

Inspection of a good school: St Nicholas CofE Primary School

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

Inspection date: 11 January 2023

Outcome

St Nicholas CofE Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to be part of the 'St Nic's' community. They feel happy and safe. Pupils of all ages work and play alongside each other well. Unkindness is rare and bullying is even rarer. Pupils know that adults in school would act and resolve any bullying. Adults have high expectations of behaviour and nurture all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey agreed, with one stating: 'Our children are nurtured, encouraged and are thriving.'

Adults know pupils well. They understand that some pupils need extra care and guidance, and they get this. There is a strong sense of belonging where pupils say it is 'good to be different'. Assemblies promote this as well as taking time to celebrate success. 'High fives', are awarded to pupils who show the school's values of 'belonging, compassion and resilience'.

Trips, visits and first-hand experiences support pupils' learning. For example, in the newly developed garden area, pupils learn about planting and composting, developing their scientific knowledge. Pupils have high aspirations. One pupil told an inspector it was important he did well in mathematics and art, as he wants to be an architect when he leaves school.

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

Leaders are ambitious for pupils. They have thought about what pupils learn and how they learn it. In most subjects, leaders have mapped learning and selected appropriate resources for teachers to use. Teachers check within lessons and at the end of projects to find out what pupils know and remember. Leaders use this information to refine curriculum planning to make sure any gaps in pupils' knowledge are tackled. However, there are a few subjects where the curriculum is not as well developed. In these subjects, the knowledge that teachers need to teach is not always clearly defined, meaning pupils do not learn as much as they could.

In subjects such as mathematics, reading and geography, pupils have a secure understanding of what they have learned. This is because learning is planned to build on what pupils already know. For example, in the early years, children take part in activities that enable them to practise the new skills they have learned. In the Reception class, children were seen counting the wheels on a vehicle and then using new vocabulary to compare the length of these vehicles. Across the school, staff adapt learning so that all pupils, no matter what their needs, join in with their class. Adults break learning down into small steps for all. They particularly do this for pupils with SEND, being mindful of the individual needs that have been carefully identified. This approach helps these pupils to achieve well.

Pupils enjoy reading. It permeates throughout the school's curriculum. Leaders describe books as, 'windows to the world', and 'mirrors looking in'. They believe it is important for pupils to be able to see themselves in the literature they read. Leaders have selected texts to widen pupils' knowledge of the world beyond this school. This includes a focus on diversity. Careful thought has been put into ensuring pupils learn to read while also developing a love of reading. Staff are well trained to deliver on both. Children in the early years get started on learning to read quickly. Staff model how to pronounce new sounds and check that children do this correctly. Reading books are well matched to pupils' phonic knowledge. Those who fall behind get the support needed to catch up quickly.

Pupils busily take on responsibilities, for example in Reception's 'bike maintenance shop', or in the eco-committee, where they weigh and report on food waste. There is always something to do. Pupils, including those with SEND, thrive on pupil leadership opportunities. This was recently demonstrated by the school council's planning of the 'St Nic's Got Talent' event, which was enjoyed by all.

Pupils are tolerant and understanding of the needs of other pupils. Learning is rarely disrupted. When it is, pupils are quick to get back on task because they enjoy their learning. Pupils support one another well. This is seen within the mixed-aged classes as well as through roles such as the Year 5 play leaders. Of the few clubs available, leaders make sure there is access for all pupils, including those with SEND and the most disadvantaged pupils.

Leaders and governors are mindful of staff workload and well-being. Staff speak positively about a team feel and sense of belonging. They appreciate and value the support from leaders, especially from the headteacher.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding is the utmost priority. All adults understand the procedures for reporting and recording concerns. Leaders act on concerns raised in a timely way, referring on and following up as needed. The safeguarding lead works closely with families to improve opportunities for pupils, for example through support for regular school attendance.

The governing body oversight of safeguarding includes checking that required recruitment checks are in place before adults start work in school, and they are. Pupils learn how to keep safe, online and offline. They understand how to be safe on the country roads around the school and not to give out personal information online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, leaders have not identified the knowledge that teachers need to teach precisely enough. Teachers are not able to pinpoint the knowledge pupils need to know and remember, meaning pupils are not always learning as much as they could. Leaders need to continue to refine the curriculum to identify and map out the exact knowledge pupils need to learn and when they need to learn it.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in September 2017.

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	141459
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10241996
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	113
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Beth Taylor
Headteacher	Heather Richards
Website	www.stnicholasceprimary.org
Date of previous inspection	12 and 13 September 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- The school is part of the Vale Academy Trust.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been significant changes to staffing.
- The headteacher joined the school in January 2021.
- The school is part of the Diocese of Oxford. The school was rated good in its most recent section 48 inspection in June 2017.
- The school has a nursery with spaces for three- and four-year-olds.
- The school has a breakfast and after-school club.
- The school currently uses no 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.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other leaders, members of staff, the CEO of the trust and three representatives from the local governing body. An inspector also held a telephone discussion with a representative from the Diocese.
- Inspectors considered the 45 responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and parents' written responses.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also looked at pupils' books and curriculum plans, and spoke to leaders about some other subjects.
- Inspectors looked at the school's own evaluation and development plans.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils, parents and staff about the school's work to keep pupils safe. They considered a range of safeguarding documentation.

Inspection team

Clare Haines, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Kimberley Kemp

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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