

# St Nicholas Church of England Primary School

Sarajac Avenue, East Challow, Wantage, Oxfordshire OX12 9RY

## Inspection dates

12–13 September 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	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Good support from the trust has enabled the school to reverse the decline in standards in key stage 2. Teaching has been strengthened and standards have risen considerably from the significant dip in 2016.
- The early years is a strength of the school. Effective provision ensures that children get off to a good start, achieve well and are well prepared for Year 1.
- Good teaching enables pupils to achieve particularly well in phonics. Pupils apply their skills well when reading.
- School leaders make effective use of the additional funds they receive to support disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Leaders and trustees have a good understanding of the strengths of the school, and where further improvements are needed.
- Trustees and governors hold leaders to account rigorously. There is a clear vision and drive for further improvement. However, the school improvement plan is not focused sharply enough on improving outcomes for pupils. In addition, governors have not ensured that all statutory information is on the school's website.
- Most pupils in and around the school behave well. They are courteous, friendly and are proud of their school.
- Staff and pupils get on well together and relationships across the school are positive and supportive.
- Due to a legacy of previously weaker teaching, pupils in key stage 2 have not made strong enough progress in mathematics. Current pupils are making better progress. However, in mathematics the most able pupils are not consistently challenged enough.
- Many middle leaders are newly appointed to the school and do not yet play a full role in leading school improvement.
- Most parents report that their children enjoy school, learn well and feel safe. However, some parents expressed concern about how well any incidents of bullying are dealt with. School documents show that incidents have been appropriately logged and addressed by school leaders.
- Leaders and governors acknowledge that they need to do more to build the trust and confidence of parents who have had concerns.

## Full report

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

- Ensure that leaders sustain the drive for improvement and that improvements made over the last year, to the quality of teaching and learning, are embedded so that outcomes for pupils continue to improve.
- Improve outcomes in mathematics, by:
  - ensuring that teachers have higher expectations and more consistently challenge all pupils, especially the most able pupils, so that they achieve well.
- Strengthen leadership and management, by:
  - developing the roles of newly appointed middle leaders to enable them to contribute more effectively to the drive for continued improvement
  - sharpening school improvement plans so that they focus more precisely on the actions needed to bring about continued improvement
  - ensuring that the school's website meets the requirements for the publication of information about the impact of the additional funding the school receives for disadvantaged pupils; the curriculum; pupils' key stage 2 results; the school's accessibility plan and a link to the Department for Education performance tables
  - ensuring that leaders work to build the confidence and trust of parents who have had concerns about bullying.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Following a significant decline in standards in key stage 2 in 2016, leaders have taken positive action to improve the quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils. With the effective support of the trust, leaders have made difficult decisions and tackled underperformance. This effective action, combined with a high level of support from the trust, has reversed the decline. As a result, outcomes have improved significantly.
- Leaders have created a supportive culture, where all pupils are valued and feel part of the school community. A number of parents especially appreciate the way school leaders have provided additional, flexible support for them and their children.
- The school has benefited from being part of the academy trust. This is enabling newly appointed middle leaders to work in partnership with other trust leaders to develop their knowledge, skills and capacity. Leaders value the support and mentoring they receive and the opportunity to learn from other schools within the trust. This support has ensured that, during a period of staffing change, stability has been maintained and the school has continued to be led well.
- Leaders have developed a curriculum that is appropriately broad and balanced. Pupils benefit from and enjoy a wide range of visits and activities, which enrich the curriculum and extend their knowledge. For example, pupils' learning in history and science is enhanced through visits to museums. Older pupils also benefit from weekly swimming lessons at a local pool.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is suitably developed. Through religious education, pupils learn about different cultures and the different beliefs and customs of world religions such as Islam and Sikhism. There are many opportunities for pupils to work together cooperatively and to contribute towards school fundraising events. Assemblies enable pupils to come together as a community and reflect on important values such as forgiveness and hope.
- The sports funding has been used very well. Sports leaders from the trust have worked effectively with teachers to develop their skills and confidence in physical education. This has improved the quality of teaching in the school and many pupils also benefit from increased opportunities to take part in competitive sport. Pupils enthuse about the competitions they have taken part in and the success their teams have had in these events.
- Leaders and trustees have ensured that pupils' progress is tracked carefully. This means that they can now see at a glance if any pupils are not making sufficient progress, and act swiftly to address this. Leaders from the school and the trust regularly check on the quality of teaching and learning. They provide clear feedback to teachers to enable them to develop their skills further.
- The trust's leader for special educational needs provides effective leadership and is currently acting as the school's special educational needs coordinator. Funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used appropriately to provide effective support for these pupils. For example, teaching assistants help pupils to be included fully in lessons, build their confidence and help them learn.

