

St Nicolas' Church of England Combined School

Rectory Road, Taplow, Maidenhead, SL6 0ET

Inspection dates 27–28 February 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	Select
	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.

- The Early Years Foundation Stage prepares children well for their future learning. As a result, they are happy, keen to learn and increasingly inquisitive.
- All groups of pupils achieve well and make good progress. By the time they leave they reach standards that are above average, particularly in mathematics and reading.
- Teaching is consistently good. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and ensure that they learn quickly. They ensure that work is at the right level for pupils of all abilities.
- The executive headteacher's, staff and governors' drive to improve teaching and attainment is resulting in high standards.
- Pupils' behaviour is consistently good in and around the school. They are keen to learn and have impeccable manners.
- The school makes sure that pupils are safe and secure. As a result, pupils say they feel safe. Parents agree that their children are safe and happy at school.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is well developed.
- Governors are very supportive. They ask senior leaders challenging questions to hold them accountable for the improvement of the school.

This is not yet an outstanding school because

- Attainment is not as high in writing as it is in reading and mathematics, particularly for the more able.
- English leaders do not focus sufficiently well on developing teachers' skill throughout Key Stages 1 and 2 in helping pupils to achieve their potential in writing.
- Pupils do not write often enough or at length or practise writing skills in different subjects. Some of their handwriting and presentation is untidy.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed parts of 15 lessons in seven classes. Five of these were seen jointly with the executive headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Discussions were held with the executive headteacher, staff, governors, parents and pupils.
- Inspectors heard a number of individual pupils read.
- The inspectors took account of the views of 96 parents who responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View). The views expressed by 14 staff who returned a questionnaire were also considered.
- A range of information supplied by the school was scrutinised, including the school's information about how well pupils are doing, planning documents, checks on the quality of teaching, the school development plan, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and safeguarding documents.
- The executive headteacher is also the headteacher of Eton Wick First School and he spends half the week in each school. Each school has its own governing body.

Inspection team

David Harris, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Judith Tinsley

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-size primary school with one class in each year group.
- St Nicolas' Church of England Combined School converted to become an academy school on 1 May 2012. When its predecessor school, of the same name, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good.
- The large majority of pupils are White British. Other pupils represent a wide range of different backgrounds. There are very few pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported at school action, at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for support through the pupil premium funding (additional government funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, in the care of the local authority or with a parent in the armed forces) is significantly below average.
- The executive headteacher was appointed in April 2013 to provide leadership support to the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, so that it is outstanding, especially in writing, in order to raise standards by:
 - ensuring teaching assistants make the most of every opportunity to support pupils throughout the lesson
 - helping class teachers to challenge pupils of all abilities to think at a deeper level about their work
 - ensuring the English leader focuses on developing teachers' skills in Key Stages 1 and 2 so the proportion of pupils reaching higher levels in writing increases
 - expecting higher standards in handwriting and presentation.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils achieve well to reach levels of attainment that are above average in mathematics, reading and writing by the end of Year 6. Their progress and attainment are generally stronger in reading and mathematics than in writing, especially for the more able.
- Children enter Reception with knowledge and skills that are typical for their age. They have good attitudes to learning and make good progress in this setting, entering Year 1 with higher than average levels in their personal development and reading and mathematics skills.
- The school has worked to improve the teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) and this has started to develop pupils' knowledge more securely.
- Pupils continue their good progress through Year 1 and Year 2. Teachers plan interesting links between subjects and encourage pupils to talk with each other to engage them in their learning and consolidate their understanding. For example, pupils posed many interesting questions when discussing rainforests in Year 1.
- By the time pupils leave Year 6 they are ready for their next phase of education. They attain well in reading and mathematics and the most able pupils perform particularly well. In writing, attainment is also above average but progress for the more able pupils is not as fast as it is in reading. Some handwriting and presentation is careless and hurried and is not as neat as it could be.
- Good teaching and planning enable pupils to enjoy sporting activities within daily lessons, at playtimes and in after-school clubs. These help stretch pupils' physical levels.
- The very few pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals make similar progress to other pupils in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs make progress in line with other pupils because they are well supported by the school. Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is in line with other pupils.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is typically good and some is outstanding. Teachers plan exciting and well-resourced lessons. Bright colourful displays are used effectively to help the pupils challenge themselves. The use of targets enables the pupils to discuss their learning and what they need to do to improve their work. During a Year 6 science lesson, for example, pupils used their English targets to help plan the layout of their experiment.
- Teaching and learning over time are good due to careful checking and support. Joint observations with school leaders illustrated that their judgements are accurate and feedback to teachers is focused on ways in which they can improve their methods.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, teachers plan exciting and fun lessons based on the children's interests. Teachers regularly check children's progress to stimulate and engage them. As a result the children are able to further develop their knowledge and skills through play and in more formal adult-led sessions.
- Pupils have regular opportunities to share their ideas with one another and develop their knowledge and understanding. They listen to each other thoughtfully and the teachers use follow-up questions skilfully to extend understanding. Pupils in a Year 2 letters and sounds lesson, for example, were asked to develop their understanding of sounds by creating nonsense words in small groups. This enabled them to develop their knowledge and understanding of key spellings.
- Pupils apply themselves well to their work because teachers do their best to make lessons interesting. In a lesson in Year 4, where the teaching was outstanding, for example, pupils were

applying their mathematical knowledge to create 'magic numbers'. Pupils were able to discuss their learning and deepen their thinking so they could become 'mathematical magicians'.

