



St Nicholas' CofE Primary

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 134611
LEA Warwickshire
Inspection number 282613
Inspection dates 20 September 2005 to 21 September 2005
Reporting inspector Stephanie Lacey RISP

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	St Faiths Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Alcester
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Warwickshire B49 6AG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01789 762578
Number on roll	383	Fax number	01789 762578
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Mrs Sally Staley

Age group 4 to 11	Inspection dates 20 September 2005 - 21 September 2005	Inspection number 282613
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Nicholas Church of England Primary School is a large primary school in Alcester. It opened in September 2004, following the amalgamation of Alcester Infant School and St Faith's CE Junior School. At the moment it is on two sites. The former junior school is currently being extended and refurbished to eventually accommodate the whole school. When children start school their skills, knowledge and understanding are broadly in line with the levels expected for their age. About 17% of pupils have been identified with some degree of learning difficulty or disability and about one per cent of pupils have statements of special educational need. This is broadly in line with the national picture. Only a very small number of pupils, about 1%, is from a minority ethnic group and no pupils are at the early stages of learning English. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is broadly average. This is the school's first inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This new school has laid good foundations to enable pupils to be successful learners and to enjoy their school experiences. It has moved forward very quickly since it opened because of the hard work and commitment of staff and governors. The school evaluates its overall provision and effectiveness as satisfactory and the inspection confirms that this is the case. It provides sound value for money. The school has already developed some strong features, which indicate its good capacity to improve. These include the very clear and inspirational leadership of the headteacher and the quality of education in the reception classes and Years 1 and 2, which results in the youngest pupils making very good progress and reaching high standards.

The school is well aware of what needs to be improved, the most important being the need to consolidate the good systems and procedures that have already been put in place. This is especially important in older year groups, where there is more inconsistency in teaching from class to class. This year, with some newly appointed staff, the school is working hard to establish a common approach. The school is focusing on tracking pupils' progress and helping them to better understand what they should do next to improve their work.

Grade: 3

What the school should do to improve further

- Build on the good procedures and policies that have been put in place to ensure that the provision for all pupils is of a consistently high standard;
- Make sure that older pupils in particular know what they need to do to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children start in the reception classes with a wide range of skills and knowledge typical for children of their age. Children make very good progress in the reception classes and last year most far exceeded the goals expected of them by the end of the year. Pupils also make very good progress and achieve well in Years 1 and 2. Consequently, results in the Year 2 national tests in reading, writing and mathematics in 2005 are high.

Standards in Year 6 national tests in 2005 are broadly average in English, mathematics and science, in comparison with 2004 national comparative data. Last year, most pupils in Years 3 to 6 made satisfactory progress but some lower ability and average pupils, mainly boys, did not. This was particularly apparent in writing and mathematics. Some of the more able pupils in Year 6 did not reach the levels expected of them in writing last year. This year, challenging targets have been set for all pupils, which the school is working hard to reach. Most pupils achieve well in lessons, although there remains a lack of sufficient challenge for a few more able pupils in writing in Year 6. The school

provides good support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, who achieve well with extra help. The very few pupils from minority ethnic groups achieve as well as their peers.

Grade: 3

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is satisfactory. It is underpinned by the school's commitment to a Christian education. Consequently, pupils show consideration for others. They reflect on a variety of issues, although opportunities to experience and learn about a wide range of cultural traditions are limited.

Most pupils enjoy coming to school and are keen to arrive in good time for the start of the day. Attendance levels are good. Younger pupils, in particular, are caught up in the excitement of learning and behave very well. They show great independence and play well together. In older pupils' classes, behaviour has improved tremendously over the last 12 months and is now satisfactory. This is because there are clear strategies to encourage pupils to behave sensibly. Staff manage well the few pupils who still find it hard to conform.

Staff encourage pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles. Many pupils take part in the after-school sports' clubs and enjoy taking exercise. The school council and prefect system make a good contribution to the successful running of the school. Pupils contribute effectively to the community and are satisfactorily developing skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being.