- Leaders make good use of the additional funds they receive to support disadvantaged pupils. Many of these pupils benefit from additional support in class to help them stay focused and engaged with their learning. Individual support tailored to pupils' needs helps them make progress with key skills such as reading and writing.
- Leaders provide good opportunities for parents to find out more about how to support their children, for example through the 'meet the teacher' meetings. Parents value and appreciate these opportunities. However, leaders and governors recognise that they have not worked effectively enough with some parents to overcome unresolved concerns.
- While leaders are clear about the need for sustained further improvement, the key priorities do not receive sufficient focus or prominence in the school improvement plan. The current plan lacks precision, clarity and the precise steps the school needs to take to bring about these improvements.

### **Governance of the school**

- Governors and trustees acknowledge that they had not acted sufficiently promptly to address a decline in standards, which led to the significant dip in the 2016 key stage 2 outcomes. Since this time, governors and trustees have acted quickly and decisively to bring about significant improvement. They now hold leaders to account rigorously and have been a driving force for improvement in the school.
- Initial steps to secure improvement were hampered by staffing issues. These have now been resolved and the quality of teaching has improved significantly. The trust's assertive action and support has also brought stability to the school during this period of significant staffing change.
- Governors and trustees have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and where further improvement is needed. They are acutely aware of the improvements made and fully committed to ensuring that they are sustained and embedded. Appropriate appraisal arrangements are in place and governors ensure that pay awards for teaching staff are only made for good performance.
- While the governors have evaluated the impact of the funding they receive for disadvantaged pupils, they have not ensured that this is published on the school's website. In addition, other statutory information is not compliant with requirements, including details about the curriculum, pupils' key stage 2 results, the school's accessibility plan and a link to the Department for Education performance tables.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The headteacher ensures that any concerns about pupils are recorded carefully and, where appropriate, referred on to the relevant agencies. Leaders have made sure that staff are trained and have a good knowledge of safeguarding practice. They are alert to any changes in pupils and refer any concerns promptly to the headteacher. The school works effectively with outside agencies to ensure that pupils are kept safe.
- The school ensures that pupils know how to stay safe online. Leaders also support

parents in helping to keep their children safe when using the internet at home. The school holds an annual internet safety week, posts regular reminders on newsletters and publishes helpful links about internet safety on the school's website.

- A member of staff from the trust carries out regular checks and assures herself of the robustness of the school's safer recruitment practice. Leaders keep records of any incidents of bullying and ensure that these are followed up and appropriate action is taken. Pupils spoken to during the inspection say that bullying does not happen often but that if it does, teachers and staff resolve this quickly.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Following a period of decline, changes in the teaching team and new appointments to the school have strengthened teaching significantly. Teaching is now good and, as a result, most pupils are making good progress.
- Teachers use their good subject knowledge to explain things clearly and help pupils learn new concepts. Teachers question pupils well to check their understanding and to ensure that they are clear about their learning activities.
- Teachers are warm and supportive and have good relationships with pupils. They encourage pupils through praising their work, and valuing their achievements. Pupils enjoy finding 'praise points' in their work and this helps to motivate them to strive further.
- Teachers' enthusiastic delivery engages pupils and helps to sustain their interest and focus. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well and support staff work alongside teachers to support pupils who find it hard to focus and to learn.
- Teachers provide effective feedback to pupils to help them know how they have been successful. The 'steps to success' also help pupils to know how to improve their work further. This effective feedback helps them to reflect and build on their learning.
- Phonics is taught well and this has led to pupils' good achievement in phonics and reading. Teachers and other adults act as very good role models for pupils, articulating very clearly how to 'blend and segment' words. They also ensure that pupils are articulating letter sounds correctly and identifying the right number of sounds in a word. They are quick to notice and address any misconceptions.
- Well-planned, regular opportunities for pupils to write ensure that pupils develop their skills appropriately in many different genres and contexts. These opportunities help pupils to develop greater stamina and become more proficient with punctuation and sentence construction.
- Teachers link many writing tasks to pupils' learning in other subjects, and this provides more meaningful contexts for pupils' writing. For example, when learning to describe a setting, pupils apply this to their learning in history about the Stone Age.
- Teachers ensure that pupils learn how to calculate and develop increasing fluency and confidence in calculation. Teachers ask pupils to explain their answers and their thinking. This practice is helping pupils to reason and to secure their understanding of important mathematic concepts such as place value.
- However, in key stage 2 teachers' expectations in mathematics are not high enough,

