



St Nicholas Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123021
LEA Oxfordshire LEA
Inspection number 281384
Inspection dates 17 May 2006 to 18 May 2006
Reporting inspector Christopher Scola AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Raymund Road
School category	Community		Old Marston
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		Oxford OX3 0PJ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01865 242838
Number on roll	287	Fax number	01865 248029
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Ian Smith
Date of previous inspection	2 October 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Sarah Willows

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3 to 11	17 May 2006 - 18 May 2006	281384

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This larger than average school became a primary school two years ago. Previously it had been a first school. It has a unit for autistic pupils. A fifth of pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. There is an above average level of pupils with learning difficulties. The school takes pupils from a wide range of nationalities and cultures.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Nicholas is a good and improving school. This reflects the school's own view of its effectiveness. It gives good value for money. The school is a welcoming, inclusive and harmonious community that nurtures pupils' excellent personal development through good care, support and guidance. Parents express high levels of satisfaction with the way the school serves the community. The school provides an excellent innovative and imaginative curriculum that develops pupils' understanding and appreciation of other cultures and nationalities. This exciting and motivating provision is one of the aspects of the school pupils say they particularly value.

The strong teaching in Years 3 to 6 has resulted in average standards and good achievement. In Years 1 and 2 most pupils make good progress but sometimes the more able pupils are insufficiently challenged and do not achieve as well they should, especially in writing. Good provision in the Foundation Stage means that children get a good start to their school life and achieve well. Good systems to enable teachers to track pupils' progress are now in place and are used very effectively to set challenging targets for older pupils, but these are not yet applied throughout the school. Assessment is not used consistently to match tasks to pupils' needs.

There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Strong teamwork, commitment of all staff and the headteacher's very good leadership are factors, which drive improvement. The school has good capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all pupils know their targets and how to reach them
- Ensure that the more able pupils in Years 1 and 2 make better progress, particularly in writing.
- Use assessment consistently to match work more effectively to pupils' needs.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Attainment on admission varies each year but is generally below average. Children make a good start in the Foundation Stage and achieve well. There are times when more able pupils in Year 2 should be doing better, especially in writing. Pupils' achievement is mostly good in Years 3 to 6 and by the time they leave at the end of Year 6 standards in English, mathematics and science are average. The school meets its targets, which are suitably challenging. There is little significant variation in the performance of boys and girls.

Standards in Year 6, in the two years since the school has become a primary school, have risen significantly. Overall performance in national tests is affected by the inclusion of pupils in the Autistic Unit in the statistics. Although these pupils make good progress their attainment is generally below average. Pupils who are at an early stage of learning English make good progress because of effective intervention and support. Pupils with

learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress because of good teaching that meets their needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The personal development of pupils is outstanding. Pupils express very high levels of enjoyment of school. Behaviour is very good and bullying virtually unknown. Pupils from a diverse range of backgrounds, nationalities and cultures celebrate their similarities and differences and relate very well to one another. Pupils say, 'The best thing about our school is the friends we make.' Pupils have very positive attitudes to the school and take full advantage of the excellent opportunities provided to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. They enjoy school and are proud of their achievements, particularly on the football field.

Pupils understand about healthy eating and the benefits of exercise. They exercise on the trim trail, and participate and enjoy a wide range of sports and activities. They speak knowledgeably of the benefits of eating fresh fruit and about choices which benefit their environment. The school council is a responsible and sensible group which makes a good contribution to the quality of school life. The buddies take their responsibilities seriously and younger pupils say that this system helps them to feel safe and happy at playtime. Pupils' good achievement in basic skills and their growing maturity prepare them well for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Overall teaching and learning are good and contribute much to pupils' good progress. During the inspection some exemplary practice was observed in Years 3 to 6. The best lessons are underpinned by thorough planning where key teaching points are identified. Challenging but achievable tasks are tailored to pupils' needs, informed by assessments made during lessons. Well-structured lessons maintain the pace of learning and through the use of short tasks to check on pupils' understanding teachers ensure that pupils are clear about the next steps in learning. Teachers use interactive whiteboards effectively to illustrate new ideas. Good relationships between pupils, their teachers and support staff ensure pupils of all abilities, including those with learning difficulties, take a full part in lessons.

