

St Nicholas Church of England Primary School

Ash Walk, Henstridge, Somerset, BA8 0QD

Inspection dates

9–10 December 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Progress has not been good enough over the last two years. This has resulted in overall standards of attainment in the Year 2 and 6 national tests being below average
- In the past, the quality of teaching has been too variable in some year groups, particularly in Years 1 and 2.
- Recently there have been some temporary changes to the leadership of the school. This has had an adverse impact upon the progress and attainment of the pupils.
- At the end of Year 2, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and boys is lower than the national average for reading, writing and mathematics.
- Although attendance for the current academic year has improved significantly, it has not been consistently so in recent years..
- The middle and subject leaders are relatively new to their posts. They have not fully made an impact on the outcomes for the pupils.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher, supported by the governors, is taking steps to ensure that all areas of recent underperformance are now being addressed.
- The proportion of good and better teaching is increasing. Inadequate teaching has been eliminated.
- The progress of pupils in the current academic year is good and many pupils are making faster progress than previously in all subjects.
- Children in the early years are taught well and make good progress.
- Pupils' personal development and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding are good.
- The governors are committed to supporting and challenging the school.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They feel safe and happy at St Nicholas.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching in all classes. He observed 10 lessons, of which four were joint observations with the headteacher. He also attended two whole school assemblies. The inspector observed the pupils' behaviour in lessons, around the school and on the playground. The work that pupils are doing in their books was also scrutinised.
- Discussions were held with pupils, members of staff, and the special educational needs coordinator. The inspector also met with the Chair of the Governing Body and five other governors.
- A telephone call took place with the school's improvement partner.
- The inspector looked at a number of documents including its use of the primary sport and the pupil premium funding. Arrangements for keeping pupils safe across the school were also looked at.
- The views of parents were taken into account by looking at responses to the most recent school questionnaire and the 15 responses to the online Parent View survey. The inspector also met parents at the beginning and end of the school day.
- Staff views were considered by analysing the 16 questionnaires completed by staff and through discussions held with staff during the inspection.

Inspection team

Mark Anderson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Nicholas is a smaller-than-average-sized primary school.
- All pupils come from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils supported by pupil premium funding (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority) is well above the national average. Approximately one in three pupils is eligible for the pupil premium funding.
- The proportion of pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs is above the national average.
- The headteacher returned to post in April 2014, taking over from the interim headteacher.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum standards for pupils' progress and attainment in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- Children start in Reception on a half-day basis. They convert to full time in their second term at St Nicholas.
- The school does not send any pupils to be educated off site or in alternative provisions.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that all pupils make good progress and attain high levels of attainment, by making sure that:
 - expectations of what pupils can achieve are always high enough
 - the work set is always at the right level so that pupils are consistently challenged to make the best possible progress and attain the highest standards
 - disadvantaged pupils make the same rate of progress and achieve as well as other pupils at the end of Key Stage 1
 - consistency in the quality of teaching is sustained through regular evaluation of classroom practice, scrutiny of pupils' work and appropriate professional development for staff.
- Improve the effectiveness of the leadership and management by:
 - developing the roles of middle and subject leaders in checking the impact of school developments on pupils' progress, and the quality of what is taught within their subject areas
 - ensure that governors fully challenge the school's leadership regarding the progress of groups and individual pupils.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

require improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because in the last two years rates of progress and standards of attainment have declined and dropped below national figures.
- Following the return of the headteacher, the staffing structure and leadership team have been reorganised. Previous underperformance has been addressed. High expectations of the quality of teaching and pupils' performance have been restored.
- Some middle and subject leaders are relatively new to their posts and have not yet had the opportunity to fully impact upon learning outcomes. However, the new leadership team shows sound capacity to secure ongoing improvement for St Nicholas. This is because of the effective way in which the leadership has quickly begun to address areas of weakness in classroom practice.
- The headteacher has established a range of policies, including marking and presentation and an updated behaviour policy. These initiatives are beginning to raise standards across the school.
- Teachers are now held to account by the school's leadership for their pupils' achievement. Arrangements to monitor their performance are effective in both supporting and challenging staff well.
- The pupil premium funding is used to good effect. It has been successful in ensuring that there are no gaps in the Year 6 tests between disadvantaged pupils and others. However, there was a gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers in 2014 in the end of Year 2 tests..
- The school is making good use of the primary sport funding. The funding provides for an external sports coach, swimming for all pupils, and new clubs, including netball, dance and Key Stages 1 and 2 football. More pupils are taking part in sports clubs and activities than before.
- The school's 'Successometer' provides a whole school focus which the pupils enjoy and to which they commit. The current focus is 'to work hard and concentrate'. The current theme is effectively reinforced by the messages delivered in two weekly collective worship assemblies. These are led by the headteacher and a visiting member of the local clergy.
- The curriculum at St Nicholas offers many different topics, learning activities and experiences. These include weekly environmental sessions in the Learning Garden and the recent Africa Art Week. In addition, there are regular trips such as the recent visit to the Spy exhibition at the Imperial War Museum in London. This breadth of experience ensures that the children gain good spiritual, moral, social and and cultural understanding and are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The school has received consistent support from the local authority. It has begun to foster good links with a support partner school, Preston Church of England Primary School.
- The allocation of the pupil premium funding has been reviewed and is now carefully matched to the individual needs of pupils.
- Parents appreciate what the school offers their children and are supportive. The Home-School agreement clearly sets out expectations. Termly individual parent 'conferences' and the weekly Book Look day ensure parents play a supportive role in their children's education.
- St Nicholas is committed to ensuring that every pupil is valued. There is no discrimination and each individual has an equal opportunity to learn and develop their full potential.
- Safeguarding procedures are robust and meet statutory government requirements. Clear systems are in place to closely check on pupils' attendance.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors know St Nicholas well and share a clear strategic vision for the school with the headteacher. This is based on a shared understanding of its strengths and areas in need of improvement. Governors are regular visitors to the school and have discussions with staff, pupils and parents to extend their understanding of how the school functions on a day-to-day basis. The recent staff/governor conference was successful in establishing a closer working relationship. Governors have a good understanding of how the school performs in comparison with other local schools and nationally. They do not yet use information on pupils' progress and achievement effectively enough to challenge the headteacher fully about how well teachers' performance is helping individuals and groups of pupils progress. Governors have a fair understanding of how performance management procedures are linked to promotion and pay. Governors have a reasonable knowledge of the impact and allocation of pupil premium funding and how the primary sport money has expanded sporting opportunities and resources. Working with the school's business manager, governors manage the finances well. They make sure that St Nicholas meets all its statutory duties, including those related to safeguarding.

The behaviour and safety of pupils**are good****Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are friendly and polite.
- The school's values, such as respect and cooperation, contribute to the positive attitudes pupils have. Pupils are proud of St Nicholas and speak highly of their school.
- Pupils understand and adhere to St Nicholas' behaviour code. Pupils say there is little bullying and if there are any problems they are sorted out quickly and fairly.
- Relationships between the pupils and their teachers are a strength of the school. Pupils are keen to learn and give of their best. Pupils' behaviour in the classroom is almost always positive. Only rarely do some pupils lose concentration.
- Pupils understand established classroom routines and respond promptly when teachers ask for their attention, so that time is not wasted.
- Historically, attendance has been below the national average. However, the school has put effective measures in place to reduce absenteeism. Attendance is above the national average for the current academic year.
- Pupils are keen to take on responsibilities, such as house captains, and be fully involved in the life of the school.
- The school places a strong emphasis on pupils' moral and social development. The pupils are provided with regular opportunities to reflect on moral and social issues in assemblies and lessons, and do so thoughtfully.
- Good behaviour and achievement are rewarded in many ways. These include the award of Kindness Tree leaves and gaining a place at the headteacher's Party in the Park every half term.
- Staff follow school procedures and policies closely to prevent any form of discrimination.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- The curriculum supports them well in learning how to stay safe in a wide range of situations. Pupils have a good understanding of e-safety, including how to avoid unsafe websites.
- Pupils understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle. In a Key Stage 2 lesson, pupils were observed learning how to keep fit and healthy throughout the life cycle from birth to old age.
- Procedures to provide for child protection issues are effective and are reviewed regularly by the school's leadership. Risk assessments, both on the school site and for visits, are accurately completed and checked.
- The headteacher and governors ensure that the school premises are safe.
- Almost every parent who responded to the Parent View questionnaire considers that their children are safe and happy at school. Evidence collected during the inspection supports this view.
- Parents told the inspector that the school is very supportive and the headteacher responds well to any issues raised. There is an open door policy for parents. Parents value the opportunity to attend the weekly celebration assemblies.

