

# St Nicolas' CofE Primary School

Locks Hill, Portslade, Brighton, East Sussex BN41 2LA

## Inspection dates

14–15 September 2016

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The headteacher provides strong leadership which has steered the ongoing improvements since the previous inspection.
- The school's very strong community and caring ethos underpins all that it does. Parents are highly positive about the headteacher, the staff and the school's work.
- Teaching is good. As a result, all groups of pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics as well as a range of other subjects.
- Teachers plan work which interests pupils. Teachers regularly check the progress that pupils are making. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and are keen to do well.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good, largely because they practise the school's values in their daily lives.
- The school's exciting curriculum is broad and balanced and supports pupils' personal development well.
- Staff prioritise the welfare and emotional well-being of pupils. As a result, pupils feel safe and valued.
- Teaching is good in the early years. Children get off to a good start. Staff work well to establish positive relationships with parents, even before children start school.
- The governing body makes a strong contribution to school improvement.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement still further by ensuring that teaching:
  - always appropriately challenges the most able pupils so that they reach the highest standards they are capable of
  - enables pupils to quickly develop accurate spelling and a wide vocabulary.
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - ensuring that the website meets statutory requirements
  - continuing to work with parents to make sure that the attendance of disadvantaged pupils continues to improve.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The headteacher leads with quiet confidence and absolute dedication to making sure that all pupils are happy, well looked after at school and achieve their best. He leads staff by example, showing care and concern while supporting them to constantly improve their practice.
- The headteacher has successfully steered the school through a period of change, as the school turned from a junior into a primary school. While doing so, school leaders have nurtured excellent relationships with parents. In numerous letters of support and highly positive comments on Ofsted's online survey Parent View, parents were fully supportive of the headteacher and staff. Typical comments included 'I continue to be impressed by all the teachers' attitudes and dedication' and 'Impressed by the headteacher, who has the overwhelming respect of all the children while still being approachable and inspiring.'
- Leaders provide good-quality support to teachers who join the school or who are new to the profession so that they are confident in their role. For example, they receive clear guidance about the school's systems and expectations, especially in relation to safeguarding.
- Staff morale is high. This is largely due to the good support staff receive to continually improve their practice, both from school leaders and from each other. Professional development is well managed by leaders and each teacher's pay and training are linked to their performance.
- Leaders and teachers make frequent checks on how well pupils are learning. As a result, they are clear about which pupils need extra help. An extra-close eye is kept on the learning of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This ensures that additional funding, including pupil premium funding, is used well to meet the specific needs of these pupils. One-to-one and small-group sessions help make sure that they do not fall behind. Leaders check the effectiveness of these sessions and make suitable adaptations where needed.
- Pupil premium funding is also used to support disadvantaged pupils to attend well. Leaders have improved communication with the parents of these pupils. This has made a positive difference. However, the attendance of these pupils still lags behind that of other pupils. Although the information on the website is not up to date, good practice in school makes sure that funding is targeted where it is needed. However, leaders know there is more to be done.
- Leaders recognise the importance of providing appropriate challenge to the most able pupils. Staff receive frequent training to further improve the provision for this group of pupils. Nevertheless, leaders recognise that most able pupils are not consistently challenged to the degree necessary to make very strong progress.
- Leaders and staff work successfully together to develop the way subjects are taught so that learning is purposeful and engaging, enabling pupils to make good progress across subjects. The curriculum is well supplemented by a range of clubs, including guitar, choir, chess and a range of sports. Visits to the local area, as well as a residential visit to France for Year 6 pupils, further enrich pupils' experiences and support pupils' academic as well as their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

- Leaders use the primary physical education and sport premium effectively. Training for teachers has improved their confidence and skills in teaching gymnastics. Additional sports clubs have increased pupils' participation, especially for girls. This makes a good contribution to pupils' physical and mental health. Less positively, required information about how leaders spend the funding is not on the school website.
- The school's values include taking on responsibilities in the service of others, being respectful and acting out of love and friendship. These values effectively support the promotion of British values and are fundamental to the work of the school. Pupils are happy to take on extra responsibilities in the service of others, for example by working with staff to formulate the anti-bullying policy and by working with the local council to improve the parking arrangements outside the school. Pupils learn to be respectful. As one parent wrote to inspectors, 'The mutual respect between teaching staff is a shining example to the children, who have learned how to respect one another.' Pupils learn about democracy by voting for school and class councillors, using voting booths and having their names checked before voting. Children in the early years learn about democracy by, for example, voting for the name of the baby dinosaur.

