

St Nicholas CofE Primary School

Kilmersdon Road, Radstock, Bath, BA3 3QH

Inspection dates 24–25 June 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
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Committed leadership by the new headteacher, very ably supported by the deputy headteacher and governors, has led to improvements in teaching and pupils' achievement.
- Governors have improved their ability to challenge senior leaders. They are well informed about the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.
- All groups of pupils at all key stages make at least good progress from their starting points. By the end of Year 2 and Year 6, pupils reach standards similar to those expected nationally. Standards across the school are rising.
- Teaching is at least good, and is improving.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They enjoy school and feel safe while they are there. Pupils' politeness and good manners help to make the school a welcoming place.
- Reading and mathematical skills are taught well. A systematic approach enables pupils to confidently develop their reading as they move through the school. Pupils use their good understanding of mathematical concepts to solve problems.
- Provision in the early years is good. Due to good teaching and effective support, children achieve well from their different starting points and the majority are well prepared for Year 1.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, as well as those who are disadvantaged, are supported well and make good progress.
- An exciting and stimulating range of learning experiences promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils have a good understanding of British values. They are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Work is not always set at the right level to challenge the varying abilities of pupils.
- Marking does not always make clear to pupils how to improve their work. Also, some teachers do not ensure that pupils act on their good advice.
- The school's plans for improvement are long and this hampers the sharpness and clarity of priorities. Senior leaders have not always ensured that all staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities in the school's ongoing improvement.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in a range of lessons, four of which were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- The school’s work was discussed with members of staff, pupils, parents, a representative from the local authority and members of the governing body.
- Inspectors also took account of the views of 23 parents who responded to Ofsted’s online survey, Parent View, as well as questionnaires completed by staff members.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and examined a wide range of documentation including: minutes from governors meetings; external reports on the school’s work; assessment information; safeguarding documents; samples of pupils’ work and curriculum planning.
- The inspectors listened to pupils read and observed the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make).

Inspection team

Carol Warrant, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Paul Hodson

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school where almost all pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is below the national average. This is additional government funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is above average.
- The school meets current floor standards. These are the minimum expectations, set by the government, for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- Pupils are taught in eight classes; most are in single age groups, but one contains both Reception and Year 1 pupils.
- Reception children attend full time.
- A pre-school is housed in the school building and there is a nursery situated in the school grounds. Neither of these is managed by the school and therefore did not form part of this inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching to outstanding in order to raise achievement by ensuring that:
 - all teachers consistently plan work that is pitched at the right level to challenge the abilities of all pupils
 - marking consistently shows pupils how to improve their work and that pupils act on this good advice, both immediately and in their future work.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - refining the school improvement plan so that the key priorities for the school are more precise and easier to identify
 - ensuring that all members of the school community are clear about their roles and responsibilities in the school's continuing improvement.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The new headteacher, well supported by the deputy headteacher, shows a passionate and unyielding determination to make the school the best it can be. As a result, the quality of teaching is improving so that pupils behave and achieve well, and make increasingly rapid progress.
- Evaluation of what is working well in the school and what needs attention is thorough and accurate.
- On appointment, the headteacher addressed the priorities in the school in a long and detailed school improvement plan. This was needed at the time to closely check progress. However, one year on, during which many effective improvements have been made, the plan needs a thorough overhaul to become a more workable document. Sharper and measurable priorities are needed to ensure that all staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities in the school's journey to further improvement, so that all pupils make rapid progress. This is why leadership and management are not outstanding.
- Senior leaders meet regularly with teachers to check how well all pupils are learning. Any pupil in danger of falling behind is given the precise help they need to catch up.
- Senior leaders have ensured that the pupil premium funding for disadvantaged pupils is used effectively. Skilled additional support results in disadvantaged pupils progressing equally well and sometimes better than others in the school. The work of the family intervention officer has been particularly effective in supporting vulnerable pupils and their families.
- Senior leaders make it clear that nothing less than at least good teaching is good enough. Staff training has improved and regular checks on teaching are followed up to ensure improvements have been made. There are increasing opportunities for staff to share practice in school and in other schools.
- The promotion of equal opportunities is good. All pupils have effective support and equal access to a stimulating curriculum. Leaders are fully committed to helping all pupils reach their potential.
- Middle leaders have been effective in implementing the new National Curriculum. Staff have met to check that all aspects are covered and resources are readily available. Middle leaders have developed their roles and now observe their colleagues and give feedback at staff meetings.
- The curriculum skilfully links subjects together to provide many exciting and creative learning opportunities. These are enriched with visits and visitors, such as the piglet that visited Reception as part of their work on traditional stories. Pupils have good opportunities to learn French and attend a wealth of lunchtime and after-school clubs, from cricket to maypole dancing.
- Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated and this is supported through strong promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Strong and positive relationships are fostered throughout the school, with many opportunities for pupils to celebrate and appreciate differences in culture and traditions. Staff promote British values well, including tolerance and respect. This prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain.
- Good use is being made of the additional funding for primary school sport. Improvements are clearly evident in staff confidence and competence through improved training and support. The employment of a specialist teacher has led to increased opportunities for pupils to develop skills and in a greater participation in additional clubs and activities. Opportunities have increased for pupils to engage in competitive sports. There is clear evidence that pupils' well-being and healthy lifestyles are improving.
- Positive links exist with parents, especially in the early years. Most parents say they feel welcomed and supported.
- The school has a strong working relationship with the local authority. The school has received good support in improving teaching, learning, leadership and management.
- Arrangements for safeguarding meet current government requirements. Clear policies and procedures are in place. Regular checks by senior leaders and governors ensure these are effective.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is effective. Governors offer rigorous challenge and support to school leaders. They know the school well. They fully share the new headteacher's vision and passion for improvement. Governors have strengthened their membership in terms of experience and expertise. They have a good understanding of how data on the progress of pupils compare to others in the local authority and nationally. They rigorously check on the quality of teaching and challenge weak teaching. They ensure teachers' pay progression and pay rewards link closely to pupils' progress and the quality of teaching informed by robust performance management. Governors keep a close eye on school finances and check that extra funding for physical education and sport and for disadvantaged pupils is having the positive impact it should. Equality of opportunity is given strong emphasis and governors ensure that the school meets its statutory duties, including those related to safeguarding.