- Teaching is not yet outstanding because some teaching still requires improvement. The sharing of what staff do best in the classroom, in order to raise the quality of teaching to the very highest levels, is at an early stage of development within the school.
- In a small number of lessons, teachers do not ask questions and provide activities that really challenge pupils of all abilities to deepen their understanding. This is especially the case for more able pupils in writing.
- Some teaching assistants provide very effective support for pupils. They explain carefully and are patient with pupils who need more time to understand new ideas. However, sometimes they do not involve themselves fully in the teaching and learning throughout the lesson, particularly when the teacher is explaining, and so opportunities to help pupils to make as much progress as possible are missed.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils have good attitudes to learning. They are happy and polite and demonstrate good manners in a range of situations.
- The school fosters good relationships well. All staff have good working relationships with the pupils and offer them plenty of praise and encouragement, as noted by all the parents spoken to by inspectors during the inspection.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and teachers use these positive attitudes to help drive progress within their learning. On very rare occasions, where the teacher has not pitched the learning at just the right level for some pupils, a few lose concentration and become chatty or fidgety, which gets in the way of their learning.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well, particularly through assemblies and religious education lessons. Pupils have good opportunities to learn about world religions, other cultures and to reflect on issues around conflicts and injustice.
- All staff adhere to the school's guidelines on promoting positive behaviour. Pupils who have particular difficulties in interacting socially or in behaving well are extremely well supported so they respect the school's expectations. Pupils describe their teachers as fun and caring so they feel safe. One pupil said, 'You know the teachers will always look after us.'
- Attendance and punctuality are above average. The school monitors attendance and promotes the need for high attendance successfully to parents.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils feel safe and say there is very little bullying. They feel well supported at school and are confident that problems get sorted out quickly and that the adults are 'very approachable'. This view is supported by parents who completed the online questionnaire, where 96% agreed that their children feel safe at school.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of fire, e-safety and road safety and have a clear love of school.

The leadership and management are good

- Leadership and management are good because school leaders have established clear systems that have led to improvements. The executive headteacher leads by example and school leaders at all levels have a clear ambition and drive for the school to do the very best for pupils. The executive headteacher has led improvement within the Early Years Foundation Stage, and,

as a result, it is now a strength of the school. Middle leaders are playing their part in improving teaching and learning. However, initiatives in English to improve progress for the most able pupils in writing have not yet resulted in a greater proportion of pupils reach higher levels in writing across all other subjects.

- The school's self-evaluation shows that leaders have accurately identified the areas requiring development. Staff are overwhelmingly supportive of the drive for improvement.
- The new system for tracking pupils' achievement is providing teachers with the information they need to make sure that pupils are given the right level of challenge. There are no significant gaps in the achievement of any groups of pupils, which means the school is promoting equality of opportunity and ensuring there is no discrimination.
- The curriculum develops pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Visits, including residential trips, and the opportunity to learn several musical instruments enrich the topics taught effectively. The curriculum builds on the school's close links with the community and the church plays a very significant role in the faith and confidence parents have in the school.
- Reading is a strength of the school and school leaders have developed guided reading texts to ensure that the more able are challenged; as a result progress is rapid.
- The spending of the pupil premium funding has been well planned and used to target the progress of eligible pupils. The school makes good use of the new sports development funding to improve teachers' skills and support pupils' sporting and other achievements. This has led to a higher participation rate in club and team activities.
- While some parents have concerns about how the school is led and managed overall, the inspection team found that the executive headteacher has a real drive and commitment to the pupils and the school. A few other parents expressed the view that the executive headteacher was 'friendly, approachable and really listened to any concerns raised'.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. All members of staff are well trained and have been checked for suitability for working in school.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors are kept well informed about the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors support the school well and are actively involved in guiding long-term development, aided by attending wide-ranging training. The governing body has played an active role in driving improvements within the school, because it has 'the right people in the right roles'. The new style executive headteacher's report to governors is structured in a similar way to their self-evaluation and is extremely detailed, allowing governors to ask probing questions. They are well informed about the quality of teaching and pupils' attainment in relation to the national picture. They have a good understanding of the management of teachers' performance and the implementation of the national Teachers' Standards and how they affect pay rises and promotion. Systems for monitoring the school's budget are very strong, including finding out how the pupil premium is being spent and whether it is making enough of a difference to pupils' achievement. They make sure that all statutory requirements are met, including safeguarding pupils and in ensuring that all pupils have equality of opportunity.

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	138121
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	426636

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	207
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Matthew Bennett
Headteacher	Robert Harris
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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