

St Nicholas Church of England Primary School

Priory Road, Kenilworth, CV8 2PE

Inspection dates 12–13 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils show pride in their school and positive attitudes to learning. They enjoy lessons and get along well with their classmates.
- Pupils feel safe and well cared for. Their attendance is above the national average.
- In the early years, children benefit from outstanding teaching in a well-planned and richly stimulating environment. They make outstanding progress in all areas of learning.
- Leaders know their school well and where more work needs to be done. They have ensured that the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement continue to improve.
- The governors are knowledgeable and well informed and provide a good balance of support and challenge.
- Most pupils of all abilities make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics throughout the school. The quality of teaching is consistently good.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. They have strong relationships with pupils and manage their classes well. Pupils behave sensibly and take a full part in activities. Teachers mark pupils' work in detail and provide clear advice on how improvements could be made.
- Pupils benefit from a broad range of subjects. Exciting trips, a good range of clubs and interesting visitors to the school enhance pupils' experiences further.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. The school organises activities that help pupils learn about British values and prepares them well for life in a modern British society.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Subject leaders are not involved closely enough in analysing performance information and subsequently planning strategies for raising standards in their areas of responsibility.
- Pupils' achievement in mathematics and writing is not quite as good as in reading. Occasionally pupils are not fully challenged in mathematics, or helped to extend their written work.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors, together with senior school leaders, observed pupils of all ages engaged in a range of activities in different subjects. They looked at pupils' written work in all years and in most subjects. They checked the records of children's learning in the Reception classes.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other school leaders, a representative of the local authority and the Chair of the Governing Body, together with four other governors.
- Inspectors spoke to two groups of pupils and, informally, with other pupils in lessons and around the school. An inspector listened to pupils reading and spoke to them about their reading habits.
- Inspectors examined several of the school's documents. These included the school's own evaluation of its performance and its improvement plan, information about pupils' progress and attainment, evidence about the quality of teaching, and records relating to behaviour, safeguarding and attendance.
- Inspectors took account of the 90 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, the views expressed by parents as they arrived at school, and three letters and an email. The 29 questionnaires returned by staff were analysed.

Inspection team

James McVeigh, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
John Croghan	Additional Inspector
Sarah Davey	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Nicholas is larger than the average-sized primary school. There are two full-time Reception classes and two classes in each year from Year 1 to Year 6.
- Most pupils are White British. The remainder come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds.
- Fewer pupils than average speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or looked after by the local authority) is below the national average.
- A below-average proportion of pupils are disabled or have special educational needs.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen leadership and management by ensuring subject leaders use all the information the school has about the progress of all groups of pupils in planning more effective strategies to improve their achievement.
- Improve pupils' achievement in writing and mathematics by ensuring that:
 - teachers maintain suitably challenging activities for different ability groups during lessons, particularly in mathematics
 - pupils have more opportunities to write extended pieces, and teachers make sure they respond to advice on how to improve their work.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, together with the rest of the senior leadership team and fully supported by the governing body, has a clear vision for the future of the school. The staff feel part of an effective team and share the ambition for continued improvement in all aspects of the school's work.
- Senior leaders have ensured that the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement have improved. Their drive to maintain the high levels of attendance and good behaviour has been effective. They have identified the areas where further improvements are still needed and are implementing detailed, effective plans to address them. The school has good capacity to continue to improve.
- Senior leaders regularly collect a wide range of evidence about all aspects of teaching and learning. They have established a strong programme to review how well teachers perform and set them challenging targets for improvement, including some appropriately linked to the pupils' progress. Any underperformance is tackled promptly. Staff have good opportunities for training in school or within a local consortium of schools and some have, or are pursuing, national qualifications for school leadership. Teachers have visited outstanding schools and their own outstanding early years department to improve their skills.
- Teachers who have subject or other school-wide responsibilities are enthusiastic and well organised. They are responsible for ensuring continued improvement in their areas of responsibility. They work closely with colleagues to ensure better planning of lessons. Individual pupils' progress is checked regularly and extra help is planned for any pupils in danger of slipping behind. However, these middle leaders do not check the achievement of different groups of pupils well enough to identify the key priorities that would help pupils make more rapid progress.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are well provided for so they are able to make similar progress to their classmates. Teachers maintain detailed information about the extra help they receive and its impact. Consequently, teachers can modify the planned support, when necessary, to improve pupils' progress in their learning. Similarly, pupil premium funding is used effectively to increase the range of experiences and promote better achievement of eligible disadvantaged pupils.
- Pupils enjoy learning in a wide range of subjects. Music has a high profile: school choirs practise and perform regularly and all pupils get the opportunity to learn how to play instruments. A full programme of afternoon activities, including art and cookery, enriches pupils' experiences further. Pupils enjoy the wide range of trips and visitors to the school as they bring topics they are studying to life. For example, pupils clearly remember the workshops for dance, the rainforest and ancient Egypt, and the trips to France, the Black Country museum and the zoo. The school is implementing suitable plans, developed within a consortium of local schools, to assess pupils' progress against the new National Curriculum.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through the school's ethos of fairness and respect and through assemblies and lessons. Pupils learn about a wide range of religions and many religious festivals are celebrated in school. The school ensures that all pupils have an equal chance to succeed, free from discrimination, for example by making sure all pupils have a chance to answer questions in class and that clubs are open to everyone. Pupils have good opportunities to consider 'British values'. They experience democracy in action during elections for the school council and learn respect for other cultures, for example through 'Diversity Days' where they celebrate different cultures.
- The school has carefully planned the use of the primary sports funding to improve the range of resources and sporting opportunities for pupils and to raise the coaching skills of staff. More pupils now participate in sporting activities and associated tournaments and competitions, and feel the benefits in terms of their physical well-being.
- Leaders maintain rigorous procedures to safeguard pupils. Child protection issues are handled sensitively and associated records stored securely. All staff are appropriately trained and they demonstrate a good