The quality of teaching**requires improvement**

- Teaching requires improvement because, until recently, it has not been consistently good enough to ensure that all groups of pupils make good progress from their starting points. In the last two years, pupils have not reached the highest levels of which they are capable because teaching has not been good enough.
- Teachers have not always had high enough expectations of pupils and the presentation of their work. There has been some inconsistency in the quality of work provided for pupils. Sometimes, it has been too hard or too easy. These weaknesses have resulted in lower standards of attainment in national tests than expected.
- The quality of teaching has seen improvements, with a restructuring of the staff since the return of the headteacher. The high expectations for the quality of practice in the classroom that were in place previously have been restored and standards are improving.
- Improvements in tracking pupils' progress have led to better half-termly monitoring of all individuals and groups. Teachers are becoming more effective in recognising where rapid progress can be supported through additional challenge. They are also aware of when to provide extra support to those who may find learning more difficult.
- Appropriate support is put in place to help any pupil identified as being at risk of underachieving. Pupil

premium funding is now deployed effectively to provide additional support in reading, writing and mathematics.

- Support staff are well deployed across the school. They are effective because of the investment in their training and the time devoted to planning with the class teachers. They make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning.
- In the summer term the headteacher restored the school's marking and presentation policies. Books are now marked regularly and provide concise and detailed feedback to pupils. Pupils have a clear understanding of their learning targets.
- In the early years, good use is made of the indoor and outdoor areas and resources to develop children's skills. Adults make use of opportunities to extend children's language and numeracy skills. They regularly encourage children to talk about the tasks they are involved in.
- There is an effective focus on teaching pupils to read throughout the school.
- Staff ensure that parents are kept well informed regarding their children's progress. This includes a weekly Book Look day, when parents are invited into school to look at their children's work.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupil achievement requires improvement because attainment is not consistently good over time. Although current pupils show that achievement is improving because previous underachievement is being addressed, national tests in 2013 and 2014 at the end of Year 6 in reading and writing were below average. Test results for mathematics were below average in 2013 but improved to slightly above average in 2014.
- Standards at the end of Year 2 were below the national average, Reading was a particular weakness. In the past progress in Years 1 and 2 has been too variable and this has reflected an inconsistency in the quality of teaching. This is now being addressed by the school's leadership.
- The school has historically achieved standards above the national average in the Year 1 phonic screening check. However, in 2014, the results fell below the national average. Strategies for improving this are now in place.
- Disadvantaged pupils outperformed other pupils nationally in all subjects in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 2. However, at the end of Year 2, disadvantaged pupils' rates of progress were slower and attainment was noticeably lower than national figures and the attainment of their peers.
- Pupils join St Nicholas with skills, knowledge and understanding that are broadly typical for their age, although a significant number are weaker in their language and communication skills. Children make good progress in Reception.
- With improving teaching, the more able pupils are beginning to make faster progress. However, there are occasions in lessons when the work set is not sufficiently demanding to extend the learning of the more able. In 2014, the proportions of Year 6 pupils who attained the higher levels were below average in mathematics and in grammar, punctuation and spelling. However the proportion who achieved Level 5 in reading was above the national average.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs varies. Some make good progress as a result of effective support and attain levels in line with national averages.

The early years provision

is good

- Children make good progress and achieve well in their Reception Year as a result of good teaching. They start in the early years provision with skills and knowledge that are broadly typical for their age.
- There are well-established routines and effective procedures for ensuring their transition from home or pre-school settings is a smooth one. As a result, children settle in quickly and behave well. They clearly enjoy the wide range of activities planned for them, and play well together.
- The early years provision is led and managed well. The deputy headteacher, who leads the early years, has an accurate view of how well the children are doing and what needs to be improved further.
- The staff work well together to ensure all children are able to make good progress. They monitor individual progress closely and use this information to plan appropriate next steps for children's learning. They make use of opportunities to engage children in conversation and to extend their learning.
- Activities are planned well and are designed to interest and encourage children to take the initiative, which helps them develop their skills. Activities are purposeful, change regularly and reflect themes in teaching

and children's interests.

- Children clearly enjoy their learning and are absorbed in activities. The outdoor area is spacious and used well. It provides lots of opportunities which excite the children to explore and investigate. The children do this with much energy and enthusiasm. They are well prepared to move up to Year 1.
- Good partnerships with parents are established. An 'open door' policy encourages parents to play an active role in their children's education.
- Careful attention is paid to ensure staff are up to date with the latest safeguarding training and guidance.

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	123760
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	443901
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	100
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Norman Symcox
Headteacher	Alison Shearer
Date of previous school inspection	24–25 March 2011
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