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

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are eager to learn and proud of their school. They enjoy their lessons and are very keen to do well. Pupils work well with others and like to test their ideas out on their partners to help clear their thoughts and find answers.
- Pupils are polite, friendly and welcoming to visitors. Pupils enthusiastically told inspectors how much they enjoy school. They behave well in lessons and around the school and get on well together. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are sometimes outstanding. This is when work captures their interests and imagination and challenges their thinking. However, when tasks are too easy or too hard, a very few pupils drift off task, hindering the progress they make. This is why behaviour is not outstanding.
- Pupils' highly positive relationships with staff help to boost pupils' confidence, self-esteem and determination to do their best. Pupils enjoy the wide range of responsibilities on offer, such as being a class monitor, school councilor or house captain.
- Pupils eagerly told inspectors about the many clubs they can attend, such as singing, tag rugby, tennis, gardening and maypole dancing.
- Pupils regularly raise money for charity. The whole school 'Race for Life', which was held during the inspection, was an inspirational event attended by a high number of parents who joined their children and the staff on a run along the local cycle path. Pupils were particularly supportive of their friends who had family members affected by cancer.
- Pupils enjoy opportunities to celebrate cultural differences and appreciate people's rights to hold different beliefs. Pupils typically say, 'You should treat all people with respect.'

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils feel safe and know how to keep themselves and others safe. Older pupils have a secure understanding of the potential dangers of using the internet.
- Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of the different forms that bullying can take, such as cyber bullying and bullying as a result of prejudice. They say bullying is rare in school and are confident staff would deal effectively with any that did happen.
- Attendance has improved and is now average. The school has effective procedures for following up absence.
- Parents are confident their children are kept safe. This is reflected in their discussions with inspectors and is also supported by the positive response to the online Parent View survey.
- The school has robust systems in place to ensure that pupils are safe and that the site is both safe and secure. Adults who work with pupils are rigorously checked to ensure they are suitable to work with children.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has improved in response to leadership that has established consistency in methods and high expectations. A review of work in pupils' books, monitoring carried out by senior leaders and external advisers, and a review of pupils' progress show that good teaching is evident across the school.
- Teaching in the early years is good and results in children's good progress over time.
- Pupils talk about enjoying learning because it is not boring. This is because of the effort teachers put in to providing a variety of activities that sustain pupils' interests.
- The management of pupils is good. It is based on positive relationships and a consistency of expectations. Their response to teachers' instructions and questions are swift and pupils are keen to please their teachers.
- A whole school approach to marking is in place and it is usually followed closely and effectively. Teachers nearly always include a comment for pupils. When these identify precisely how improvements can be made they are most effective. However teachers sometimes fail to ensure that pupils respond to their marking and that their good advice is applied in any future work. This can sometimes result in repeated errors and pupils' progress not being as good as it might be. This is why teaching is not outstanding.
- Pupils' learning is planned well; it generally takes account of their different abilities and provides suitable challenges. Teachers share their good subject knowledge when asking questions to make pupils fully

explain their answers and deepen their thinking.

