
- The reshaping of the curriculum has encouraged pupils show a lively curiosity about the things they are learning. They ask useful and sometimes challenging questions, and are keen to work

together to take their learning beyond what the teacher asks. This can be seen in homework, where they can choose activities from a range which allow them to build up credits. Many pupils choose very challenging tasks and some of the work seen by inspectors was of very high quality, including three-dimensional timelines and models of Anderson shelters.

- Pupils are proud of their school, take care of their environment and take an interest in its development. Pupils wear their uniform with pride and move around the school with purpose. Their attendance is above average and punctuality is good. Around the school, at lunchtime and in the playground, pupils are calm, orderly and kind to each other and respectful to adults.
- A clear behaviour policy is in place and adhered to by all. Positive behaviour and consistency are central themes, as are opportunities to reflect on behaviour and time to put things right before sanctions are imposed. In a few lessons teachers allow more noise and movement, but the good relationships between pupils and staff ensure that this is rarely allowed to disrupt learning.
- Parents strongly feel that behaviour is good, and pupils who spoke to inspectors in meetings and informally around the school agreed. Pupils say that bullying is very rare and that any incidents are dealt with effectively. They understand the different forms of bullying and have been taught how to keep themselves safe and look out for others.
- Pupils who sometimes have difficulty managing their own behaviour are particularly well supported by a variety of strategies established by pastoral staff. For example, an early morning 'nurture' group provides a calming start to the day. The success of these strategies can be seen in the very low level of exclusions recorded.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils feel happy and safe in school. They understand how to keep themselves safe as a result of a curriculum that includes teaching on e-safety and 'stranger danger'. Almost all parents who responded to the online Parent View survey agreed that their children were kept safe.
- All bullying and incident logs are well maintained. They are analysed for patterns to ensure that future problems can be reduced or eliminated.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Where teaching requires improvement the quality of marking and feedback and teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve, are not checked closely enough by senior leaders. As a result, the improvements in pupils' achievement in writing and boys' achievement in reading are not happening quickly enough.
- The headteacher's enthusiasm, drive and determination have contributed to the school's success in improving some areas of teaching. Better use of questioning in lessons provides teachers with a versatile tool to assess pupils' progress and check understanding. Effective tracking systems ensure that underachievement is being identified and extra help is being given where it is needed. As a result, there have been some improvements in pupils' writing over the last term.
- The headteacher, supported by the governing body, has restructured the senior leadership team to more closely support the improvement in the quality of teaching. In doing so he has taken difficult decisions and removed barriers to improvements in some areas of the school. The senior team hold regular pupil progress meetings with teachers to discuss the progress pupils are making and to check on the effectiveness of any additional support being provided to pupils. One pupil said that she really enjoyed going to her 'Mathematics Whizz' sessions and described

how they had helped her to improve.

- Staff who are responsible for year groups and subjects understand their roles and use effective procedures to check the progress of pupils. They observe lessons and take a lead in developing teaching by linking teachers who need support with good and outstanding practice within the school or in neighbouring schools.
- The headteacher's judgements of the quality of teaching are accurate but do not always take enough account of how well pupils are doing in the longer term. Action plans and self-evaluation documents provide an accurate picture of what the school does well and the priorities for future improvement.
- The 'learning journey' curriculum offers pupils rich learning experiences and provides strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It was devised to enhance pupils' love of learning, particularly for boys, and is beginning to have an impact on their engagement and progress. Each theme begins with an 'igniter day' and works up to a celebration day which shows what the pupils have achieved. The 'Escape and Evade' journey begins with map skills in the Forest of Dean and deals with historical themes of the Second World War and moral themes of the Holocaust.
- The school works hard to tackle discrimination and help all pupils to have an equal opportunity to succeed. The pupil premium and funding to help Year 7 pupils catch up if they have fallen behind are used wisely, and is beginning to have a positive effect on closing gaps in attainment.
- The primary school sports funding is used to employ a specialist higher level teaching assistant for physical education and dance training. Additional clubs are being provided for pupils at lunchtime and after school and teacher training is in place for teachers both in this school and in other local schools. As a result, participation rates in sport have increased and pupils' physical fitness has improved.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding are very strong. All statutory requirements are met.
- The local authority provides limited support to the school, by challenging its self-evaluation and checking that the appropriate priorities for action are in place and being monitored.

■ **The governance of the school:**

Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school because of the way they are involved in school development planning and self-evaluation. They take part in an evaluation day with all staff to determine what has gone well and what needs to improve. The headteacher then draws up priorities and actions which the governors amend, and then each governor takes responsibility for a strand of the plan and visits the school to monitor and evaluate its implementation. This knowledge helps the governors to manage the school budget well. Governors have a clear understanding of performance data and have commissioned the headteacher to construct a 'governors' data dashboard' so they can see how different groups are doing, including those pupils eligible for pupil premium funding. They understand about how teaching is improving and how the performance management system is being used to achieve this. Through these structures, the governors are developing their use of independent evidence to challenge leaders about the pace of change in the school.

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	116861
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	433309

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

Type of school	Middle deemed primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	9–12
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	316
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gary Robinson
Headteacher	David Snell
Date of previous school inspection	24 March 2011
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