

St Nicolas CE Junior School

Link Road, Newbury, RG14 7LU

Inspection dates 12–13 May 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Leaders and managers have driven considerable improvements since the last inspection. In particular, there has been a concerted and successful effort to improve the quality of teaching, which is now good.
- The improved quality of teaching has resulted in pupils making more rapid progress and their achievement is now good. For example, pupils' progress in mathematics this year has been very strong in all year groups.
- Governance is a further area of improvement and governors are now knowledgeable and fully able to challenge and support leaders and managers. They have played a full role in checking on the quality of teaching and ensuring its improvement.
- Pupils' behaviour, and especially their attitudes to their learning, are good. This is because, as they say, 'lessons are interesting and fun'. They say that teachers always provide good levels of challenge which enable them to extend their learning.
- Skilled teaching assistants play an important role in aiding pupils' learning and progress. This is particularly the case for those with specific learning needs. They also support vulnerable pupils very well and inspectors saw this done sensitively on several occasions.
- Pupils are caring and thoughtful. The school's extremely strong promotion of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development ensures that pupils have a very clear understanding of the uniqueness of the individual, despite any apparent differences.
- The school has very sound procedures for ensuring that pupils are safe. This is reflected in the fact that all pupils spoken to said that they feel very secure in school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Teachers do not always use their assessments in lessons of the skills and knowledge that pupils have already mastered to adapt their teaching so that pupils can make the best progress.
- Teachers take too few opportunities to refer to pupils' targets when they mark their work.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited 19 lessons, five of these jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspectors held meetings with leaders and managers, staff, pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other members of the governing body, and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors met informally with parents and carers at the beginning and end of the school days and analysed the results of the 44 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at its self-evaluation, development planning and policies and procedures, including those relating to pupils' safety.
- The inspectors evaluated the school's information on the progress that pupils are making and scrutinised the work in their books.

Inspection team

John Eadie, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Lesley Voaden	Additional Inspector
Gill Walley	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Nicolas CE Junior School is an average-sized junior school. There are eight classes, two for each year group from Year 3 to Year 6.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority) is below average.
- The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. Almost one in five is from a variety of minority ethnic groups and this proportion is below average. Roughly a third of these speaks English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below the national average.
- 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.
- The school runs a breakfast club and an after-school club and these are managed by the governing body.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement by ensuring that:
 - teachers consistently use assessment during lessons to establish what skills and knowledge pupils have mastered so that they can move them on to more challenging work, or give them extra support
 - teachers take more opportunities to refer to pupils' targets when they are marking their work.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has provided strong leadership in the improvements made since the last inspection. In this he has been ably supported by the assistant headteachers. There is a strong sense of teamwork in the school and on their questionnaires staff were universally positive about the commitment to raise standards. They said such things as, 'I know how much we have improved and the efforts put in by everyone, which makes me proud to be a member of this school.'
- Middle managers have also contributed well to the improvements made. For example, the literacy and numeracy leaders have initiated good improvements in their subjects and have clear plans for further development.
- A key area for improvement for the school at the last inspection was improving the quality of teaching. Very rigorous monitoring has been carried out and support provided where needed so that the quality of teaching is now good. Each teacher has an individual programme of areas for their own development and their progress towards these targets is checked regularly. Teachers are fully behind these developments, saying such things as, 'The school has risen quickly to the challenge of raising teaching and learning standards and has made a positive impact on results.'
- There is an ethos of providing the best for the pupils in the school. Pupils are expected to play their part in this by working hard and behaving well and they rise to the high expectations well.
- The school provides an engaging and rich curriculum, correctly focusing on the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. Good links are made between subjects. For instance, examples were seen of literacy targets being noted as having been met in extended writing in other subjects, religious education for example. The curriculum makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their awareness of British values. For instance, they have a good knowledge of diversity. They also know how the democratic process helps society to function. This ensures that they are being prepared well for their next school and life in Britain today.
- Pupils benefit enormously from a wealth of extra-curricular opportunities. For instance, the orchestra observed during the inspection gives very good opportunities for instrumentalists to learn to play together and create a corporate sound. The drama group was also observed, raising the self-confidence of pupils. Singing in assemblies was heard in two parts, reflecting the fact that nearly half the school are in the choir, which performs regularly in the locality and further afield.
- There is good support within a local group of schools where, for example, teachers have been able to share expertise. Strong links have also been built with the feeder infant school, particularly in the last two years, to enable a smooth transition from infant to junior school.
- Discrimination of any type is not tolerated and pupils have a very strong sense of their role in creating a harmonious and happy environment, where all are valued.
- The school's procedures for keeping pupils safe and secure are rigorous. All statutory safeguarding requirements are met and kept fully up to date.
- The extra funds provided for disadvantaged pupils are used well. Very carefully costed actions are put in place to support these pupils and these have been effective in enabling them to close the gap between their performance and that of their classmates.
- The extra funds for physical education and sport are also used well. For example, a wider range of sports is now taught and there are considerably more opportunities for pupils to engage in competitive sport, for example in sports new to the school such as indoor archery and ten pin bowling. This has all had a positive impact on pupils' health and well-being.
- The popular breakfast and after-school clubs contribute well to pupils' well-being. They are well organised and pupils have opportunities for activities such as cooking in the after-school club.
- The local authority has provided good support in aiding improvement since the last inspection. For example, it has provided targeted training for teachers, leaders and managers and governors.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance has improved significantly since the last inspection. Effective training has been accessed and governors are now keenly aware of their responsibilities in keeping a check, particularly on the quality of teaching. They are knowledgeable about the performance management process and are well aware of the improvements being made. This has enabled them to make informed decisions on rewarding individual teachers for improvements in their teaching. Governors now have sufficient knowledge to be able to ask the right questions in order to challenge leaders and managers. Their committees have been restructured and they have instituted a key committee keeping a check on standards. Governors now understand what data are telling them about how well pupils are doing both

