



# St Nicholas School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 101854  
**LEA** Croydon LEA  
**Inspection number** 276603  
**Inspection dates** 8 November 2005 to 9 November 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Jacque Cook AI

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Special	<b>School address</b>	Reedham Drive
<b>School category</b>	Community special		Old Lodge Lane
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11		Purley, Surrey CR8 4DN
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	02086604861
<b>Number on roll</b>	110	<b>Fax number</b>	02086608119
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr D Ghagan
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	3 July 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs J Melton

<b>Age group</b> 4 to 11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 8 November 2005 - 9 November 2005	<b>Inspection number</b> 276603
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by one additional inspector.

## **Description of the school**

St Nicholas is a mixed school for pupils aged 4 to 11 with moderate learning difficulties. Almost a half, which is far more than at the last inspection, have autistic spectrum disorder. A few pupils have additional social, emotional and behavioural or speech and communication difficulties and a small group have severe learning difficulties. There are 110 pupils on roll with twice as many boys as girls. About half the pupils are from minority ethnic groups that include Black Caribbean, Black African and Asian pupils. Sixteen pupils are from families where English is an additional language and they are at an early stage of language acquisition. Three pupils are in the care of the local authority.

## **Key for inspection grades**

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 1**

The headteacher, staff and governors were too modest in judging the effectiveness of their school as good, because they know they can continue to improve further. The school is outstanding and provides excellent value for money. Pupils' achievements and their progress are excellent. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorder often make rapid progress as they learn to use the strategies they need. Pupils enjoy school and have very positive attitudes towards their work. Teaching and learning are good. Although a significant amount is outstanding a few staff require a little further development. Many, but not all subjects have been recently revised. The curriculum is good and enriched very well through a broad range of activities that make extremely good use of excellent facilities on site. The care, guidance and support of pupils is outstanding and there are very good links with parents and therapists. The quality of the provision for pupils of reception age is very good. Children make very good progress. They do particularly well in improving their communication skills. Leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The headteacher and senior management team are extremely effective. As their monitoring is comprehensive and their planned improvements highly appropriate standards have risen. Improvements since the last inspection have, therefore, been excellent and the school's capacity to improve further is very good.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

Continue with plans to: \* further improve the quality of teaching and learning\* review the few remaining curriculum areas.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils achieve outstandingly well. Many pupils with autistic spectrum disorder make very good progress indeed. This is because staff are very skilled in helping these pupils to change their behaviour so they can concentrate on their learning. All pupils make very good progress in improving their literacy and numeracy skills. Particularly good progress is made in personal, social and health education and citizenship. Children of reception age also achieve very well and make very good progress. They improve their communication skills particularly well because vocabulary is taught at every opportunity and is supported very well by the use of signs and symbols. There is no difference between the rates of progress made by boys and girls. Pupils from minority ethnic groups and those learning English as an additional language make very good progress. On occasion the progress of individual vulnerable pupils slows due to the effect of circumstances outside school which impedes their learning. Pupils make excellent progress towards meeting the challenging targets on their individual education plans, which are reviewed every six weeks.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' attitudes to their work are very positive. They clearly enjoy their lessons and are keen to answer questions to show what they have learned. Their behaviour is very good. Pupils with initial behaviour difficulties make considerable improvements in developing self control. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Staff are skilled in helping pupils understand the consequences of their actions. As a result, pupils are very aware of what is right and wrong and they have a keen sense of fairness. They join in with activities and celebrate the success of others extremely well. Pupils take responsibilities seriously. Year 6 pupils make a positive contribution to the community through the 'Young Citizen' scheme. Pupils are very well prepared for their future economic well-being. Taking into account the number of pupils who have been, or continue to be, very ill, which has lowered the attendance figures, attendance overall is good. The school has done well to decrease the levels of unauthorised absence considerably. However, in spite of their best efforts, there remain a few pupils who have time off during term for holidays.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The quality of teaching and learning is good and there are a significant number of lessons where teaching and learning are outstanding. There are a few lessons where teaching and learning are satisfactory. This is because a few staff are still acquiring the specific skills needed to teach pupils with such complex needs. However, they are quickly gaining these skills due to the high quality of induction and training. The team work of staff is excellent and all have very good knowledge of the needs of the pupils. Pupils learn well because they gain confidence from the consistent way staff deal with them and the routines established. Most staff have very high levels of expertise. Specific strategies for teaching pupils with autistic spectrum disorder are used very effectively. By the time these pupils are in Year 6, they work independently, often concentrating for extended periods. Lesson planning is very good and very well based on detailed assessments of pupils' progress. As a result, work is carefully planned to meet the needs of different pupils. This extends each pupil's knowledge and understanding effectively.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum was an area for improvement at the last inspection and has been developed well. It is broad, exciting and interesting and has a clear focus on meeting the needs of the pupils. Further work on the programme of reviewing overall subject plans is on course to be completed. The curriculum for children of reception age is very good. The curriculum is enriched very well through activities such as horse riding

