

Inspection of St Nicolas CofE Primary School

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

Inspection dates: 15 and 16 November 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and enthusiastic ambassadors for their school. They are proud of their roles as members of the school council, playtime buddies and librarians. Pupils trust staff, who help them deal with any worries or concerns they have. Bullying is not tolerated and pupils know it is not acceptable to be a bystander. Leaders swiftly address any unkindness that arises.

Leaders have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and how they should behave. Pupils rise well to meet these challenges and achieve well. They are eager to learn. Pupils work hard in lessons. Around school, pupils are kind and considerate to each other and adults. They play happily together at breaktimes. Pupils enjoy visiting the forest school.

Pupils learn about the importance of a healthy diet and exercise. They know how to take care of their mental health. Pupils practice yoga, meditation and mindfulness. They appreciate and celebrate diversity. As one Year 4 pupil said, 'It is just not cool to discriminate. Our differences are what make us unique and special.'

Parents speak highly of the school. One said, 'Leaders and staff make families really feel part of the community. They do a fantastic job through their genuine care for our children.'

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders, governors and staff have worked effectively to bring about rapid improvements and address the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection. Staff are overwhelmingly positive about the support and consideration they get from leaders. They value the ongoing training they have received to bring about the improvements to the curriculum. Governors challenge leaders about the impact of their actions and are clear what still needs to improve. St Nicolas is a school that is now moving from strength to strength.

Reading is the bedrock of the curriculum. Staff teach early reading with precision. Children start learning to read right from the moment they join the early years. Pupils are provided books that closely match with the sounds they are learning. This helps them practise their reading and become fluent readers. Leaders ensure that those pupils who are at risk of falling behind receive additional opportunities to read in school. At playtime, pupils cannot wait to hop onto the playground bus and share a book with their friends. They relish listening to adults read the class book. One pupil described these moments as 'like being in the book'. Pupils are thrilled to welcome the range of authors and illustrators that visit their school regularly.

The ethos around school is inclusive and nurturing. Staff are relentless in their ambition for every pupil to achieve as well as they should. The provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is effective. Leaders quickly

and accurately identify pupils with SEND. They ensure teachers are supported well to skilfully adapt activities to individual's needs. This ensures pupils with SEND achieve as well as they should from their starting points.

Leaders have developed a curriculum that precisely sets out the essential knowledge pupils should learn from early years to Year 6. Teachers' subject knowledge is secure. This means that across all year groups and in all subjects, they make sure that pupils learn well and use important vocabulary to explain their ideas. However, sometimes teachers, including those in the early years, do not always accurately check pupils' understanding before moving on to new learning. As a result, pupils do not always achieve as well as they could across the curriculum and in the early years.

Pupils behave well in lessons. There is a purposeful buzz of learning in every classroom including the early years. Pupils take a pride in their work. They talk enthusiastically about the trips to art galleries and museums that bring learning to life. However, some pupils do not attend as well as they could. This means they miss out on important learning. Leaders are tenacious in their support but identify more work is needed to ensure these pupils benefit from all the school has to offer.

The provision for pupils' wider development is strong. Leaders make sure the school's Christian values play a central role in pupils' personal development. Through leadership opportunities, such as the school council or eco-action teams, pupils take positive steps in improving their school. Pupils learn about different religions and are given opportunities to explore their own ideas and beliefs. They talk with maturity about different views. In forest school, pupils learn important skills such as teamwork and perseverance. Pupils embrace the school's golden rule, 'to treat others how you want to be treated yourself'. This creates a tangible ethos of acceptance and belonging for all.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, both in person and when online. They know how to report anything that may worry or concern them.

Leaders have created a strong culture of vigilance. Staff receive regular training and understand the systems to record and report the slightest concerns. Leaders act swiftly where there are any concerns about a pupil's safety. They work effectively with external agencies to ensure that pupils and their families have the help they need. There are robust processes for the safer recruitment of adults who work in school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers' checks on pupils' understanding are not always precise enough. This hinders pupils' learning where they do not pick up gaps or misconceptions. Leaders should ensure teachers consistently check and help all pupils secure their knowledge of the important ideas in all subjects.
- Despite leaders' actions to improve attendance, a small number of pupils do not attend regularly. This means that they sometimes miss out on their learning. Leaders should take effective action to work with families to reduce persistent absence rates.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	114560
Local authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	10240255
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	423
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Katy Twynning
Headteacher	Andy Richbell
Website	www.stnicolas.brighton-hove.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	21 – 22 September 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Diocese of Chichester. The last section 48 inspection of its religious character was in 2016.
- The governing body manages before-school childcare provision.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the second routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. They also met with members of the governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, computing, physical education and geography.

- For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- During the inspection, inspectors met with a range of pupils to discuss their views about the school and talked to them informally during social times.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors scrutinised a wide range of information, including a selection of the school's records. Inspectors spoke to staff and pupils about safeguarding and looked at how pupils learn to keep themselves safe. Inspectors spoke to the safeguarding leader about the recording and reporting of safeguarding incidents.
- Inspectors met some parents to gain their views of the school. They reviewed the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View. They also took account of the staff responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire.

Inspection team

Laura James, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Andrea Carter	Ofsted Inspector
Rachel McDonald-Taylor	Ofsted Inspector
Shazia Akram	His Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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