

Inspection of a good school: St Nicholas Church of England Primary School

Mill Lane, Cottesmore, Oakham, Rutland LE15 7DL

Inspection date: 19 January 2023

Outcome

St Nicholas Church of England Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Teachers and leaders at this school know each pupil individually. Every morning as pupils arrive in classrooms, they use their emotion dolls to let their teacher know how they feel. If a pupil indicates they are sad, teachers will try and ease their worries or concerns. This helps pupils to feel safe and happy at school.

Teachers support pupils to become more resilient. Pupils know if they make a mistake, they need to try again and they will eventually achieve success. This helps pupils to build their strength of character.

Pupils are polite and have good manners. They follow the school's rules and show respect for others. Pupils rise to teachers' high expectations. They understand that there are occasional fall outs between pupils, but teachers sort these out quickly. Pupils know that bullying is wrong and that teachers would deal with this equally well if it happened.

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers would recommend this school to another parent. One parent summed up the view of many when they said: 'St Nicholas has a wonderful nurturing environment for my children to learn and grow. The staff care very much for the children and go over and above.'

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

Leaders have adapted and re-designed the curriculum. It is broad and ambitious. All pupils study this curriculum. 'Learning journeys' map out the most important concepts and essential knowledge in each subject. Subject leaders have designed the curriculum to be progressive so pupils can build on what they already know. The 'learning journeys' for some subjects are new. Teachers do not check what pupils have learned in previous years in these subjects. As a result, their teaching does not build on what pupils already know. Some pupils do not achieve a depth of understanding in some foundation subjects.

Teachers use 'knowledge organisers' well to present the key knowledge to pupils in many subjects. There is ample time for discussion and debate. Teachers match activities well to what pupils should learn. Teachers use 'recall activities' to check that pupils know and remember more. Some recall activities do not match precisely and consistently to the essential knowledge set out in curriculum plans. As a result, some pupils do not remember the most important knowledge well enough.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported in lessons. Their needs are accurately identified. Effective strategies are co-produced so that these pupils can achieve across the curriculum.

Children start to learn to read as soon as they start the Reception Year. Adults are well trained in how to teach reading consistently and effectively. They use assessment well to find out which pupils might be falling behind. Teachers intervene quickly when pupils struggle with the sounds that letters make. They listen to pupils read every day. Books are closely matched to the sounds that pupils know so they can become more fluent readers. Older pupils continue to develop a love for reading. Each year group has six selected texts which they read throughout the year. This exposes all pupils to different authors and genres. Books are carefully matched to the curriculum. For example, 'Wind in the Willows' helps pupils to embed key vocabulary when they study rivers in geography.

The curriculum starts in the early years and children get off to a good start. Teachers help children to develop their understanding of number and use of language. They learn about contrasting environments, such as Antarctica. This helps develop their understanding of the world.

Pupils behave well. They talk proudly about their achievements and how the school community celebrates these achievements in weekly assemblies. Pupils are eager to collect bouncy balls, awarded for demonstrating the school's values. They show positive attitudes to learning.

Leaders think about how they develop each pupil in the widest sense. The 'courageous advocacy' programme helps pupils to make a highly positive contribution to the wider community. For example, pupils in Year 2 plant seeds, grow vegetables and make soup. They serve this to the wider community and understand how this act can bring the local community closer together. Service children are well supported. Staff at the school help pupils prepare for a parent's deployment as they know this can cause some unrest at times.

Leaders consider the workload of staff. Staff feel well supported. Governors are actively involved in ensuring that new initiatives benefit all pupils while considering the implication of these initiatives on staff's well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are vigilant. They report and record any concerns that they have about pupils. Staff know that changes in behaviour could indicate a pupil is at risk of harm. They understand their statutory duties, including how to protect children from radicalisation. Staff are well trained.

Leaders ensure that they engage with external agencies when they feel a pupil or family may benefit from further help. They keep detailed records of safeguarding concerns and actions taken to keep pupils safe.

Through robust monitoring, trustees and governors assure themselves that the school maintains a strong safeguarding culture and that policies are well implemented.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some teachers do not always check precisely enough that all pupils have remembered the essential knowledge they must know. As a result, some pupils do not always remember the most important knowledge well enough. Leaders must ensure that teachers check that all pupils are able to recall the important knowledge as set out in curriculum plans.
- In some foundation subjects, where the curriculum has recently changed, teachers do not always know what pupils have learned in previous years. As a result, they do not always build effectively on the knowledge pupils already have. Some pupils do not gain a sufficient depth of knowledge as a result. Leaders must ensure that teachers know what pupils have learned before, and use this information to build pupils' knowledge further.

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 predecessor school, St Nicholas CofE VA Primary School to be good in February 2013.

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	141452
Local authority	Rutland Council
Inspection number	10241732
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	127
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Revd James Saunders
Headteacher	Daniel Alfieri
Website	www.stnicholasprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	19 September 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Rutland Learning Trust.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The religious character of the school was inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 in June 2016.

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.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics and science. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited lessons, spoke with teachers and pupils, and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector listened to a sample of pupils in key stages 1 and 2 reading to a familiar adult. Inspectors also visited a range of lessons in other subjects. For these subjects, they checked the work that pupils had produced, looked at subject plans and spoke to pupils.

- Inspectors met with leaders responsible for behaviour, personal development, the early years foundation stage, and the provision for pupils with SEND.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils from key stages 1 and 2.
- The lead inspector met with the safeguarding leaders to discuss the actions taken to keep pupils safe. He reviewed a range of documents related to safeguarding, including the school's single central record.
- The lead inspector reviewed a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan.
- The lead inspector met with the local governing board.
- The lead inspector met with representatives of the trust, including the chief executive officer.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, and considered the results of the Ofsted staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Rakesh Patel, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Dawn Ashbolt

His Majesty's Inspector

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