



# St Nicholas At Wade Church of England Primary School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 118698  
**LEA** Kent  
**Inspection number** 280375  
**Inspection dates** 18 May 2006 to 19 May 2006  
**Reporting inspector** David Collard AI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Down Barton Road
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		St Nicholas-at-Wade
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11		Birchington, Kent CT7 0PY
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01843 847253
<b>Number on roll</b>	208	<b>Fax number</b>	01843 847253
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	12 September 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr A J Taylor

<b>Age group</b> 4 to 11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 18 May 2006 - 19 May 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 280375
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

St Nicholas is an average sized and popular village school. There are very few pupils from minority ethnic groups and everybody speaks English as a first language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is low. None have specific statements of special educational need.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school that has been able to maintain this good quality of provision for a number of years while at the same time managing to achieve good academic and outstanding personal standards. As the accurate self-evaluation states it is a school where 'Quite simply, every child matters'. The reasons for the school's success stem from consistently strong teaching, a highly effective range of curricular opportunities and a senior leadership team that knows the school well and addresses problems before they become issues. There is a good capacity for this to continue. For instance, an analysis of assessment data indicated that the overall ability profile of one year group appeared different, and teaching methods were adapted accordingly. Very effective use of these methods was used with the 2005 Year 6 class and evidence from pupils' books shows that it is now working with another class.

Pupils arrive at the school with standards above those expected for their age and, because of the good quality of provision, leave the Foundation Stage with standards above those expected. This continues throughout the school so that pupils leave Year 6 with standards above and sometimes well above the expected norm and well prepared for their future education. Very high quality links are made between literacy and the rest of the curriculum but these are not so strong when combining the use of mathematical analysis using computers. The good leadership of the school is characterised by a strong belief that there is always more that can be done to improve. However, much of this effort falls on the shoulders of the headteacher and deputy headteacher because the expertise of other staff is not used sufficiently to share the load. Nevertheless, the school clearly provides good value for money.

### What the school should do to improve further

- develop the role of the middle management so that they have the fullest influence on school improvement
- make the same high quality connections across the curriculum between mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) as can be seen in English.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Achievement is good for all pupils and standards are above those that might be expected. In the Foundation Stage the good development across the range of nationally recognised skills means that many are already working on Year 1 work before the end of the Reception Year. Their communication and language skills are particularly advanced. From Year 1 to Year 6 pupils make good progress. This is confirmed by above average national test results both in Year 2 and Year 6 and has been the case for the last five years. The year group that left in 2005 had a different profile than that previously. Their attainment in Year 2 had been unusually lower, albeit still matching the national average. The school recognised this very early and intervention over four years meant that they left Year 6 with above average standards overall.

Confirmation of this could be seen in English where the progress between national tests at seven and 11 was in the top 10% nationally.

The school recognises that there are high numbers of more able pupils. It sets work accordingly to make sure that pupils are given increasingly challenging opportunities to think for themselves and to make links between different subjects. Pupils use their literacy skills very well across a wide range of subjects, such as the World War 2 topic in Year 6. Mathematical and ICT links are also incorporated but work in books shows that these are not as strong. Some opportunities, such as for analysing data in more detail, are missed. The newly refurbished ICT suite is being tailored to address this issue.

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

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' personal development, including that for spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding, is excellent. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school. They find lessons stimulating and get on very well with everybody. One pupil said 'We are a big family where we can trust each other'. There is a real buzz to pupils' learning as they revel in finding out more. Boys are responding particularly well to these efforts at keeping them enthused and interested.

Behaviour is outstanding. Even when lively, pupils have the self-discipline to calm down quickly and sensibly. They know what is right and wrong and have a keen sense of fair play. The consistently good attendance rates reflect the value their families place on regular education.

Social development is excellent. Pupils are highly involved in school and village events and have a good voice via their class councils. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe from harm and are confident to turn to adults for help. Very active participation in the wide range of sports and clubs keeps the pupils active and fit learners. They know about a balanced diet and the benefits of, for instance, eating fruit. They are rightly concerned about the high carbohydrate content of their school dinners.

Pupils are being prepared successfully for the world of work. Not only are they self-motivated, but also adept at evaluating their work and seeing what could be done to make it even better.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching is consistently good through the school. In the Foundation Stage there is a good balance between activities directed by the teachers and those which the children can choose for themselves. A good example was seen following the visit of a fire officer. The class decided for themselves how best to get a cat out of a tree and the teacher sent out the class fire engine to complete the rescue.

