Inspection of St John the Evangelist CofE Infant and Nursery School

Old Newtown Road, Newbury, Berkshire RG14 7DE

Inspection dates:	11 and 12 March 2025
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?

The school is a welcoming and inclusive environment. It expects pupils to live out its core value 'for the good of all through curiosity, creativity and love'. Relationships between staff and pupils are based on mutual respect and trust. As a result, pupils feel safe and happy. The school has high expectations for pupils' behaviour and achievement. From the youngest children to the oldest pupils, teachers notice and praise pupils' positive actions and attitudes. This enhances the school's highly harmonious ethos.

Pupils are proud to take on leadership responsibilities, such as eco-councillors and as members of the school council. Every part of the school day, from breakfast club to after-school clubs, has a clear purpose to build pupils' confidence, independence and character. Most pupils leave school ready for the next stage of their education.

Pupils enjoy the experiences which bring their learning to life. They talk excitedly about trips to the Town Hall to meet the mayor and learn about the democratic system and visits to the woodland area to learn about the local habitat. Pupils showcase their sporting talents by taking part in tournaments in the area. They relish participating in the cricket, dance and multi-sport clubs.

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

In recent years, the school has worked effectively to review the curriculum, including phonics. As a result, the curriculum is ambitious and well-crafted in all subjects and in early years. The school provides teachers with precise information about the important knowledge and vocabulary pupils should learn and remember. This has made a pivotal difference to pupils' learning and to their academic success. Staff identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) quickly. Adaptations to the curriculum and effective support from adults ensure that these pupils achieve well from their individual starting points.

The school takes every opportunity to develop pupils' love of reading. There are many exciting spaces around the school where pupils can dive into and enjoy reading the diverse and inclusive range of texts available. Younger pupils look forward to listening to the stories that staff share. The sounds and letters pupils need to know well are introduced right from the start of the Reception class. If pupils fall behind, they receive the support they need to help them catch up. However, on occasion, key gaps in pupils' phonics knowledge are not addressed effectively. Additionally, some of the books that older pupils read do not help them practise the sounds they have learned. When this happens, some pupils do not learn to read as quickly as they could.

Teachers have good subject knowledge. They explain new concepts clearly and model learning well. This helps pupils build their knowledge of the curriculum successfully over time. In early years, staff introduce a wide range of vocabulary, which children use very well to explain their ideas. However, sometimes teachers do not identify and address some weaknesses in pupils' understanding well enough. Where this happens, some pupils develop gaps in their knowledge and do not learn as well as they could.

Pupils are courteous and well mannered. They look forward to their work and listen attentively to staff. Classrooms are calm, orderly and stimulating areas where pupils work well together and are keen to share their ideas. Children in the early years develop kind and caring friendships. They cooperate well with adults and with each other.

The school analyses the reasons for some pupils' low rates of attendance. It works with a range of external agencies to help address barriers to pupils' attendance. Despite this, a significant minority of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, are persistently absent and miss out on vital learning.

Pupils are very accepting of the different faiths and cultures in this diverse, multi-cultural school. They are positive citizens. For example, pupils collect donations for causes they support and for the local food bank. Pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of healthy relationships and how to look after their physical and emotional well-being. They have a deep understanding of the relevance and importance of fundamental British values and respecting people's differences. Pupils discuss topics such as integrity, refugeehood, discrimination and individual liberty respectfully. As one pupil said, 'No one should struggle for being who they are because that is not fair. We make everyone feel comfortable to be themselves.'

Governors are knowledgeable and work effectively with leaders. They provide appropriate support and challenge and ensure that the school moves from strength to strength. The school makes sure staff's workload and well-being are considered. Staff feel valued and are proud to work at the school. Parents and carers almost unanimously support the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Sometimes, teachers do not identify and address some weaknesses in pupils' understanding well enough. When this happens, some pupils do not learn as well as they could. The school should ensure teachers are suitably equipped to check pupils' learning so they can rectify misconceptions quickly and effectively.
- Occasionally, staff do not identify with sufficient precision key gaps in pupils' phonics knowledge. Additionally, the books that some older pupils read do not help them practise the sounds they have learned. Consequently, some pupils do not learn to read fluently. The school should refine its approach to early reading and ensure books are more accurately matched to pupils' reading knowledge.
- A number of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, do not attend school often enough and are persistently absent. This means they miss out on important learning and vital

school experiences. The school should ensure that its ongoing work leads to high attendance levels for all pupils.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the definition of children in need of help and protection; pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's pupil premium funding (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	110093
Local authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	10359390
Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	190
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Mike Burroughs
Headteacher	Keith Harvey (Executive Headteacher) Heather Whiting (Head of School)
Website	www.stjohnandstnicolasschools.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	8 and 9 October 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Information about this school

- The school is part of St John and St Nicolas Schools Federation. The federation was formed in October 2021 and the executive headteacher oversees both schools.
- St John the Evangelist CofE Infant and St Nicolas CofE Junior School are both governed by the federation's governing board.
- The school is a voluntary-aided Church of England primary school in the Diocese of Oxford. The most recent section 48 inspection took place in 2023. The next section 48 inspection is due before the end of 2029.
- There is a before- and after-school club, which the school manages.
- 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. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years provision). Schools

receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the executive headteacher, the head of school and other leaders in the school. The lead inspector met with a group of governors, including the vice-chair.
- The lead inspector spoke on the telephone with a representative of the local authority and of the Diocese of Oxford.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, geography and computing. They spoke with the leaders of these areas of the curriculum. Inspectors also visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work, held discussions with teachers and talked with pupils. Inspectors also visited the Nursery provision.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school. They also observed pupils' behaviour during social times.
- Throughout the inspection, inspectors met with groups of staff. Inspectors also considered the opinions expressed through the staff survey.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- An inspector spoke with parents and carers as they dropped their children off at school. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses.

Inspection team

Shazia Akram, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Paul McKeown	Ofsted Inspector

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