

Inspection of a good school: Norton St Nicholas CofE (VA) Primary School

Norton Road, Letchworth Garden City, Hertfordshire SG6 1AG

Inspection dates:

30 November and 1 December 2022

Outcome

Norton St Nicholas CofE (VA) Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy at this caring school. The school's encouraging ethos nurtures pupils. Pupils are polite and kind to one another and adults. Pupils enjoy learning a broad and rich curriculum which prepares them well for later life. Leaders have high expectations, and pupils work hard to achieve these. The overwhelming majority of pupils conduct themselves well in lessons and around school. Pupils play happily together during their breaktimes. Pupils know they can talk to staff if they need help and that staff will deal with bullying if it occurs. Pupils feel listened to. They know that staff care about them and look after their well-being. Pupils are safe at school. The school's vision, built upon educating and nurturing and 'guided by God's love', is part of everyday school life.

Parents and pupils value enrichment activities such as looking after the giant African snails in the early years and taking part in forest school work. Pupils enjoy going to the good range of clubs available to them, including choir, the school band and arts and crafts. These broaden pupils' interests. Pupils make a positive contribution to school life through leadership roles that help build character. These include being members of the care committee and serving as eco-councillors or house captains.

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

Staff and governors want pupils to achieve their best. The well-planned curriculum leaders provide supports pupils' academic and personal development well. Leaders ensure they train teachers to teach the curriculum well. Teachers inspire pupils to learn through the lessons they teach. Pupils build their knowledge and skills successfully across all curriculum subjects. Teachers regularly check pupils' understanding of what they have learned to help them plan future learning. They also identify misconceptions pupils have and address these. As a result, pupils achieve well. They are well prepared for the next steps in their education. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This is because staff know how to support pupils with SEND. For example, teaching assistants are well trained to deliver specific interventions which support pupils with SEND.

Reading has a high priority across the school. Leaders ensure that staff have the skills and knowledge they need to teach early reading well. Pupils have a secure understanding of the sounds letters make. The books that pupils read are closely matched to the phonics that they are learning. Pupils learn to read with fluency and confidence. Pupils thoroughly enjoy reading. They talk about their favourite books with enthusiasm and can describe characters and story plots in an articulate way. Pupils who are less confident in their reading receive the additional support they need.

Children in the early years get off to a good start. In the Nursery and the Reception classes, children receive a good range of meaningful learning experiences. In mathematics, adults provide effective support to develop children's number skills. Adults are well trained. They ask children stimulating questions that get them thinking. Adults help children settle quickly into school routines. Children in the Reception class explored sizes and shapes by filling containers and building towers of different proportions. They used a good range of words such as 'narrow', 'wide' and 'half-full' to describe what they are doing. However, the layout and organisation of resources that teachers use in the early years are not consistently well matched to the planned curriculum. As a result, not all children are able to make the most of the well-planned curriculum.

Pupils develop positive attitudes to learning. They settle quickly to tasks set by their teachers because they are interested in the subjects they learn. Teachers provide plenty of opportunities for pupils to work cooperatively. Pupils listen carefully to each other during class discussions.

Leaders ensure there is a strong focus on pupils' personal development. Pupils learn to appreciate different faiths and cultures. Pupils learn to be caring, active and responsible citizens through the broad range of opportunities available to them such as trips, clubs and helping to support the local community. Pupils learn about the democratic process through writing manifestos and electing representatives to the eco-council and the care committee and as house captains.

Staff are proud to work at Norton St Nicholas CofE (VA) Primary School. Leaders ensure that staff receive good-quality professional development. This supports their teaching of the curriculum. Leaders are considerate of their staff, who very much appreciate the support they receive, particularly for their well-being. Governors hold leaders to account for the school's work and check that statutory requirements are met.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff are vigilant. They know how to identify when pupils are at risk of harm. Staff know what to do should they have a concern, and they carry out these actions in a timely manner. Appropriate referrals are made to outside agencies to secure help for pupils and families.

The curriculum and other events, such as assemblies, offer opportunities for pupils to learn to be safe. This includes learning about online safety and healthy relationships.

Governors check that the systems in place to keep pupils safe work well.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The layout and organisation of resources in the early years are not always consistently or precisely matched to the planned curriculum. This means there are occasions when children do not achieve as well as they could. Leaders must ensure that teachers carefully select and organise the resources they use to meet the ambition of the intended curriculum. This will help children achieve even better across all areas of the early years curriculum.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in December 2012.

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	117442
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10241623
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	226
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Keith Taylor and Amanda Devine (Co-chairs)
Headteacher	Andrew Brown
Website	www.nortonstnicholas.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	28 March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There is a nursery class that children attend, either part-time or full-time, once they have turned three years old.
- There is an early morning childcare club run by school staff and an after-school childcare club run by an external organisation.
- The school does not currently use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first 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.
- The inspector met with the headteacher and members of the school's leadership team.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics and science. For each deep dive, the inspector met with the subject leader, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at pupils' work.

- The inspector met with the special educational needs coordinator.
- The inspector met with five members of the governing body, including the two co-chairs.
- The inspector met with the local authority's school improvement partner.
- The inspector looked at the single central record of pre-employment checks. The inspector spoke to leaders, school staff, governors and pupils to review the school's arrangements for safeguarding.
- The inspector spoke to parents at the start of the school day. The inspector considered the 67 responses made by parents to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including 57 free-text responses. The inspector also considered the 25 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for staff and the 75 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for pupils.

Inspection team

Nick Rudman, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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