

# Church, St Nicholas Church of England Primary School

St Nicholas Road, Church, Accrington, Lancashire BB5 4DN

## Inspection dates

7–8 February 2017

<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

- Strong and determined leadership has ensured that improvements noted at the time of the last inspection have accelerated.
- St Nicholas provides a good education for its pupils. Standards of teaching and behaviour have improved significantly.
- The five core values, visible on walls throughout the school, guide the staff in their commitment to the pupils. There is a unity and shared purpose, driven by the headteacher, to which all in the school community subscribe.
- Lessons are well planned and busy. Pupils respond well to the good guidance they receive both from their teachers and from skilled teaching assistants. However, time in lessons is not used consistently well to challenge pupils to reach high standards.
- Improvements in the standards of writing throughout the school since the last inspection mean that pupils make good progress and reach expected standards.
- Pupils' reasoning skills are not as well developed in different subjects as other skills. There are not enough opportunities for pupils to explain their thinking in depth.
- In reading and mathematics, attainment was below national standards at the end of key stage 2 in 2016. Rapid progress has been made in this academic year. Pupils typically work at a level which is similar to, or better than, the expectations for their age group.
- The school provides a broad and interesting curriculum. Humanities subjects have not been developed to the same extent as other subjects.
- The provision of care and guidance is a strength of the school. All efforts are made to meet individual needs. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress.
- Leaders set high expectations of behaviour and these are consistently maintained by staff throughout the school. The vast majority of pupils have responded positively to this and, as a result, behaviour is now good.
- Children get off to a flying start in the early years. They thoroughly enjoy the rich variety of learning experiences that are on offer.
- Parents have great confidence in the leadership of the school.

## Full report

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

- Further improve the quality of teaching, by:
  - building on the school's work in developing reasoning across the curriculum by giving more opportunities for pupils to explain their learning and discuss it in greater depth
  - ensuring that time in all lessons is used productively in order to challenge pupils more.
- Continue to develop the school's curriculum by further improving the provision in humanities subjects.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- At the time of the last inspection, the leadership team had made some inroads into improving teaching and behaviour. This work has accelerated over the past two years to the extent that both teaching and behaviour are now good.
- The headteacher has been at the forefront of this change. Her quiet determination to secure better outcomes for pupils has galvanised staff into raising expectations and improving lessons. Well supported by a reflective group of middle leaders, she and the governing body are well placed to take the school forward.
- Leaders have not been afraid of challenging teaching which has not been good enough, or behaviour which has detracted from pupils' learning. There have been high numbers of exclusions over the last two years but these have occurred only after all other strategies and support have been exhausted. Through its own carefully monitored procedures, the school is able to demonstrate how the same support for current pupils has avoided exclusions and led to improved outcomes.
- At the heart of leaders' work is an unshakeable focus on the school's ethos and values. The school's five core values of 'love, kindness, self-control, patience and joy' are lived out by staff, highlighting the belief they have in the direction of the school. This has assisted in improving the consistency of teaching and behaviour management.
- Leaders use systems well to check on the progress of pupils. This means that they can set realistic but challenging targets which are also used effectively in teacher appraisal.
- Teachers feel overwhelmingly that they are supported and developed. There is a wide programme of training for all staff, and the headteacher has been active in forging links and partnerships with good and outstanding practice outside school. Staff have benefited from this because their teaching has improved.
- The pupil premium funding is used effectively. Despite having a large proportion of children eligible for this funding, leaders track its benefits to pupils on an individual level. They check the effectiveness of this commitment regularly.
- The school has altered the way it allocates its sports funding mid-year. This is because school leaders check impact regularly and felt that change was required. Staff have benefited from training and support and are now more confident in delivering lessons and coaching. They, rather than external coaches, therefore lead teaching. Leaders are aware that they now need to check on participation and competition rates in more detail to ensure that all pupils are given further opportunities in their sporting development.
- Additional funding to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used effectively and supports them in making good progress and enjoying all that the school has to offer.
- Pupils enjoy the school's wider curriculum. Reading, writing and mathematics are promoted well in other subjects, especially science. There is a buzz around the development of a creative homework strategy which has captured the imagination of

pupils and staff alike. History and geography are less well developed.