understanding of what they are expected to do if child protection issues arise. The designated leader for safeguarding, the headteacher, is tenacious in following up referrals to social services and checking that they respond appropriately.

- The local authority supports the school well. It considers St Nicholas to be a good school and in good hands. Termly visits from local authority officers provide leaders with an external, objective view of the school's work.
- The school keeps parents informed and involved with their children's learning. As well as regular updates on progress, parents visit class assemblies and regular workshops help them understand how subjects are taught and how they can help their children at home. Parents say that teachers are very approachable and supportive and help their children to enjoy learning.

■ The governance of the school:

- The governors bring a good range of skills and experience to their role and keep themselves up to date through regular training, for example in safeguarding and understanding information on pupils' achievement. They are knowledgeable about all aspects of the school. They receive regular reports from leaders, but also visit the school to see for themselves and gather the views of teachers and pupils. They know about the quality of teaching and pupils' academic performance.
- Governors provide an effective balance of support and challenge to the school. Their searching questions hold leaders to account and ensure the school continues to improve. Governors oversee the management of teachers' performance, including how underperformance is tackled. They make sure that pay awards are clearly linked to effective teaching and set challenging targets for the headteacher.
- Governors make sure that funds, including the pupil premium and the primary sports funding, are spent for the benefit of pupils. They ensure all safeguarding procedures are effective and meet national requirements. For example, they monitor the school's emergency evacuation practices and carry out health and safety checks each term.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils know the school rules and are strongly influenced by the values they are taught. They are considerate of one another, learn to take responsibility for their actions and know the importance of treating everyone fairly.
- Pupils behave well when moving around the school. They are polite and helpful towards visitors. In lessons, they are usually attentive, respond enthusiastically to instructions and get on with their work. During discussions, they listen carefully to each other's ideas.
- Pupils know that their behaviour affects their progress. They show pride in their work. Written work in books is well presented and exercises are completed. Pupils say little learning time is wasted on managing behaviour.
- The school monitors the small number of minor misdemeanours that do occur closely. Staff and the vast majority of parents report that behaviour is good.
- Pupils get on with each other well, including at playtimes. Playground leaders in Year 6 carry out their roles in organising games for younger pupils enthusiastically. Prefects and monitors help to manage movement around the school and junior librarians help to organise the library system. Older pupils regularly read with their younger schoolmates.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils feel safe at school. Strong fencing around the site and controlled access for visitors ensure a high level of security. All of the areas used by pupils are well supervised and visitors are advised about the behaviour expected of them when in school.