- The systematic teaching of reading helps build the skills and understanding pupils need as they move through school. Pupils receive a firm foundation in phonics to aid their reading. Skilled teaching assistants provide regular additional support to help pupils who need it. Older pupils are challenged to scan the text for information and to recognise inference.
- Impressive writing in pupils' books in Year 6 reflects the good, and often better, teaching of writing. Most teachers insist on work being presented neatly. Targets in pupils' books remind pupils of the need to use their grammar, punctuation and spelling skills in their work.
- Staff consolidate and strengthen pupils' mathematical abilities through regular revision of basic skills. Pupils are provided with opportunities to apply their skills regularly in interesting problem-solving activities. Pupils are encouraged to explain why they have chosen particular strategies. This is helping pupils to improve their knowledge and understanding of mathematical concepts.
- Teaching assistants contribute well by working effectively with class teachers. They know pupils well and manage their particular needs with sensitivity, including when working with individuals and small groups. They help to ensure that pupils make the progress they should.

The achievement of pupils is good

- All groups of pupils in all key stages, including children in the early years, are making at least good progress from their starting points.
- Standards by the end of Year 2 are above average in reading and average in writing and mathematics, reflecting pupils' good, and sometimes outstanding, progress from their starting points in Year 1. By the end of Year 6, pupils also typically reach standards that are broadly average. Although in Year 6 in 2014, standards fell to below average in mathematics, pupils made at least expected progress relative to their particular starting points and learning needs.
- The proportion of pupils currently exceeding the rate of progress expected of them is increasing rapidly. This is particularly evident for pupils currently in Year 2 and Year 6. As a result, standards across the school are rising. A much larger proportion of pupils are now working at the higher levels of attainment, particularly in reading and mathematics.
- Systematic teaching of reading skills, including phonics, throughout the school is improving achievement in reading. Well targeted and sensitive support is given to those in danger of underachieving. In 2014, the results in the Year 1 national phonic screening check were below average, but this represented good progress from pupils' low starting points. Improvements to the teaching of phonics have led to an increasing proportion of current Year 1 pupils working at and beyond the expected standard. This reflects pupils' increasing confidence in identifying the sounds that letters make. Pupils continue to make good progress and develop a love of reading as they move through school. Older pupils read widely and talk confidently and revealingly about their favourite authors and themes.
- Improvements in the teaching of writing have led to more opportunities for pupils to talk about their ideas and redraft their work to improve punctuation, grammar and choice of vocabulary. As a result, progress in writing is good, and improving.
- Pupils demonstrate increasingly secure basic skills in mathematics. Their mastery of mathematical concepts is improving strongly. This is because of a strong focus on the development of basic skills. As a result, this has led to improved opportunities for pupils to explore the most efficient strategies to use when solving problems and explain their reasons for the choices they make.
- The most able pupils are given more challenging and demanding work that deepens their understanding and stretches their abilities. As a result, their progress is good overall.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are identified quickly so that no time is wasted in them receiving the targeted support they need. This support effectively meets their individual needs and ensures these pupils make good progress.
- As a result of the effective use of additional government funding, disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to their classmates in reading, writing and mathematics. The very small number of disadvantaged pupils at the end of Year 6, in 2014, means that meaningful comparisons between their performance and that of other pupils in the school, and nationally, are not possible. Gaps between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and that of their classmates are closing rapidly across the school.

The early years provision is good

- Children start school with attainment that is below what is typical for their age and significantly below in the early skills of reading, writing, number and shape, space and measures. As a result of improved provision, all children, including the most able, those with special educational needs and disadvantaged children make good progress in all areas of learning. An increasing proportion reaches the level that is typical for their age. Most children are well prepared to enter Year 1; however, some still have a way to go in the development of their writing and mathematical skills to be fully prepared for Year 1.
- Teaching is effective because all staff are skilled in meeting the needs of this age range. They use assessment effectively to ensure the most able are challenged and those who have special educational needs are supported to make good progress. Staff are quick to build on pupils' enjoyment. For example, children loved the many activities linked to their study of pirates. Small group sessions teach children basic numeracy and early writing skills.
- The focus on learning through exploration is good. During the inspection, children delighted in fishing for 'sea creatures', building a pirate galleon and drawing and labelling pirate maps for their friends to follow. Staff are alert to children who need support or greater challenge and intervene skilfully to ensure learning is effective.
- Staff have organised the indoor and outdoor learning spaces and resources effectively so that children can select their own resources. Good attention is given to children's well-being and the children feel safe. Children have established positive relationships, follow well-established routines and behave very well.
- Leadership and management of the early years are good. Staff are clear about their roles and sessions run smoothly. Assessment is used well to identify the progress children make and plan the next steps in their learning. Information is kept in well maintained individual records and learning journals.
- Communication with parents is seen as a priority, starting before children enter Reception. Parents are kept informed about their children's progress and are welcomed into the classrooms every morning, as well as being involved in other events.

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	134238
Local authority	Bath and North East Somerset
Inspection number	462517

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	214
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jon Brown
Headteacher	Nicola Smith
Date of previous school inspection	9–10 July 2013
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