in the school and in comparison with pupils elsewhere. A close control is kept on finances and all funds are managed carefully. This applies particularly to the extra funds provided for disadvantaged pupils. Governors meet their statutory requirements well.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are particularly keen in lessons, almost always trying to do well and work their hardest. There are occasions when this keenness flags, but this is usually when the teaching is less engaging. Pupils are very good at working together in pairs or small groups, aiding each other's learning through sensible and relevant discussions.
- Pupils say that lessons are very rarely disrupted by minor behaviour issues, even though they recognise that some pupils in the school find behaving well difficult, which is why behaviour is not outstanding. The school's behaviour logs show that strategies for improving behaviour are effective in improving the behaviour of individuals.
- Pupils' behaviour around the school is very good. Playtimes are harmonious affairs because pupils are happy to include others in their play so no-one feels left out. They care for each other and their environment well. For example, at a lunchtime break some pupils were observed moving some woodlice into a more shaded area as they were concerned that they were becoming too hot and dry.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Safeguarding systems are rigorous and all pupils spoken to said that they feel safe in school. Their parents and carers who responded to Parent View were almost unanimous in their agreement with this.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and deal with risk in a range of situations. They are confident that there is always someone to turn to if they need help.
- A small minority of parents and carers who responded to Parent View expressed concerns about the way the school deals with bullying. However, pupils were very confident, and could even give examples of minor incidents which had been extremely well dealt with when reported.
- Pupils have very good knowledge of a wide range of different types of bullying. For instance, they are well aware of the dangers inherent when using the internet and particularly social media. They were then able to explain how to deal with these dangers. Pupils hold strong views on the unacceptability of all types of bullying, racist or homophobic for example. They were keen to explain that all individuals should be accepted for who they are, as we are all different.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection and is now good, in reading, writing and mathematics. Data collected by the school show that this improvement is continuing and so pupils are making accelerated progress. This is particularly the case in literacy and mathematics. Teaching of reading has been strong for some years and consequently standards in this subject are higher than in writing or mathematics.
- Teachers are generally very good at planning challenging and interesting lessons. This means that pupils are engaged well. Pupils particularly enjoy the extra challenges that they are given when they finish their work and this aids their faster progress, particularly for the most able.
- Teachers are good at asking questions during lessons to take pupils' learning on. However, they do not always use their assessments during lessons to adapt their teaching. For example, instances were seen of pupils who had already mastered a skill having to listen while the teacher went through it again as other pupils had not understood. The teacher had not recognised that these pupils could have moved on more quickly.
- Skilled teaching assistants are deployed well and contribute significantly to the progress that pupils are making. They work well in class, helping those who are struggling to take a full part in lessons. They also work very well with those unable to cope with the pressures of being in the classroom situation. These pupils are able to make good progress because of this support.

