

St Nicholas Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Station Road, Child Okeford, Blandford Forum, DT11 8EL

Inspection dates 1-2 May 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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 make good progress and achieve well throughout the school.
- By the end of Year 6 standards are high, and an above-average proportion of pupils attain the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching is typically good. There is some outstanding teaching, for example in the Reception Class and Key Stage 2.
- The school provides good support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, enabling them to make good progress from their different starting points.
- Marking is thorough and pupils understand what they need to do to improve their work.
- Pupils are polite and courteous. Behaviour around the school is good and pupils have positive attitudes to learning.
- The headteacher is a highly effective leader who works well with staff, parents and governors to maintain high standards.
- The governors are supportive and knowledgeable. They accurately prioritise what the school needs to do to improve further.
- The vast majority of parents and carers are very positive about the school, and the education given to their children.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Too few pupils in Key Stage 1 attain the higher levels in national assessments for writing and mathematics because the more able pupils are not always given work that stretches their abilities.
- The teaching of phonics (the linking of letters and sounds) is not consistently good.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out by one inspector who was in school for two days. She observed ten lessons or parts of lessons, three of which were joint observations with the headteacher. The inspector listened to pupils read and examined work in their books.
- The inspector met with pupils and talked to them about their work, and behaviour and safety. She observed play times and lunchtimes and pupils' movement around the school. She undertook a series of short visits to different areas of the school to find out about the different activities that take place at St Nicholas School.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders, governors and a representative from the local authority.
- Documents covering safeguarding, the performance management of staff, records of behaviour and safety and checks on pupils' attainment and progress were reviewed.
- The inspector took account of 69 responses from parents and carers who completed the on line questionnaire (Parent View) and 17 questionnaires from staff. She also spoke to parents and carers informally during the inspection.

Inspection team

Janet Maul, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Nicholas is smaller than the average-sized primary school. Pupils are taught in six classes. Three of these have mixed year groups.
- Since the last inspection the governing body has appointed a new headteacher who has been in post for just over a year.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs who are supported through school action is similar to the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational need is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils receiving extra support from the pupil premium funding (additional funding for pupils in the care of the local authority, for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or for pupils whose parents are in the armed forces) is low.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage and there are very few pupils who do not have English as their first language.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the most able pupils in Key Stage 1 attain the highest levels in both writing and mathematics by:
 - making sure that all teachers in Key Stage 1 set work at a challenging enough level
 - staff and leaders working effectively together to plan the next steps in learning for the most able pupils in Key Stage 1.
- Ensure that the quality of phonics teaching is high throughout the Reception class and Key Stage 1 by:
 - identifying a member of the leadership team who will take responsibility for co-ordinating the teaching of phonics and checking progress, who will report regularly to the headteacher, and through her to the governing body.
 - learning from local schools that have outstanding practice.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Children start school in Reception Class with skills and knowledge typical for their age. They make good progress and enter Year 1 well prepared for learning and with skills ahead of those found nationally.
- The most recent check on phonic skills showed a dip in the number of pupils attaining the expected standard at the end of Year 1. Most pupils have now caught up and are making good progress, however the teaching of phonics varies in quality and this slows the progress of a few pupils.
- At the end of Key Stage 1 pupils achieve standards slightly above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. However while more pupils achieve the highest levels for reading, fewer achieve the highest levels in writing and mathematics.
- Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 2. From their different starting points the proportions of pupils making expected progress is high compared to national figures for reading, writing and mathematics. A high proportion of pupils also make better than expected progress for reading and writing.
- For the last three years pupils leaving the school at the end of Year 6 have reached high standards in the national tests in mathematics, reading and writing. In 2013 pupils also reached a high standard in the new English grammar, punctuation and spelling test.
Throughout the school, the enjoyment of reading is promoted extremely well, as shown by pupils' good progress and the high levels attained in the standardised tests at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium make progress at a similar rate to other pupils in the school; however, they remain one term behind in reading and one year behind in writing and mathematics. Support for this group of pupils is good and includes additional individual tuition and opportunities to work in small groups. Nearly half of the pupils eligible for the pupil premium also have special educational needs. In 2013 only a very small number of pupils who took the Key Stage 2 tests were eligible for the pupil premium.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are given good support and make progress at a similar rate to other pupils.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Good and sometimes outstanding teaching in most subjects, including English and mathematics, results in most pupils making at least good progress and achieving well.
- In most lessons teachers have high expectations, plan interesting activities and use questioning skilfully to move learning forward. This results in pupils being highly engaged in their learning.
- Teachers assess pupils' work regularly and their progress is carefully checked. If a dip in performance is identified, plans are formulated to improve progress.
- Marking is a strength of the school, with teachers giving positive written guidance to pupils on how to improve their work, and pupils having time to respond. This dialogue in pupils' books is proving to be a powerful learning tool that is appreciated by pupils
- Teachers create a positive climate for learning in their lessons, which enables pupils to settle quickly to their work and concentrate well.
- In Key Stage 2 a high level of challenge was seen in the work set for pupils. However, this was not consistent across the school and not all teachers have high enough expectations of what their most able pupils can achieve.
- Homework is set and marked regularly, and parents and pupils consider the quantity and type of work to be about right.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs receive good support that enables

them to take a full part in lessons alongside other pupils.