- In talking to the 'School Parliament' and the 'Rotas' groups, inspectors heard the children's understanding of British values at first hand. For example, children spoke confidently about how a recent trip to the Houses of Parliament had assisted them in understanding issues such as human rights and democracy. Through attractive displays around the school, these values are well promoted.
- Leaders are successful in their work to inform pupils about the benefits and dangers of life online. Inspectors visited the school on 'Internet Safety Day' and this was marked by lessons and assemblies highlighting this issue. Pupils and parents are unanimous in saying that these activities are typical of how leaders place child welfare at the heart of the school's work.
- The school has received welcome support from local authority advisory officers. In particular, this has assisted the work of middle leaders.

### **Governance of the school**

- Governors have an astute understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They have a shared ambition to raise expectations, and are able to demonstrate that, over the past three years, their actions have led to improvements.
- Governors provide an appropriate balance of support and challenge to senior staff and are rigorous in their duties regarding the management of the performance of teachers. Both the pupil premium funding and sports funding are managed efficiently under their scrutiny. However, they are not averse to bringing in extra expertise for an objective viewpoint, so external reviews of these funds are commissioned annually.
- Governors are regular visitors in the school. Whether participating in a 'Real Maths' day, or organising community events, they ensure that they have a working understanding of the daily life of the school.
- Their commitment to safety is given due weight. Recent improvements to perimeter fencing and CCTV cameras have added to the security of the environment. They are vigilant in ensuring pupils' safety through appropriate internet filtering.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have shown vigilance in establishing a culture where pupils are kept safe. Relevant policies and procedures are up to date and well understood by staff. They know what to do should they have any concerns about child welfare.
- The most vulnerable pupils are given a high priority. Record-keeping is effective and the school works well with local agencies to ensure that concerns are followed up.
- There are regular training updates for all staff and governors and those new to the school. Staff are aware of the key messages within government guidance on keeping pupils safe in school.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching is now good because there is a greater consistency of practice throughout the school, together with higher expectations of pupils. This helps them to make steady gains in their learning. Teachers commit fully to school policies and procedures. For example, they sing with conviction and musicality alongside their class when entering assembly, establishing a standard which pupils are expected to copy.
- Many teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge. In a Year 6 lesson where the teacher was dissecting a lamb's heart, she was able, confidently and correctly, to use terminology such as 'ventricle', 'chamber' and 'oxygenated blood'. Pupils were riveted by this presentation.
- The teaching of reading is good throughout the school. Texts are both interesting and appropriate to the ability of the pupils. In reading workshops, teachers skilfully question pupils and extend their vocabulary.
- There has been a steady improvement in the teaching of writing since the last inspection. Grammar and punctuation are taught well, with corrections noted carefully by pupils so that they learn from their mistakes.
- The school employs a range of teaching strategies to meet the needs of those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Many of the school's skilled teaching assistants are deployed to support these pupils. The good guidance that they receive ensures that the progress that these pupils make is at least in line with that of their peer group.
- Teachers have responded well to the area for improvement at the last inspection regarding the displays in classes. These are now more often centred on pupils' learning as well as celebrating quality.
- Staff are trying hard to develop core learning skills across all classes. This has met with some success, such as the greater output in extended writing, linked to improving resilience. However, some teaching does not promote independence. Consequently, pupils wait for the next piece of work or do not have strategies to overcome difficulties. This prevents them from learning at a fast enough rate.
- Since the last inspection, the teaching of mathematics contains an increased focus on reasoning and problems related to logic. However, in some lessons, both in mathematics and in other subjects, pupils can be waiting too long for the appropriate challenge. Those pupils in key stage 2 who were interviewed by inspectors also reported this to be the case.
- Pupils report that teachers are very supportive. In particular, they find the feedback they receive useful because it helps them to improve their work. This was evident in pupils' books. Staff are generous with their time and are patient and reflective.