- Teachers are keen to develop their own skills and are fully behind the successful efforts of leaders and managers to help them improve.
- A particular improvement since the last inspection has been teachers' higher expectations of pupils. This is reflected not only in the way pupils are prepared to work hard at challenging tasks but also in the way that pupils present their work. This is neat and reflects real pride in what they are doing.
- Teachers assess pupils' progress in the long-term regularly. This enables them to identify quickly any who are in danger of falling behind. Subject leaders, particularly those for literacy and numeracy, have developed effective strategies for these pupils so that they can catch up quickly.
- Teachers' marking is good and pupils say that it helps them improve. Leaders and managers have instituted a new system fairly recently and it is still in a developmental stage. For example, although teachers note in their marking when pupils' targets have been met, they do not take sufficient opportunities to remind pupils of the targets they are working towards.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Because of the improvements in teaching since the last inspection, pupils' progress has accelerated and they are now achieving well. Pupils in all year groups are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Analysis of data shows that pupils are making good progress over time. For example, pupils currently in Year 6 have made good progress from their starting points three years ago. This progress has been particularly strong in mathematics.
- Pupils' attainment in reading has been consistently strong in recent years. It has been above the national average for the last four years and improving year on year so that it is now significantly above the national average.
- Disadvantaged pupils also make good progress from their starting points, which in most cases are significantly lower than those of other pupils. Their attainment in reading in 2014 was better than that of other pupils nationally and better than that of their classmates. In writing it was weaker than other pupils' both nationally and in the school by about a year. It was also weaker in mathematics than other pupils' both nationally and in the school by about two terms. However, this shows a significant improvement as in 2013 they were behind in reading by about two terms and well over a year behind in writing and mathematics. Effective strategies have therefore closed the gap completely in reading and by about six months in writing, both compared with other pupils nationally and their classmates. In mathematics the gap has closed by more than a year compared with other pupils nationally and more than two terms compared with their classmates.
- The most able pupils are challenged well and achieve well. This is reflected in the good proportion of higher levels attained in the national assessments, particularly in writing. A significant proportion of pupils in the current Year 6 are working at the higher levels.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make the same good progress as their classmates. This is because of the careful consideration that is given to their needs and their programmes of work, which are closely matched to meeting these needs. Much of their specific learning is administered by teaching assistants, who are ensuring that they are able to make good progress from their starting points.
- The pupils from ethnic minorities are making the same good progress as their classmates. The few pupils who do not speak English as their first language also make the same good progress, as they are supported well.
- Published data would not appear to support a judgement of good achievement. However, the most recent data are based on the tests taken a year ago. At that stage the initiatives to improve the quality of teaching had not been in place for very long and had not had a full impact on accelerating pupils' progress. The extra year has made all the difference and pupils' progress and attainment have improved markedly.

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	110013
Local authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	462362

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	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	251
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Catie Colston
Headteacher	Keith Harvey
Date of previous school inspection	14–15 May 2013
Telephone number	01635 41282
Fax number	01635 582427
Email address	Office@stnics.w-berks.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2014