especially for the most able pupils. Teachers plan some problem-solving and reasoning activities to enable pupils to apply their mathematical skills. However, pupils often repeat calculations of a similar level of difficulty and the most able pupils are not moved on to harder work soon enough. This limits the progress of some of these pupils.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and are proud of their achievements. Most pupils have positive attitudes to learning, are confident learners and keep trying, even when they find learning hard. As one pupil commented, 'If you get stuck, you can keep trying and you might get it.'
- Pupils have a good understanding of the school values such as respect and courage. They can also explain why these are important as they '... help us to become better pupils'. The pupil-led 'Eco Team' enjoy helping other pupils to learn about the environment. They lead some assemblies about issues such as the problems caused by litter and the need to reduce the amount of paper people use.
- Pupils know how to avoid risks and keep themselves safe when using the internet. Pupils can explain that they must only access appropriate websites, never share personal information and never open pop-ups. Older pupils learn about cycle safety and pupils in Year 6 follow a Junior Citizen programme to help them learn more about keeping safe.
- Assemblies and the annual anti-bullying week help pupils to understand what bullying is and that any bullying is unacceptable. They say they feel safe in school and know that it is important to speak to a teacher if they are worried about something. Pupils spoken to during the inspection could name a trusted adult in school who they can speak to if they are upset or worried about something.
- A small number of pupils at the school receive additional support from adults to help them manage their emotions and behaviour. The school supports these pupils well, and leaders are taking further appropriate action to ensure that these pupils do not unsettle other pupils.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. In class and around the school, most pupils behave well. They are courteous and friendly and enjoy talking about their school and what they are learning. Pupils are proud of the school's achievements and are keen to show visitors the school's trophies.
- In the last school year, during a period of instability and high teacher absence, there was a rise in the number of fixed-term exclusions. Staffing changes and improved teaching have led to greater stability and improved behaviour.
- At lunchtime and playtime, pupils cooperate well and play together happily. They follow

instructions promptly, for example when asked to line up sensibly at the end of playtime.

- Pupils understand and can talk about school rules and why these are needed. For example, pupils know that before they play football they have to sign a 'code of conduct' to agree to play fairly and sensibly.
- Although still below the national average, attendance has improved significantly. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has fallen. Leaders have worked tirelessly to successfully improve the attendance of a small group of pupils who were previously frequently absent. While there is still more work to do, the school's efforts to promote good attendance and challenge poor attendance are bearing fruit.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Overall, pupils' progress has improved and current pupils are now making good progress. Leaders' concerted efforts to address the dip in the key stage 2 outcomes as a result of previous weak teaching have been effective. This has resulted in a significant rise in the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard at the end of key stage 2. Nevertheless, leaders recognise that there is still more work to do to embed recent improvements to sustain this journey of improvement.
- In key stage 1, current pupils are making good progress. The proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standards at the end of the last school year was just below the national average. However, small cohorts and the high proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do not allow for meaningful comparisons to be made.
- Pupils achieve very well in phonics and this is a strength of the school. In 2017, all pupils achieved the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check. Pupils apply their phonic skills well when reading new words and this enables them to become fluent, confident readers. Pupils enjoy reading, and many make good use of the well-stocked library. As one pupil exclaimed, 'I love reading; it's my favourite thing to do!'
- Over time, pupils develop greater stamina for writing and use a wider range of punctuation and vocabulary. Pupils' sentence construction develops suitably, moving from simple sentences to more complex sentences with embedded clauses. Pupils learn about the different writing conventions needed, for example when setting out a letter.
- In science, pupils typically achieve the standards expected for their age. Pupils have opportunities to plan and carry out experiments to develop their understanding of scientific concepts. For example, pupils in key stage 2 conduct practical tests to find out which materials can dissolve in water.
- In key stage 1, disadvantaged pupils make good progress and the proportion of pupils who achieve the expected standard is comparable with other pupils. In key stage 2, disadvantaged pupils' progress was more variable last year, mainly due to weaker teaching in some classes. Current pupils are making similar progress to their peers. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well and most make reasonable progress. However, some pupils who have significant cognition and learning challenges make slower progress.

- In reading and writing, the most able pupils make good progress. In 2017 in key stage 2, a higher-than-average proportion of pupils achieved a greater depth of learning in reading. However, in mathematics the most able pupils are not consistently challenged to enable them to achieve as well as they can.
- Pupils' growing confidence and the school's very strong links with secondary schools enable pupils to be well prepared for their transition to their new schools.