In the satisfactory lessons, teachers did not make sufficient use of probing questions. They did not use assessment effectively to identify the next stages in pupils' learning and set sufficiently challenging tasks for the more able. Although groups of pupils are set targets, individual targets are not always identified. While the best marking gives pupils a clear indication of what to do in order to improve their work, the practice is not consistent among all staff.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Although the school judges the curriculum to be good, inspection evidence indicates it is outstanding. It is carefully structured to ensure appropriate links are made between subjects. Another strength is the way that pupils use their skills in information and communication technology, literacy and numeracy in other subjects. The use of computers is having a particularly good impact on boys' achievement in writing. Problem solving is well integrated into the curriculum and this helps pupils to apply their learning.

The curriculum is broad and balanced, and skills and knowledge are developed consistently. One week per term there is a whole-school focus on a relevant topic such as healthy eating. Opportunities for enrichment are wide and varied. Africa week helps to develop the pupils' understanding and appreciation of other cultures. Other opportunities include visits to support the topics pupils are studying, music tuition, outdoor activity weeks to promote team-building and after-school clubs to develop pupils' interest in gardening, drama, creative writing and sports.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Parents describe the school as 'a safe and nurturing environment', which is 'welcoming to newcomers and encourages parental involvement.' The quality of personal care, guidance and support is good and this provides a strong foundation for the school's work. There is some inconsistency in the use of assessment to guide pupils' academic development.

The school provides many opportunities for pupils to develop into mature and confident individuals. Excellent procedures for child protection ensure the safety of each child and there is a very good programme of risk assessment, which ensures that all are well cared for. Outside agencies effectively support the school in meeting the needs of those with learning difficulties and disabilities.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides very good determined leadership that focuses firmly on raising pupils' achievement and improving teaching and learning. The headteacher has rightly focused on ensuring that there is now a strong team of teachers where morale is high and where all staff willingly take on new ideas.

The new leadership team, supported by an enthusiastic and dynamic deputy head, works very well together and has introduced systems so that the school is better able to analyse data about pupils' performance and identify where improvements are needed. This enables teachers across the school to have a clear view of how their pupils should be achieving. Some initiatives such as target setting for individual pupils are very

recent and have yet to make an impact. This is an area the school knows it needs to develop. The newly formed curriculum groups have been very effective in developing a more creative and integrated curriculum and have enabled governors, alongside subject co-ordinators, to monitor the effectiveness of teaching and learning.

Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Very good leadership in the Foundation Stage and improvements to the buildings have addressed the criticisms in the previous report. Standards of behaviour, once an issue, have greatly improved because of very effective strategies that have changed the way behaviour is managed. These developments illustrate the school's capacity to improve.

Governors are actively involved in the daily life of the school and use their considerable range of expertise to enrich and support the school's development. Parents value the approachable nature of the school, the extended day provision and the very rich curriculum.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	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	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	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

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	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	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	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	1	NA

The quality of provision

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

¹ 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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	2	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	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
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
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
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
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
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
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
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

Pupils

Thank you for welcoming us when we visited your school, being so friendly and polite to us and telling us about your school. We really enjoyed talking with you. This is what we found out that makes your good school a special place.

* we think the way you make children from other countries feel very welcome and respect their culture and belief is really good* you are very well behaved and told us that you enjoy your lessons and feel safe* you enjoy challenging lessons and the many trips and visits provided for you.* relationships are very good and you all make lots of friends* you know it is important to exercise and eat healthy food* we know that you appreciate the good range of exciting clubs and other after-school activities* your headteacher and all the adults who work in your school care very much about you and want you to do your best.

We know that you will want to help your school improve even more. We have asked the teachers to help you know exactly what to do to improve your work. Some of you have told us that the work you do is sometimes too easy. We agree with you and have asked your teachers to make sure your work is always interesting and challenging. Thank you again for talking to us and answering our questions. Good luck in the future.

Chris Scola

Lead Inspector