Grade: 3

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Throughout the school, teachers plan interesting work that engages pupils successfully. Especially careful planning goes into numeracy and literacy lessons. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities receive well-targeted additional support from teaching assistants and this helps them to succeed. In the reception classes and in Years 1 and 2, teaching is very good and is a key factor in children achieving very well. In Years 3 to 6, teaching is more varied but is always satisfactory. In some of these classes teaching is consistently good. However, in a few of the literacy and numeracy groups last year some pupils were not challenged sufficiently and did not do as well as they should have done. This difference in teaching accounts for the variation in progress made as pupils move through the school. The leadership team is working hard to ensure a consistency of approach from class to class.

Teachers do not always share sufficient information with pupils about how well they are doing or what they need to do to improve. The school knows that tracking progress and helping pupils to understand how to improve their own work are areas for development. It has plans in place to improve these.

Grade: 3

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory, with some areas of real strength especially in younger pupils' classes. The school has a sound planning structure but has yet to develop a fully agreed policy for personal, social and health education.

In the reception classes, work is particularly lively and interesting. Staff work together well to provide valuable learning experiences in all areas of learning. In Years 1 and 2, there is also a focus on learning through relevant and purposeful tasks. In Years 3 to 6, staff have correctly identified the need to apply literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects and to bring learning alive by linking learning in different subjects in order to make it more relevant.

There have been problems with the computers in the older pupils' information and communication technology suite. Provision is currently inadequate and so pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding are not as good as they should be. The school has plans to replace the computers this term.

The school offers a wide range of after-school activities for pupils that add to their enjoyment and promote better achievement in music, sport and art. Field trips, educational visits and links with local secondary schools fuel pupils' enthusiasm for learning.

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good care, guidance and support for pupils. It has established many good procedures. Requirements for child protection are in place. Pupils know whom to turn to for help and are confident that any issues of bullying or harassment will be dealt with.

The school provides good support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, with teaching assistants making a very positive contribution. Careful plans and detailed progress records for these pupils are shared with all staff. There are good relationships with support services outside school to provide additional help where needed.

There are good opportunities for children and parents to become familiar with the school before they start and strong links exist with pre-school providers. Pupils receive clear information about secondary school choices.

Most aspects of the school's care, guidance and support are good. Class teachers are supportive, but older pupils in particular are not sufficiently informed about what they need to do to make progress. The school is aware of this and has identified it as an area for development.

Grade: 2

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The clear and incisive leadership of the headteacher has been instrumental in establishing the firm foundation of this school over the last 12 months. She has risen above the difficulties associated with the building work and staff changes, and enabled her team to remain focused on working towards providing the best education that they can for the pupils. The work in the younger pupils' classes is managed very effectively. The leadership team in the older pupils' classes is new, and has not yet had time to make an impact. Provision for pupils is satisfactory and the leadership team is encouraging staff to develop and improve what it has to offer its pupils. The move to one site is being managed very well and staff have helped pupils to cope with the disruption.

A constant evaluation of how well things are going lies at the heart of the school's commitment to improvement. Views about the strengths and areas for improvement are sought from all members of the school community. Until now, the headteacher and the very experienced chair of governors have shouldered the responsibility for evaluating and planning for the future, but they intend to widen this responsibility over the coming months. There is a clear agenda for development and improvement, with staff and governors becoming increasingly involved in monitoring and evaluating how well things are progressing.

Grade: 3

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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>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	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	1	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	NA	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	NA
The behaviour of learners	3	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	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	3	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	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?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	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	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	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

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

22 September 2005

Dear Pupils

We thoroughly enjoyed visiting your school. Thank you very much for making us feel so welcome. We particularly enjoyed coming into your classrooms and talking to you at playtimes.

I expect that you would like to know what we thought about your school.

What we most liked about your school:

most of you are happy at school and enjoy learning

children in reception and Years 1 and 2 do exciting and interesting work

your teachers and the other adults in the school are working hard to make your new school one to be proud of

your headteacher is running your school very well and encouraging everyone to do their best.

What we have asked the school to do now:

help you to understand how well you are doing with your work and what you need to learn next

make sure that all the good ideas that your headteacher, governors and staff have about running your new school are being carried out.

With best wishes

Stephanie Lacey (Lead inspector)