- Pupils know the different forms bullying can take, and say there are few incidents of bullying and teachers sort them out quickly and fairly. Name-calling is not tolerated. Pupils who find a busy playground challenging appreciate the availability of the 'crocodile' club, where they can engage in supervised activities in a quiet room.
- Pupils have learned how to stay safe, for example when on the internet or crossing the road. They know that it is important for their health to eat a balanced diet and take regular exercise.
- Pupils like school. They say that teachers make learning fun. The school ensures pupils attend regularly and attendance has been maintained above average in recent years. Absences are followed up rigorously and punctuality is good.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching has improved and is good across the school in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers expect pupils to behave well and work hard. They manage their classes well. Pupils are generally attentive and respond to instructions promptly.
- The relationships between staff and pupils are a strength of the school. Pupils feel listened to and valued. Teachers try to make activities interesting and engaging. They maintain an authoritative presence without being overbearing, and often use gentle humour to make lessons more fun. All pupils were involved in a combined Year 1 and 2 physical education lesson and had great fun in a 'pirate' game, involving running, jumping and balancing. They met the competitive challenge with gusto and were breathing heavily by the end.
- Teachers show that they have good subject knowledge. They ask probing questions to make pupils think hard about topics they are learning, and encourage pupils to extend their answers with follow-up questions. The pupils are eager to respond and often help each other to develop their ideas during class discussions.
- Teachers use visual stimuli, visits and visitors to motivate pupils. Pupils have opportunities to write in a range of styles, such as stories, letters, poems, instructions and news reports, although not always extended pieces. Practical work, which pupils enjoy, is common in science. Pupils in Year 4 made good progress in understanding separation techniques when trying different methods to clean dirty water. Pupils in a Year 5 spoke enthusiastically about their experience of real rainforest animals when they were visited by an animal expert, and used this in an English lesson where they made good progress in composing a poem about the rainforest.
- Homework is linked to classwork and pupils' responses are often very creative. For example, a three-dimensional wattle fence appeared in the middle of a Year 3 history written homework. Their books show that they spend a lot of time and effort on homework tasks. Parents are invited to share with the class teacher how much their children enjoyed each activity.
- Teachers mark pupils' written work regularly and in detail in English and mathematics. Pupils receive good feedback on their performance, including information about areas that need improving or questions to test or extend their understanding. Pupils are used to responding to the advice and say it helps them to make better progress. However, pupils are not always encouraged to edit and redraft their writing, so teachers' guidance on how to improve does not have as much impact on their achievement as it might.
- Teachers modify lesson activities in line with the pupils' differing ability levels. Those who need more individual support are taught in small groups or receive individual attention. Teaching assistants are usually well prepared to offer effective support to individual pupils, such as those who have special educational needs. Teaching assistants often skilfully calm and support pupils who find it difficult to manage their own behaviour.
- Staff usually give pupils suitably challenging tasks in lessons. However, teachers do not always spot part way through a lesson that the work is too easy or too hard for some pupils, particularly in mathematics, so

occasionally they do not make as much progress as they could.