- The vast majority of parents and carers who responded to Parent View agree that teaching is good.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. This has a positive impact on the progress pupils make and the standards they achieve. Good behaviour starts in the Reception class where children play and learn purposefully together and behave well because the routines are clear and staff expectations are high.
- All adults in school set a good example of polite and friendly behaviour, with the result that pupils are well-mannered and respectful to each other and the atmosphere in school is calm and positive.
- Lunchtime and playtimes are safe and enjoyable for pupils and there is a good level of supervision. Pupils appreciate the system of peer mediation where the older pupils help the younger ones to sort out playground problems.
- Pupils respond well to the support and guidance given by adults. They are keen to talk about their work and show pride in their learning.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils report that they feel safe and parents and staff agree that pupils are kept safe and are well looked after.
- The schools arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements. All adults are checked to ensure that they are suitable to work in school, and staff receive regular child protection training.
- The school has systems in place for recording behavioural, bullying or racist incidents or concerns. Pupils understand about the different types of bullying, and they expressed confidence that staff would quickly deal with any incidents.
- Attendance is good because pupils enjoy coming to school and want to attend, and parents and carers value the work of the school. In the case of unexplained or persistent absences the school works closely with the pupil's family.
- There have been no exclusions in recent years.
- Pupils spoke with knowledge and enthusiasm about the different aspects of keeping safe. This demonstrates that keeping pupils safe has a high priority in the school.
- Site safety is regularly monitored by the deputy headteacher who undertakes a weekly health and safety walk around the building and grounds.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is well supported by leaders at all levels and the governing body. She has high expectations which she shares with the school community.
- The headteacher and class teachers closely track and check on pupils' progress and quickly intervene if progress slows.
- The headteacher and leadership team have identified the areas that require improvement, and have started to implement plans to raise standards.
- The management of teachers' performance is conducted rigorously and the results are used to set targets and inform teachers' professional development training. Pay and performance are closely linked.
- Subject co-ordinators and all leaders are effective in their roles. They are knowledgeable about their areas of responsibility, and play a part in checking the quality of teaching and planning, and delivering staff training in their areas of expertise.
- Schools have recently been awarded additional money from the government to fund sports provision. This is used effectively at St Nicholas school, and a member of the school staff is

leading the local partnership of schools in sharing expertise and organising joint activities. Pupils spoke highly of the provision and the quality of physical education in school where they have the opportunity to take part in many different sports. Pupils understand what factors constitute a healthy lifestyle.

- The headteacher has been well supported in her new role by the local authority who have arranged support from a successful local headteacher. The advice and assistance has been greatly appreciated by the St Nicholas school leadership team.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and pupils enjoy learning through work across a variety of subjects. Pupils from Years 5 and 6 spoke enthusiastically about their study of the human body, which they believe helps them to live a healthier life. The school is currently planning for the implementation of the new National Curriculum
- The school environment is lively and welcoming. Displays are of a high standard and reflect the breadth of learning that takes place across the school. One lively display was of 'Jungle Rock' a musical play that had recently been performed by pupils from Years 3 and 4.
- The school plans thoroughly for pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development, and this is integrated into the wider curriculum. The school takes every opportunity to learn about different cultures and currently has a link with a school in India, which has enabled pupils to appreciate life in a culture very different from their own.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The school's governors are enthusiastic about the school and committed to its success. They are knowledgeable about how well the school is performing compared to other schools nationally, and are aware of the school's relative strengths and weaknesses. The governors work closely with the headteacher to plan how to improve the school and raise standards still further. Governors know what the quality of teaching is like and are fully aware of their responsibilities regarding staff pay and the school's systems for setting performance management targets. They manage the headteacher's performance effectively and offer both support and challenge. Finances are well managed. Governors monitor the progress of pupils eligible for the pupil premium and ascertain that the money is spent wisely and that it is having a positive impact on pupils' progress. All governors attend training regularly, and designated governors have had additional training for special educational needs, safeguarding and safer recruitment.

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	113796
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	439569

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	148
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Elizabeth Sims
Headteacher	Mrs Tracy Maley
Date of previous school inspection	12 May 2009
Telephone number	01258860581
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