### **Governance of the school**

- The governing body plays an effective role in the school's continuing improvement. Governors know how well the school is performing in relation to other schools and are clear about the most important priorities in the next stage of its development. They ask sensible questions about pupils' achievement and about the impact that teaching is having on the progress different groups of pupils make. This ensures that the governing body provides appropriate support and challenge to school leaders.
- Governors know how funds, such as the pupil premium, are used to support the achievement and well-being of pupils. Governors know that the primary physical education and sport premium has improved teachers' confidence in teaching physical education as well as increasing pupils' participation in sport.
- Governors make sure that pay increases for the headteacher and teachers are linked to performance.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school works well to keep pupils safe. Effective links are made with external agencies to support pupils who may be at risk of harm. Leaders ensure that support is given in a timely manner when needed. The school works well with families to support the well-being and safety of their children.
- The safeguarding policy is being suitably updated in line with the most recent requirements. Procedures in school are rigorous. Staff receive appropriate training, including training in recognising extremism and radicalisation. They all understand the importance of being vigilant. Staff know exactly what to do should a concern be raised.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Good**

- Leadership has been effective in improving the quality of teaching. Teachers teach with confidence and enthusiasm.
- Lessons are lively and interesting. 'Stunning starts' are used to introduce topics in an

exciting way. For example, to begin the Year 5 topic on space, pupils tasted space food, tested their own reaction times and drew three-dimensional drawings of rockets made from cubes. As a result, pupils were enthused and learned well.

- Skilled, well-trained teaching assistants provide effective additional support for pupils who need to catch up quickly, including pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those pupils who are disadvantaged. Focused teaching in class, as well as work in small groups and individual support for these pupils, helps them make good progress with their learning.
- Teachers and teaching assistants check pupils' understanding to find out what they need to learn and make sure that they have learned it. Pupils were keen to explain to inspectors how a 'cold task' at the beginning of a topic lets them and their teachers know what they can do and a 'hot task' (completed at the end of a topic) shows how much they have learned. Pupils said that this helped them with their learning. However, there are occasions when this information is not used well enough to quickly move the most able pupils on in their learning, and this sometimes slows their progress.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this well to provide effective feedback to pupils, in line with the school's policy. Teachers provide pupils with clear guidance about what they have done well and their 'next steps'. During the inspection, Year 5 pupils very successfully used feedback to improve their descriptive writing. One pupil improved a sentence so that it read, 'A mass of churning foam rose in an arch high above the boat and threatened to suck its victim to its watery end.'
- The teaching of reading is good. Pupils' reading skills are enhanced through daily reading sessions. Year 6 pupils are able to summarise texts and write detailed 'character profiles'. The school environment promotes a love of reading. A bright display shows pupils 'getting caught reading' in some strange places! Pupils make good use of the well-stocked library.
- A variety of strategies has been successful in improving the teaching of writing. Pupils are encouraged to use a range of 'ingredients' in their writing, rather like a chef using a recipe. A group of most-able pupils created a system of coded symbols to represent these 'ingredients'. Pupils use these to highlight effective features of their writing when they assess their work.
- The teaching of mathematics is now good. Pupils develop their mathematical skills across other subjects, for example measuring distances in a science investigation and calculating the distance that the ship 'Mayflower' travelled from Plymouth to the New World in a history topic. During the inspection, the most able pupils were challenged to use decimals to solve complicated problems. One pupil said, 'This is really tricky but I like the challenge.'
- A published author works with the most able writers to extend their writing skills and these pupils often use a rich vocabulary. However, this is not the case for all pupils because teaching does not always provide enough opportunities for pupils to develop a wide vocabulary. Consequently, pupils do not make really strong progress in reading and writing.
- Phonics is taught well in phonics sessions. However, spelling is not taught consistently well across the school and spelling mistakes are not corrected often enough to ensure that pupils quickly develop accurate spelling.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are positive about school and take pride in their work. Their attitude to learning supports their good progress. Relationships across the school are strong and this helps pupils learn to be self-confident and self-aware.
- Pupils feel safe and cared for in school. All parents who completed Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, agreed that the school keeps pupils happy, safe and well looked after. Through the curriculum, pupils learn how to stay safe. For example, pupils learn about the need to stay safe when using computers. They know not to provide personal information when using technology.
- Pupils know how to keep healthy. They know that it is important to take part in sport and they welcome the opportunities that the school provides. Pupils said they particularly enjoy the sporting competitions.
- Pupils know about different forms of bullying and told inspectors that bullying did not happen in school. School records show that any instances of unkindness are dealt with swiftly and effectively. 'Worry boxes' are provided for pupils to let adults know of any concerns they may have. Pupils are confident that adults help them if needed. In this way, the school effectively promotes pupils' emotional well-being.
- The breakfast club provides a safe, welcoming place for children before school.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils enjoy school. They understand the importance of the school's values and behave well in class, during breaktimes and when walking around the school. Staff say that behaviour is good. Parents agree.
- Lunchtimes are sociable occasions. Supervision is good and pupils have time to chat while eating their meal. Pupils are polite. They speak respectfully to adults and to each other.
- Most pupils attend regularly and arrive punctually. Attendance has improved for all groups of pupils. However, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils still lags behind that of others.

## Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils currently in school are making good progress in English, mathematics and a range of other subjects. The school prepares pupils well for secondary school.
- In 2015, key stage 2 attainment was above the national average in reading. However, too few pupils reached the higher levels in mathematics and writing, and this represented slow progress for the most able pupils. Evidence gathered during the inspection confirms that, across the school, the most able pupils now make good progress. However, there are occasions in some classes where progress for the most able pupils is slowed because they are not moved on in their learning when it is clear that they are ready for a greater challenge.

- Over the past two years, pupils' results in the Year 1 phonics check have been at least as good as the national average. This gets pupils off to a good start in reading.
- The school's own information, as well as evidence in pupils' books, show that in 2016, Year 2 pupils made good progress from their starting points in Reception.
- The school's work to diminish the difference between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally is effective. Disadvantaged pupils currently in the school are achieving increasingly well. This is due to the very close attention that leaders and teachers give to making sure that additional funding is used effectively so that disadvantaged pupils achieve well.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because teaching is focused sharply on pupils' individual needs.

### Early years provision

**Good**

- During the inspection, children were spending their first half-day in school. It was clear that good links with nurseries, the use of home visits and the 'stay and play' sessions designed to familiarise children with school meant that children settle quickly into school life. Parents spoken to during the inspection talked positively about how well the induction arrangements had helped their child to prepare for school.
- The proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of early years has improved year on year. In 2016, children's attainment represented good progress from their starting points. This level of achievement ensures that children are well prepared for learning in Year 1. The leader for early years has identified the need to make sure an even higher proportion of children exceed the expected standard at the end of Reception and is planning accordingly.
- Adults quickly establish positive relationships between with children. They make sure that children feel safe and secure in school. This helps children to develop self-confidence and make friends. Children behave very well. They play sensibly together, encouraged and supported by well-trained adults who quickly get to know the children's needs and interests.
- The school's values are emphasised right from the start. Adults insist on children saying 'please' and 'thank you' when sharing fruit. Children quickly learn to be independent and to put toys away at the end of an activity.
- Teaching is effective. Additional funding for disadvantaged children is used effectively to make sure that they achieve well. Teachers provide activities, both inside and outside the classroom, that excite and engage the children.
- Early years provision is well led. Induction for new staff is of high quality. They quickly become effective. Good links are made with external agencies to give additional support to children who need it. The leader for early years ensures that safeguarding arrangements are appropriate.

## School details

Unique reference number	114560
Local authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	10012283

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	383
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Julie Scarratt
Headteacher	Andy Richbell
Telephone number	01273418026
Website	<a href="http://www.stnicolas.brighton-hove.sch.uk">www.stnicolas.brighton-hove.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:head@stnicolas.brighton-hove.sch.uk">head@stnicolas.brighton-hove.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	15–16 July 2014

## Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about the pupil premium and the physical education and sport premium for primary schools on its website.
- This school is larger than the average-sized primary school and has restructured to become a primary rather than a junior school. In September 2013, two classes of reception-age children were admitted. In September 2015, the school had a full complement of primary-age pupils.
- Most pupils are White British. Few are from minority ethnic backgrounds or speak English as an additional language.
- The children in the Reception year attend full time.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is similar to the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above that found nationally.



- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school runs a breakfast club.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in lessons across the school. Several of these were observed jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, senior leaders, teachers, parents and pupils. A meeting was held with representatives of the governing body. An inspector had conversations with two representatives of the local authority. Twenty-one responses to the staff questionnaire were also considered.
- Inspectors took account of 112 responses to the online survey, Parent View. Nine letters from parents were also taken into account. An inspector also met with some parents at lunchtime and at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and considered a range of documents, including the school's improvement plan, attendance records and safeguarding documentation.
- Pupils' books from different year groups and subjects were scrutinised. Inspectors heard several pupils read.

## Inspection team

Joanna Toulson, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Alan Jenner	Ofsted Inspector
Chris Donovan	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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