Teachers are conscientious about lesson planning so that it provides work that challenges and excites interest within the different ability ranges. The responses from pupils and the quality and quantity of well presented work show how successful this is. The staff have worked hard to eliminate differences between different groups of pupils. For instance, realising that boys were not doing as well with their writing, they have restructured the approach to literacy. National tests show that their performance is improving better than that nationally. While satisfactory, there has been relatively less success in developing the full range of opportunities for using modern technology even though it is used very well for presentations, research and word processing. Teaching assistants are used well and a wide range of resources is used to bring each piece of work to life. Marking has improved. It is used very well to help pupils understand how well they have done and to give them an indication of how to improve. The pupils understand their own targets and can talk about what they need to do to get better.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 1**

The curriculum at the school is outstanding and pupils find they do not have 'enough hours in the day' to undertake the very many activities they are offered. The range of opportunities is impressive. Lessons are aimed at engaging pupils' interest, for instance through extended topics, visits, exciting resources and by the teachers' obvious enthusiasm for what they are doing. Clubs cater for all pupils' interests, such as in music, sports, the arts and theatre. The school has performed and competed both locally and further afield and there are three full drama performances each year. This is all done without endangering the prime aim of maintaining consistently high academic standards and preparing pupils for their life ahead. Local secondary schools have remarked about how pleased they are with the 'well balanced pupils that arrive from St Nicholas'.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school looks after all pupils well. Pastoral support is particularly strong because of the close communication with parents and the valuable knowledge that the stable teaching and support staff have of their pupils. If pupils are not achieving as well as they should the school is quick to put in place support to get them back on track. As one parent comments about her son, 'We have watched him blossom under the care and skill of the staff.'

Vulnerable pupils are monitored carefully and achieve just as well as their peers. There are good links with outside agencies to provide extra expertise and training and to deal with issues quickly. All staff know what to do should they be worried about child protection issues although the support staff have not been fully trained in line with recent changes of legislation. Health and safety procedures are effective.

Work is well matched to the needs of individuals. Since the last inspection teachers have worked well to make sure that information collected in one lesson is used

accurately to plan work for the next. The school acknowledges that because the world is changing so quickly, it is 'preparing pupils for jobs that, at present, do not exist'. A good example is the way that ICT is used for communication and an understanding that this needs to be extended to include the development of analytical and mathematical skills.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good resulting in consistently high standards, and good achievement. The monitoring of performance is excellent and is a key reason why the capacity for improvement is so good. The headteacher knows that the school is doing well but has been very astute in bringing in outside consultants to provide an objective view and to confirm the school's self-evaluation. Lessons learned from previous experiences are being effectively transferred to pupils in different years alleviating potential problems.

The deputy headteacher complements the headteacher's skills well. Subject leaders are very effective at promoting good achievement. While there are plans to change, as yet the senior team does not include other leaders who could usefully provide extra valuable expertise and help with the future direction of the school.

Parents and pupils are highly supportive of the school. The headteacher is increasing the ways the school consults parents but a small proportion have the perception that their contributions are not fully acknowledged.

Issues from the last inspection have been addressed well even though the excessive number of temporary classrooms still remains a concern. Finances are astutely managed. The school's action plan recognises the need to reallocate funding to enhance the learning environment.

The governing body is well led and very supportive. It has an improved structure to find out how the school is faring, and is becoming increasingly knowledgeable about the school's performance in relation to comparison with others.

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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>	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	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>	2	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	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	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	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>	1	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	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>	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	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	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	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	Yes
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 for looking after us so well during our recent visit. We very much enjoyed being with you, talking to you about your school and looking at your work. No doubt you would like to know what we have written about your school so I have included a few of the main points below.

You told us that you really enjoyed school and we could see why from the super behaviour in class and while you were playing outside. We can see that all of you work so well together as a team.

You also said that you were taught well and we agree. Your teachers work very hard to make sure that you are all given work that will make you think. They are very good at making the lessons exciting and we were really interested in the many stories, letters, topics and presentations that you have completed.

We have asked that when your new ICT suite is up and running, the computers are also used to give you some really challenging work associated with mathematics such as analysing data that you have collected on spreadsheets.

You said that you had so many different things to do both in lessons and in after school and lunchtime clubs. We agree; in fact we don't know how you manage to fit it all into a school day.

We are pleased that you are managing to achieve good standards and that you all progress well through the school. We think it is the consistency of the good teaching that helps you do this along with the way that any problems you have with your work are dealt with so early and effectively.

We think that your headteacher and deputy headteacher are doing a good job but that it is the right time now for them to share some of this workload with other teachers.

Finally, we would like to wish you all the best for your future time at St Nicholas and hope that you achieve every success in the future.