The achievement of pupils is good

- School information about current pupils' achievement and the work seen in their books show that all groups of pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 are making good and sustained progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Children in the early years are making even better progress.
- In 2014, pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 1 was above average in reading, writing and mathematics, reflecting good progress. Pupils in Key Stage 2 also made good progress overall in these subjects. Attainment in Year 6 was broadly average in reading and writing, but below average in mathematics, and progress was better in reading than in writing and mathematics. The Year 6 data are potentially misleading because a significant and unusually high proportion of the pupils in this year group had complex additional needs. Their attendance and behaviour were not as good as those of other pupils. Some were not able to socialise well with others. All of these factors disrupted their learning, with a consequent impact on overall standards and progress.
- Pupils develop a good understanding of phonics (the sounds letters make) and effective strategies to read unfamiliar words. The proportion of pupils in Year 1 who reached the expected standard in the phonics screening check has been above the national average for the last two years. The small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language acquire the necessary skills quickly and do particularly well.
- The school effectively encourages pupils to read often. Younger pupils read regularly to an adult at home and at school. Older pupils borrow books from school and report that they read at length every day and often read with younger pupils at school.
- Extra support for disadvantaged pupils, some of whom also have special educational needs, is organised well so that they make good progress. However, due to the significant proportion who had complex additional needs in Year 6 in 2014, the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and others in school widened. In writing, reading and mathematics, the gaps were two, four and five terms respectively. The gaps with others nationally were slightly wider in mathematics and writing but slightly narrower in reading. The gaps for disadvantaged pupils who did not also have special educational needs were much smaller, around a term in writing and mathematics and less than half a term in reading. For pupils currently in Year 6, the attainment gaps are smaller still.
- The school carefully plans extra help for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Detailed records are maintained to show the progress each individual has made and the next steps needed for improvement. Consequently, these pupils are helped to make similar progress to their classmates.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language are supported well. For example, teaching assistants have received specialist training to work with pupils who are at an early stage of learning to speak English. Most of these pupils make good or better progress and reach higher standards than their classmates.
- Teachers plan challenging activities for the most able pupils in their class, including more open-ended and investigative tasks. The school also ensures that these pupils can work on projects with similar pupils from other schools and enter competitions such as mathematics challenges. The most able pupils are making good progress. A much higher proportion than nationally achieved Level 6 in mathematics last year.

The early years provision is outstanding

- Children achieve even better in the Reception classes than further up the school. Adults match activities to the next steps children need in their learning very carefully, and follow their progress very closely. The children enjoy highly stimulating activities that fire their imagination and lead to outstanding achievement.
- Most children start Reception with skills and abilities that are typical for their age. They make very rapid

progress in all areas of learning. Children learn how to do things for themselves and get on with everybody else. They are very well prepared, including in their writing and number skills, to get off to a good start when they enter Year 1. In 2014, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development was higher than the national average. School information shows that the proportion in 2015 year will be even higher.

- The early years is led and managed extremely well. The early years team uses an efficient system to gather and record evidence, including parents' own observations, to provide an ongoing, comprehensive record of each child's development and abilities. Adults plan the most effective activities to promote the next steps in children's learning, including for disadvantaged children and those who are disabled or have special educational needs.
- Children's behaviour is outstanding. They make huge strides in their personal and social development, learning to sit sensibly, to share resources fairly and to take turns. When engaged in activities, children persevere and concentrate. For example, a small group of children worked with little distraction on writing a shopping list and collecting the appropriate items for their shopping baskets.
- Children feel safe and are well looked after. All safeguarding precautions are securely in place.
- Phonics is taught very well. More advanced children are suitably stretched in learning new sounds and words in interesting activities, while others are given the time and encouragement they need to make rapid progress. Children were seen confidently pronouncing new words, linked to pictures, following their teachers' clear and accurate modelling. They extended words into sentences and showed very good skills in their early writing and reading.
- The learning environments are well organised. Display is lively and rich in text and number. Excellent resources enable children to develop their skills and confidence in all areas of learning. Adults observe children closely and ensure they get the most out of each activity they engage in. Adults ask questions skilfully to encourage children to talk and to explore and to think more deeply about their experiences.
- Children enjoy a range of activities that enrich their experiences, some led by teachers and others organised on a 'free-choice' basis linked to a common theme. For example, as well as working on shopping lists, children had the opportunity to examine different pieces of (covered) decaying food with magnifying glasses. They were able to describe the fungal growth and changes happening to the food.
- Children's transition from home into school is organised very well. Teachers visit children at home to gather parents' views and see children in the home environment. Parents are encouraged to 'stay and play' with their children when they first start school to help them settle and to be reassured of the quality of teaching their children enjoy. Parents are pleased with the approachability of staff and the progress their children are making.

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	125661
Local authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	453185

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	411
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Trevor Wilson
Headteacher	Louise Mohacsi
Date of previous school inspection	2 March 2011
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