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school has invested much time in developing successful learning characteristics for its pupils. They persevere well and listen carefully. Carefully tailored programmes of support for pupils to build on these skills are at the forefront of the planned day.
- Pupils live up to the school's mission of 'Growing Together' through their commitment to learning. They are rightly proud of the improvements at the school and their role in these. As School Parliamentarians or Rota Kids, they are given increasing opportunities to have their say in the school's work.
- During events such as 'Real Maths Day', a variety of visitors have given presentations to children about the importance of knowledge and skills in their everyday work. Governors were fully part of the planning of this day. This type of event highlights the importance that the school attaches to promoting ambition in its pupils.
- The school has developed its own nurture provision which aims to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff are highly sensitive to these needs and will alter activities or support if something is not working. Parents are fully involved in these plans.
- Safety is a huge priority for the school and pupils are unanimous in praising the school's efforts to keep them protected. On the very rare occasions when bullying occurs, staff take quick action to intervene. As a result, pupils feel happy and relaxed in school and morale is high.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school has had to deal with challenging behaviour from a small minority of pupils since the last inspection and this accounts for the high level of exclusions during this time. This is not indicative of a lack of support. In contrast, by working intensively with other agencies, leaders do all they can to meet the needs of pupils and provide the appropriate help. Records seen by inspectors show how guidance for pupils currently at the school has led to significant improvements in behaviour.
- The school's consistent approach to behaviour management has been welcomed by all within the school community. Pupils and parents recognise the benefits it brings. Staff are seeing the emergence of greater self-discipline in their pupils, which in turn is leading to more productive lessons.
- Around the school, pupils are unfailingly polite and courteous. Their respect for others is notable, exemplified by their conduct during assemblies. Despite these recent improvements, some lessons are still affected by low-level disturbances.

- Leaders have been vigilant in keeping attendance rates close to, or above, national averages. An experienced family support worker helps to maintain close links with families in the community. Parents have trust in the school and are regular visitors; this helps to cement a culture where everybody is valued.
- For its efforts, the school has received a local gold award for its improvements to behaviour, and this confidence placed in the school's work is indicative of the feelings of staff, governors, parents and pupils.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- In 2015, the school's results showed that pupils were leaving the school with attainment at least in line with national figures, and above in mathematics. This represented strong progress from pupils' starting points.
- Under the revised assessment arrangements of the new curriculum in 2016, results dropped so that pupils achieved standards lower than national figures in reading and mathematics. In writing, they achieved standards which were similar to national averages.
- Evidence from progress information held by the school for current pupils shows that any decline flagged up in these 2016 figures has been arrested. Within each key stage, pupils make consistently good progress.
- Despite the good start made in the Reception class, a significant minority of children start Year 1 with skills which are below those typical for their age. They then make good strides forward, so that they leave Year 2 with broadly expected standards, leaving them well placed to begin the key stage 2 curriculum.
- Current work seen in pupils' books is good for most groups of pupils. It is sufficiently well matched to the expectations of the curriculum. For example, a Year 3 class had to construct a Venn diagram using multiples of eight. During the lesson, they showed that they had a good working knowledge of their times tables which helped them with the task. The volume of work covered is good and most pieces of work are completed and evaluated.
- Reading has a high profile in the school. A variety of staff hear pupils read regularly. Though the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level in the Year 1 phonics check is below average, it is rising. The small group of pupils who were not able to read and write unfamiliar words at the end of Year 2 now can.
- Throughout the school, reading workshops, which are a new initiative this year, give valuable time for the embedding of comprehension work. More advanced reasoning skills, both oral and written, are less well developed.
- The school has a high proportion of disadvantaged pupils and more than half of these pupils typically leave Reception without a good level of development. They then progress at broadly similar rates to those of the other pupils at the school, often supported skilfully through carefully planned small-group work. Despite their progress being good, their performance is not yet sufficiently good to ensure that a high

proportion leave the school with the expected standards in reading and mathematics.

