

St Nicholas' CofE Middle School

Main Street, Pinvin, Pershore WR10 2ER

Inspection dates	7–8 June 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Pupils make good progress in their learning in reading, writing and mathematics from their individual starting points.
- Since the previous inspection, pupils' learning has improved strongly because of greatly improved teaching and assessment.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieve well because leaders use pupil premium effectively to support their learning.
- The improved teaching and pupils' outcomes have been securely driven by highly focused leaders and determined governors. Leaders have successfully tackled previously weak teaching which hampered pupils' learning historically.
- The coaching of less experienced teachers by more experienced colleagues is successfully improving teaching throughout school.
- The inspirational headteacher, staff and fully committed governors are a strong team. Their effective leadership ensures that the school continues to improve.
- A culture of high expectation has been successfully established in school, helping all pupils to thrive in their learning.
- Governors relentlessly ask highly challenging questions of the executive headteacher and school staff, holding them robustly to account for pupils' progress and achievement.
- Pupils are well cared for by dedicated and diligent staff. Staff effectively promote good achievement through their caring and nurturing approach.
- Pupils are well cared for and feel safe in school. Behaviour is good and pupils enjoy coming to school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There remain a few minor variations in the gains pupils make in their learning in reading, writing and mathematics.
- A minority of teachers do not have high enough expectations of presentation of pupils' work and what they can achieve.
- Homework does not support effective learning well enough.
- A few teachers do not consistently apply the school's marking policy. This slows down pupils' learning slightly.
- Subject leaders, other than English, mathematics and science, are not yet having as much impact as they could on improving teaching, learning and assessment.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve the quality of teaching and eliminate variations in the rates of progress pupils make in reading, writing and mathematics, by:
 - ensuring that teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are consistently high
 - always insisting on the highest standards of presentation
 - using homework more effectively to support learning.

- Further strengthen leadership and management, by:
 - increasing the impact subject leaders have on teaching, learning and assessment in subjects other than English, mathematics and science
 - ensuring teachers apply the school marking policy consistently.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Since the federation was formed and the executive headteacher took up his post, teaching and learning have been radically transformed. Highly effective governors, along with the strong senior leadership team, have worked decisively to eliminate weak teaching so pupils can excel in their learning.
- The executive headteacher is well supported by an able senior leadership team who have the highest expectations for pupils in school. The expectations staff have of their pupils have been raised dramatically since the school was federated with Pinvin CofE First School. Expecting the best for all pupils is at the heart of the vision shared by staff at the school. One senior leader explained with gusto, 'In this school failure is not now an option.'
- School leaders and managers have a robust understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The comprehensive school improvement plan shows they are collectively very clearly focused on eliminating the few remaining weaknesses to accelerate pupils' progress even more rapidly.
- Teachers and teaching assistants place much value on the high-quality professional development opportunities provided to help them improve their teaching. The strategy of using highly skilled teachers to support those who are new to the profession is proving effective in securing improvements in teaching.
- The curriculum has breadth and balance which meets the needs of pupils well. It is carefully designed to enthuse, inspire and motivate all groups of pupils which it does successfully and raises their achievement. The curriculum is further strengthened by the many clubs which are available to pupils as well as the exciting outdoor learning. Many visits to sites of local interest and importance enhance the curriculum effectively. A group of pupils extended their knowledge of local history when they visited the Worcester Commandery Museum.
- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They learn about, and have a good understanding of, democracy because of the role played by members of the elected pupil parliament. Recently, a pupil initiated a debate about the equality of opportunity in the school which a number of pupils participated in. Pupils regularly experience democracy in action in this school.
- Social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is effectively promoted throughout school. This contributes well to pupils' understanding of right and wrong. They are regularly given opportunities to reflect on quite complex dilemmas within lessons, to which they respond thoughtfully.
- Additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils in their learning is successfully targeted on enabling them to attain well. Attainment gaps between disadvantaged pupils compared to other pupils in school and nationally narrowed greatly in 2015. This is because senior leaders and governors spend the funding astutely. This year, the progress of disadvantaged pupils is at least in line with that of other pupils in the school.
- Sporting opportunities for pupils have been enhanced well through the additional funding provided by the government. Staff expertise in the teaching of sport has improved well.
- The leadership of English, mathematics and science is strong. Subject leaders are having a powerful impact on teaching and learning. This impact is not yet fully replicated in other subject areas because these leaders' skills in monitoring are not yet fully developed. School leaders rightly have plans to extend the impact of other subject leaders across the curriculum.
- The local authority supported the school well following the previous inspection. More recently they have been able to substantially reduce their involvement in school. This is because the capacity of the school to improve was strengthened by key appointments.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The governing body, which works across the federation, has secured strong improvements in the middle school. Governors have a very clear grasp of their strategic role in driving improvement forward. When governors had concerns about pupils' achievement in mathematics, they undertook a meticulous investigation into the quality of mathematics teaching in school. They then sanctioned an action plan to bring about the rapid improvements which inspectors saw the impact of during the inspection. Pupils are now given many more opportunities to explain their reasoning behind how they solve problems and gain a deeper understanding of mathematical concepts.
 - Improved knowledge ensures that questions asked by governors of senior leaders are challenging. Governors hold school leaders fully to account for any perceived underperformance of either staff or pupils. Governors take decisive action through robust processes to manage staff performance. They