## Early years provision

**Good**

- Children get off to a happy, successful start in the early years. Positive, warm relationships enable children to settle quickly, feel secure and be confident learners.
- Teaching is consistently good, enabling children to make good progress and achieve well. Learning activities are well planned, capture children's interest and sustain their attention well. All areas of learning in the early years are promoted well. The classroom and the outdoor areas are well resourced, interesting and spark children's imagination and curiosity. For example, children enjoy exploring how their sound pattern changes by jumping on individual musical stepping stones. They enjoy fitting together different geometric shapes to make interesting models and love showing their creations to their friends.
- Adults respond skilfully to children, giving timely prompts and questions to move on children's learning. They also respond very well to children's interests, encouraging them to develop their own ideas and further improve what they have created. As one child said about his 'stormtrooper' model, 'I am going to improve this.'
- Children's early literacy and mathematical skills are developed well. Adults plan effective activities that promote children's language development and understanding of important concepts such as 'more' and 'less'. Every opportunity is taken to engage children in conversations. This contributes well to children's speaking and listening skills, as well as their social skills.
- Children's behaviour is exemplary. They share well, take turns and respond well to adults and each other. Almost all children quickly become engrossed in their learning. Adults encourage individual children who 'butterfly' between activities to become a 'stickosaurus' and sustain their attention. Children are keen to tell adults all about their achievements and like to see these captured on photographs.
- Leaders track children's progress carefully and record their learning through well-judged observations and photographs. The school's electronic system also enables parents to contribute well to children's learning records by including children's experiences and learning at home.
- Good leadership in the early years has ensured that, over time, achievement has remained strong in this part of the school. Effective professional development has enabled the early years leader to develop her skills and the setting further. She also works effectively with pre-school settings to enable children to be ready and well-prepared for school.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the early years setting. They speak enthusiastically about the way they and their children have been welcomed into the school. Many parents comment about how well their children have settled into school,



typically saying, 'I am very happy; my child loves it.'

- Children's good achievement and a positive first year in the early years ensure that they are well prepared for Year 1.

## School details

Unique reference number	141459
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10036805

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	93
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Phil Harrison
Headteacher	Andrew Browne
Telephone number	01235 763858
Website	<a href="http://www.st-nicholas-pri.oxon.sch.uk">www.st-nicholas-pri.oxon.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:office@challowce.org">office@challowce.org</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about the curriculum; pupils' key stage 2 results; a link to the Department for Education performance tables; the school's accessibility plan and the school's evaluation of the spending of the pupil premium grant for disadvantaged pupils on its website.
- The school does not comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish about the curriculum; pupils' key stage 2 results; a link to the Department for Education performance tables; the school's accessibility plan and the school's evaluation of the spending of the pupil premium grant for disadvantaged pupils on its website.
- St Nicholas Church of England Primary School is smaller than the average-size primary school. There are currently four classes in the school. Children in the early years are taught in a Reception class. There is one mixed-age class in key stage 1 and two mixed-age classes in key stage 2. Over the past three years, the school roll has grown

considerably, rising from 67 pupils to 93 pupils.

- The school joined the Vale Academy Trust in October 2014 and is one of eight schools in this trust. Prior to joining the trust, St Nicholas Church of England Primary School was inspected in June 2013 and judged to be good.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is similar to the national average.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who join or leave the school at times other than the normal point of transfer is much higher than the national average.
- The headteacher was appointed to the school in 2013, initially as an interim headteacher. The post was made substantive in 2014. Since this time, there have been many other changes of staff.
- The school has a breakfast club for pupils, which is run by school staff.
- The school did not meet the government floor standards in 2016, which are the minimum expectations for standards and progress for pupils in Year 6.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning in all classes with the headteacher. The inspector also made shorter visits to classes with the headteacher and had a tour of the school with pupils.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders and leaders from the trust.
- The inspector met a group of governors, trustees and the chief executive of the trust.
- The inspector listened to pupils read, looked at pupils' work in books and discussed pupils' progress with leaders.
- The inspector held meetings with pupils and spoke to pupils in classes and on the playground during lunchtime and playtime.
- The inspector took account of the views of parents through discussions before school and the 35 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 31 free-text responses.
- The views of staff were gathered through discussions with teachers.
- The inspector checked a wide range of records and documentation relating to child protection, safeguarding, behaviour and attendance, and the recruitment checks made on the suitability of staff to work with children. The inspector also reviewed other school documents including governors' minutes and records of meetings, policies, improvement plans, teacher appraisals, curriculum plans and evaluations of teaching and learning.

## Inspection team

Sue Cox, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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