- Most-able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, lagged a little behind most-able pupils nationally in 2016 at both key stages. This year, rates of progress have accelerated and there is no discernible difference between their progress and that of other groups in the school.
- Teachers have been successful in setting high expectations in science work. Written work is of a similar standard to that in English books, and graphs and tables are presented with precision and care. This is less evident in history and geography but the school has plans for how to develop these subjects in greater depth.
- Writing is a success story for the school, with accurate spelling and punctuation evident in the books viewed by the inspection team. This has helped to maintain good rates of progress for all groups. Pupils clearly enjoy their writing, practised across a range of text types and styles. Handwriting is improving, though it is not yet consistent in its quality across the school.
- In its well-planned nurture provision and support within the classroom, the school assists pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in making good progress. Like their peers, these pupils are increasingly well prepared to meet the challenges of the next stage of their education.

### Early years provision

**Good**

- Committed and talented staff have created a busy 'theatre for learning' which helps children begin their life at school on a highly positive note. Children are receptive and cooperative learners and this helps them to progress well.
- The leadership in the Reception class is characterised by energy and enthusiasm which drive the learning. Supported by a skilled team of assistants, the leader provides a wide range of attractive activities within an environment which, both indoor and outdoor, is well resourced and stimulating.
- Teaching is very effective because high expectations are set by all. Children are excited by the range of activities set for them. Questioning is used well to probe understanding and extend vocabulary. Phonics is taught well, with many children able to write simple sentences using the phonic strategies they have learned.
- Staff know the children very well. They make regular checks on learning which allow them to meet individual needs effectively. The strong teamwork between adults means they can change plans quickly to benefit the children.
- Children make good progress from low starting points. Though the proportion of children who attain a good level of development when leaving Reception is still below the national average, it is increasing steadily each year.
- The school is particularly successful in developing spoken and written language in the early years provision. For example, children in outdoor role play excitedly created their own restaurant and spoke confidently about 'customers' and how to 'sprinkle the spaghetti'.
- Behaviour is notable for the good relationships formed. A group of boys supported



each other for a sustained period of time in making a giant pirate ship in the classroom. This is typical of the way children take turns and encourage each other. This positive culture is promoted very well by staff, leading to children who are happy and eager to learn.

- Parents are pleased with the support given to their children. The school is becoming more pro-active in strengthening links with parents and with the various pre-school providers in the area.

## School details

Unique reference number	119447
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10024110

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 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	195
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jason Clemson
Headteacher	Vicky Axon
Telephone number	01254 381875
Website	<a href="http://www.st-nicholas.lancs.sch.uk">www.st-nicholas.lancs.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:head@st-nicholas.lancs.sch.uk">head@st-nicholas.lancs.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	20–21 January 2015

## Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below that found nationally, as is the proportion of pupils from a minority ethnic background.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is similar to that found nationally.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a range of lessons in all year groups in addition to teaching of small groups and reading sessions. Joint observations were carried out with the school's headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and held a number of meetings with pupils from key stage 2. Pupils' work from this academic year was scrutinised across a range of subjects.
- Inspectors considered the 21 responses from parents to the online survey, Parent View, as well as surveys that had been carried out by the school. They also spoke to a range of parents in and around the school.
- A meeting was held with five governors, including the chair of the governing body. Meetings were held with various school leaders, including those responsible for English and mathematics. A meeting was also held with leaders responsible for behaviour, welfare and children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- A meeting was held with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors considered a range of evidence in other documents. These included the school's review of its own performance, improvement plans, checks on the quality of teaching, information about pupils' progress, safeguarding documentation and records of pupils' attendance and behaviour.

## Inspection team

Jeremy Barnes, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Nusret Ellahi

Her Majesty's Inspector

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