

# Inspection of a good school: St Nicolas C of E VA School, Downterry

Downterry, Torpoint, Cornwall PL11 3LF

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Inspection date:

16 May 2023

## **Outcome**

St Nicolas C of E VA School, Downterry continues to be a good school. There is enough evidence of improved performance to suggest that the school could be judged outstanding if we were to carry out a graded (section 5) inspection now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils have a love of learning at this school. They experience broad and rich opportunities to develop their own individual character. Pupils proudly give many examples of how their experiences bring to life the school's motto, 'Where learning becomes an adventure'. These experiences are exceptional and make the most of the school's unique location. Pupils and parents value the opportunities to explore, take risks and be adventurous. These activities help to prepare them for future life.

The school's values underpin learning. Pupils have a strong moral code. They learn how to be good citizens through their good works within the local and global community. This develops a strong sense of service to those around them.

Pupils are very respectful of one another. They know the school rules and are clear about any consequences if they break them. However, these are rarely needed because pupils almost always meet the very high expectations of teachers. Pupils feel that everyone is treated equally and with consistency. They understand that everyone is different and that sometimes they need different support.

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

Leaders ensure the curriculum is embedded securely and consistently across the school. Leaders' vision for outdoor learning is integral to the unique offer at the school. This is not a bolt-on to the curriculum. It is intentionally and carefully woven into learning across the different curriculum subjects. Leaders have the same ambition for all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Teaching is adapted where necessary so that all pupils can achieve their individual potential.

Leaders have identified the essential knowledge they want pupils to learn. This is well sequenced, which enables teaching to revisit knowledge covered previously and then introduce new learning. In geography, teachers skilfully build pupils' understanding of location through well-constructed activities. Children in the early years start by learning about their own locality, which underpins their later learning about the UK, Europe and the wider world. Over their time at the school, pupils build a 'passport' of 'destinations' they have learned about. They enjoy this and have a very secure understanding of location as a result.

Teaching ensures that the work given to pupils is of a consistently high quality. In science, pupils learn to make links between what they are being taught. This helps them to understand more complex ideas. In mathematics, pupils develop strong fluency with numbers. They are then able to apply this to reasoning and problem-solving.

The importance that leaders place on reading permeates the school. Pupils love to read. They appreciate the wide range of texts they can choose from. The outside reading pod is popular with pupils and broadens their reading experiences with magazine subscriptions as well as novels and picture books. Children in the early years learn to read well. Nursery children enjoy exploring sounds and rhymes through stories and play. In Reception, children begin to learn phonics from the start. They quickly learn to segment words and blend sounds accurately. This prepares them well for becoming fluent readers in key stage 1. The few pupils who fall behind are quickly identified and the precise support they receive helps them to catch up quickly.

Teachers speak highly of the support they receive from leaders and the trust. They develop good subject knowledge as a result of effective professional development. Subject leadership is used well to evaluate the impact of the curriculum on pupils' learning, and changes or improvements are made where necessary. Teachers feel involved in these discussions. They are proud to work at the school and staff morale is high.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders instil in staff that, despite this being a small village school, 'it could happen here'. Staff are vigilant and knowledgeable. They are clear about the procedures for recording and reporting any concerns. Regular training makes sure that they know the signs to look out for. Leaders work with a range of external agencies to get the right help for pupils at the right time.

Pupils have a good knowledge of how to keep themselves safe. They regularly learn about online safety. Relationships between staff and pupils are highly positive. As a result, pupils feel confident about telling any adult if they have a worry.

## 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 November 2016.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	140342
<b>Local authority</b>	Cornwall
<b>Inspection number</b>	10211052
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	107
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Sue Morrish
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jake Imrie
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.st-nicolas.cornwall.sch.uk">www.st-nicolas.cornwall.sch.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	29 and 30 November 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school joined the St Barnabas Church of England Multi Academy Trust in 2013.
- The school is a Church of England primary school in the Diocese of Truro. Its most recent section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, was carried out in 2018, when the school was judged to be good.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The 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 these subjects: early reading, mathematics 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.

- Inspectors held meetings with the executive headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator, curriculum leaders, and teaching and support staff. The lead inspector also spoke with members of the local governing body, including the chair of governors.
- The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer of the trust. She also had a telephone call with the school improvement officer.
- The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead to discuss how pupils are kept safe in school. Inspectors considered the school's recruitment procedures, staff induction and training, records of concerns and staff's engagement with external agencies. They also spoke with staff and pupils throughout the inspection.
- The lead inspector listened to pupils read to an adult.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site. In addition, they met with pupils informally and formally to hear their views.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses. Inspectors also took into consideration the responses to the staff and pupil surveys.
- Inspectors examined a range of documents provided by the school, including the school's self-evaluation document, the improvement plan and documentation relating to safeguarding.

### **Inspection team**

Angela Folland, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Anne Hutchinson

Ofsted Inspector

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