expect weak teachers to improve rapidly. Governors have rightly taken firm action when teachers have not improved to an acceptable standard.

- Safeguarding is effective. The school has robust processes in place to ensure that statutory requirements are met and pupils are kept safe. Safeguarding is soundly managed by a recently appointed manager who ensures that all staff training on child protection and safeguarding is fully up to date. Robust records are kept in line with requirements. The safeguarding leader and school staff work successfully with a wide range of outside agencies to ensure that all pupils are supported and safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Since the previous inspection the quality of teaching has improved strongly. This can be seen in the latest accurate school assessment information and in pupils' books where their progress is accelerating at a fast rate.
- Many teachers are highly skilled at asking pupils questions which help them to reflect carefully on what they have learned. This helps to extend pupils' learning well.
- Teaching assistants successfully play a key role in helping pupils to learn effectively. They work well with a wide range of ability levels in classes to support strong learning. Many teaching assistants are particularly skilled at supporting pupils who have special educational needs or disability and those from vulnerable groups. The caring and nurturing approach of teachers and teaching assistants has a strong impact on the learning of these pupils.
- Learning is planned thoroughly to challenge and motivate the most able pupils in many lessons. In mathematics, this group of pupils are given many opportunities to apply their knowledge to solve complex problems. The most able pupils are also challenged well in writing and their attainment was in line with the national average in 2015.
- Pupils make great use of the many prompts on display. Teachers ensure that reassurance is at hand when they need to know how to approach a mathematics problem or construct a specific type of sentence.
- Learning in many lessons proceeds at a fast pace because resources provided to support pupils are matched closely to what they already know and can do. Information and communications technology is used successfully throughout school to bring the curriculum to life for pupils. Older pupils were observed excitedly participating in a challenging English lesson after watching a video clip which ignited their interest.
- Pupils are taught to read very well in school. They are confident and fluent readers because of the importance placed on developing their love of books and enjoyment of reading. This opens the educational door for them in other subjects. Writing and mathematics are taught equally as effectively.
- Teachers use the latest available assessment information effectively in the planning of learning activities which are well matched to pupils' needs. This supports pupils' learning well and raises expectations of what pupils can achieve. However, occasionally teachers accept work from pupils which is untidy or presented scruffily – showing that not all teachers always have high enough expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving.
- Leaders have not gained consistency in teachers' application of the school marking policy. At times, feedback is used most effectively and supports learning strongly. However, this not consistently the case – which hampers learning slightly as pupils are unclear how to improve.
- The impact homework has on learning was rightly raised as a concern by many parents. Inspection evidence supports this view that homework does not currently support learning as well as it might.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The work of the school to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The support provided for pupils in this caring and nurturing school helps those who are more vulnerable to achieve well. The funding of a minibus by the school to transport vulnerable pupils to school has successfully improved their attendance. This has led to improved progress in learning being made by these pupils.
- The nurture provision effectively addresses the needs of specific pupils who have special educational needs or disability. This support helps these pupils to make good rates of progress in their learning throughout school.