and the use of the school's excellent facilities. Interesting and challenging playground equipment supports pupils' physical development very well at break and lunchtimes. Visitors to the school, including police and firemen help pupils to begin to understand about the world of work as well as their contribution to the community. Excellent links with a local primary school enable pupils to extend their information and communication technology (ICT) skills through using a networked computer suite.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

The care, guidance and support of pupils are outstanding and provide a safe environment where pupils can achieve so well. There is a very clear focus on their health and safety. High levels of supervision and the consistent application of school policies ensure pupils feel safe which helps to develop their confidence. Vulnerable pupils are monitored closely and there is very good liaison with the agencies that work with them. Child protection procedures are robust. Staff make time to listen to the views of pupils. The school works very well in partnership with the visiting therapists. Staff use the strategies and techniques they learn from working with speech and language therapists and assistants at other times. Links with parents have been developed exceptionally well. As a result there are regular meetings where speakers are invited to talk about a broad range of topics that interest parents. The school provides a well respected outreach facility to help staff in other schools to teach pupils with learning difficulties.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. There is a common sense of purpose throughout that stems from the innovative headteacher and senior management team. The headteacher is extremely skilled in delegating responsibilities effectively and the senior management team are very clear about their roles. There is a real focus on raising standards and on being responsive to changes, including meeting the needs of the greatly increased number of pupils with autistic spectrum disorder. There are excellent arrangements for monitoring how well the school is doing. Subject leaders have a strong role in systematically reviewing their areas. Self evaluation processes are rigorous, involve staff and governors and make very good use of the views of parents. Priorities for improvement are very well selected. Resources are used well. The development of the equipment for ICT, which was a weakness at the last inspection, has been very well organised. It has been linked to staff training to ensure it is used effectively and pupils' skills have improved. The governing body are very effective and are very knowledgeable about the school. They provide excellent support, monitor well and challenge the headteacher appropriately. The very high quality of leadership and management has ensured that the school has made excellent improvement since the last inspection and as a result has an outstanding capacity to continue to improve.

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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	1	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	1	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	1	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1	NA

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.



**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	NA
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you very much for making me so welcome when I visited your school recently. I enjoyed seeing you working and feel I learned a lot about what you do. I would like to say a special thank you to the pupils who told me what they felt about your school.

What I liked about your school: \* The way you enjoy school and work hard \* You do very well in your lessons and learn a great deal \* Your teachers and support staff are extremely good at helping you to learn \* All staff take excellent good care of you \* Your headteacher and the staff keep making the school better for you \* There are interesting and exciting things to do at playtimes and lunchtimes.

What I have asked your school to do now: \* Continue to make some of the teaching even better. \* Finish checking and making better what is taught in all subjects.

With best wishes

Jacque Cook, Lead Inspector