- Many pupils take on additional responsibilities in school. Older pupils have additional responsibilities such as helping younger pupils in the transition from the lunch hall to the playground. The most able pupils are willing to use their knowledge and skills to support those who are struggling. An older pupil was observed helping one of his peers who was stuck on a multiplication challenge in mathematics.
- Members of the pupil parliament make a positive contribution to school life. They make important decisions which impact on all members of the school community. Pupils are proud to serve as elected members representing their peers.
- Pupils have a very good understanding of how to stay safe both in the wider world and when they are using the internet because they are taught so well about these issues.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are polite, well-mannered and respectful of each other and adults in school. They are smartly turned out and wear their uniforms with pride.
- During breaktimes pupils enjoy the company of their friends on the calm playground which has different areas where pupils can sit and socialise. The school hall is an orderly place at lunchtimes where pupils sit, eat and chat. When leaving the school hall after collective worship, the pupils file out in silence with what could be called military precision.
- Pupils' overall attendance is above the national average. The proportions of pupils regularly absent from school have been reduced as a result of actions by the school.
- Pupils report there is no bullying in this school and this was supported by inspection evidence. One pupil explained sometimes other pupils could be a little mean but this is not bullying. Pupils report if they have any concerns they speak with the adults in school and their worries are resolved rapidly.
- Pupils and parents are able to use an online system to record behaviour concerns. This system is regularly monitored by staff. Leaders follow up concerns swiftly, demonstrating that these are taken seriously.
- Parents, pupils and staff say that pupils behave well. Inspectors agree that behaviour is a strength and were pleased to note no pupils running in the school building even when unsupervised.
- Rewards for good behaviour provide a strong incentive for pupils to behave well in school. The system provides good opportunities for the overwhelming majority of pupils who behave well to exchange tokens from a range of rewards. This system is highly effective in encouraging positive behaviour and attitudes to learning. Occasionally, a very small minority of pupils do not display consistently strong attitudes to learning in a few lessons.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Historic progress information is not reflected in the current fast progress pupils are making in their learning. The latest school assessment information, which inspectors verified in an in-depth check of many books, show pupils' progress is accelerating rapidly from their individual starting points. This is because of the vastly improved teaching since the federation was formed. Inspectors observed pupils making strong progress in their learning in a range of subjects but primarily English, mathematics and science.
- Pupil premium funding is used astutely to support disadvantaged pupils. It has enabled these pupils to narrow attainment gaps dramatically compared to other pupils in school and nationally. From their individual starting points, disadvantaged pupils progress well in their learning.
- The most able pupils are challenged successfully in lessons. This helps them to make good rates of progress and attain good outcomes.
- The support provided for vulnerable pupils and those who have special educational needs or disability is effective in helping them to progress well in their learning.
- In 2015, Year 6 pupils reached standards which were broadly in line with the national average in mathematics, reading, writing, grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- The latest robust school assessment information shows that standards are on track to rise this academic year because of the stronger progress now being made by pupils. The achievement of boys is stronger now than at the time of the previous inspection.
- Inspection evidence and the latest school assessment information shows that there remain a small number of variations in the rates of progress being made in reading, writing and mathematics by groups of pupils such as boys compared to girls.
- Pupils are well prepared for their move to high school from St Nicholas CofE Middle School.

School details

Unique reference number	116861
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	10002528

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

Type of school	Middle deemed primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	9–12
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	310
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kevern Oliver
Headteacher	Andrew Best
Telephone number	01386 554196
Website	www.st-nicholas.worcs.sch.uk
Email address	office@st-nicholas.worcs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	9–10 January 2014

Information about this school

- This middle school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported by pupil premium funding (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children looked after) is lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is above the national average.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage although a small but increasing proportion are from minority ethnic groups.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school joined with Pinvin CofE First School in September 2014 to form the Pinvin Federation. At the same time the executive headteacher took up his post.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specific information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in lessons and part lessons. Three part lessons were observed jointly with the executive headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, school staff and nine members of the governing body, including the chair. The lead inspector also spoke with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors held discussions with parents and groups of pupils. Inspectors also spoke informally to pupils in lessons, during breaks and over lunch.
- Inspectors scrutinised the work pupils produced during lessons and in a wide range of their books over time. They also listened to a small number of pupils from Year 5 read.
- Inspectors closely observed the work of the school and looked at the latest school performance information showing the progress pupils are currently making.
- Other documentation scrutinised included: plans for school improvement, safeguarding information, behaviour logs, attendance records and minutes of the meetings of the governing body.
- Inspectors took account of 44 responses to the online Ofsted questionnaire with free text comments (Parent View) and 30 responses to a parent questionnaire circulated very recently by the school. Inspectors also considered 25 responses to the online staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Declan McCauley, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Diana Pearce	Ofsted Inspector
Rowena Green	Ofsted Inspector

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