

St Nicolas and St Mary CofE First and Middle School, Shoreham-by-Sea

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126049
Local Authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	293448
Inspection dates	21–22 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Helen Hutchings

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–12
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	224
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dennis Wares
Headteacher	David Etherton
Date of previous school inspection	7 March 2005
School address	Eastern Avenue Shoreham-by-Sea BN43 6PE
Telephone number	01273 454470
Fax number	01273 440256

Age group	4–12
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is similar in size to most primary schools. Pupils come from a wide area, as admission is based on a Church connection. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties, including those with a statement of special educational need, is average. When the school was last inspected, it was judged to have serious weaknesses. The school will change its designation to a primary school in September 2008. The headteacher joined the school in September 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a rapidly improving school. It has improved sufficiently since its last inspection so that its overall effectiveness is now satisfactory. Therefore, in accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer has serious weaknesses. The school has the strong confidence of parents who value the improvements. Comments typical of many include, 'I wouldn't choose any other school' and 'I strongly believe that our school has come on leaps and bounds'.

Very good pastoral care leads to good personal development and well-being. Pupils talk positively about the things they do in school and bring this same enthusiasm to their learning. Children develop these positive attitudes from the time they join the Reception class. The sound provision at this stage gives them a thorough basis for later learning. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They are safe and enjoy each other's company within the school's harmonious community and Christian ethos.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and more consistent than when the school was last inspected. Adults know pupils well. They use the improved assessment procedures in English and mathematics to match work appropriately to pupils' abilities, but recognise that these procedures now need to be extended to other subjects. Underachievement has been challenged so that pupils now make satisfactory progress and for many pupils, progress is good. Standards are above those found nationally, giving pupils the necessary skills and knowledge for their future world of work. Teachers mark work carefully and many add short-term targets for improvement. However, this is not consistent yet across the school. Many parents and pupils commented on the interesting curriculum, which satisfactorily meets pupils' needs. As one parent said, 'I have never seen such enthusiasm and interest. Their enthusiasm has been totally captured and it has ended up "rubbing off" on the whole family.'

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher's very good leadership and accurate identification of the school's strengths and weaknesses are key factors in the school regaining its confidence, seen in the way all adults work as a team to take the school forward. However, not all subject leaders have yet had enough opportunity to develop their management expertise to make a full contribution to monitoring the quality of their subjects.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that marking gives pupils a clear understanding of what they have to do to improve.
- Extend assessment systems to monitor and track pupils' performance in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- Develop the leadership expertise of subject leaders.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children join the school with higher than expected levels of attainment for their age, particularly in their social and emotional development. They are ready to learn and adapt quickly to the school's routines in the Reception class so that many exceed the goals expected for their learning. From this good foundation, pupils reach above average standards in the tests in Years 2 and 6, and in many years standards are significantly above national averages. Pupils in Year 7 are working at levels above those normally found at that age. When the school was last

inspected, pupils did not make enough progress between Years 2 and 6 but this is no longer the case. Progress is now satisfactory and many pupils are making good progress. A few pupils are not yet making the expected rates of progress but the school is aware of this and is providing specific programmes to help them catch up. In recent years, pupils have not done as well in mathematics as in English and science, but the changes made to the teaching of the subject mean that pupils are now achieving as well as in the other core subjects. The school is setting increasingly challenging targets for its performance and is on course to meet them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' thorough enjoyment of school is reflected in their exemplary behaviour. Good attitudes are the norm, and are underpinned by very good relationships. Pupils say bullying is rare and that adults deal with inappropriate behaviour quickly and fairly. Good gains in spiritual, moral, social and cultural development help pupils to appreciate the achievement of others and to show care and consideration for one another. Attendance is above average.

Pupils contribute well to the school and local communities. They show initiative and enjoy taking responsibility. For example, older pupils mediate if there are problems between younger pupils at playtimes. The school council effectively contributes to school life and ensures pupils' views are well represented. Through its activities, it gives a valuable introduction to the workings of democracy. Raising money for charities helps pupils to develop an awareness of wider social and economic issues and, as one pupil said, 'It helps us appreciate what we have and others haven't.' Work towards gaining 'Healthy School' status gives pupils a secure understanding of the need for safety, regular exercise and healthy eating.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Consistent approaches to teaching from the Reception class to Year 7 enable pupils to learn effectively and develop good study skills. Interactive whiteboards are used well to provide good visual stimulus for learning and contribute well to pupils' enjoyment. Many teachers regularly use a range of strategies, such as sharing intended learning, using 'talking partners' for pupils to share their thinking, and reviewing achievement at the end of the lesson. These routines mean that pupils are confident in their learning and are beginning to monitor their own progress. Marking is regular and builds pupils' confidence well by pointing out what they have achieved. Some teachers encourage pupils to comment on their own work and, in the best examples, pupils record that they understand what they have to do to improve. This is not yet consistent across the school so that marking does not always give enough guidance about what to do next and the targets set are not followed up. Teachers use the improved systems for tracking pupils' progress in English and mathematics effectively to plan tasks which meet the different needs of pupils in the class. The work is usually challenging and pupils respond well to the high expectations teachers now have of them. As one pupil said, 'Teachers help us; we like the way they respect how we learn.'

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets statutory requirements. The emphasis on teaching literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills is resulting in improved progress. Children's personal and social development is addressed well in the Reception class. This forms an effective basis for pupils' ongoing personal, social and health education which is an effective thread running through the whole curriculum in the rest of the school. Teachers link subjects very well, which helps pupils to develop their literacy skills in other subjects and makes learning interesting. As one pupil said, 'I look forward to something new every day.' The school recognises that the curriculum needs developing further to make sure that the skills specific to each subject are developed systematically as pupils move through the school. Pupils talked enthusiastically about the themed activities, such as Chinese Day and Food Week. They say that they learn a lot from these activities and really enjoy the wide range of enriching events, for example, building an Anderson Shelter as part of a study of World War II. The range of extra-curricular activities is satisfactory and covers a range of pupils' interests. Year 6 pupils are looking forward to their residential visit.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pastoral care and support are excellent and reflect the strong Christian ethos of the school. Pupils feel well looked after and are confident to approach adults if they have a problem. Procedures for child protection, together with those for risk assessment and health and safety, are robust. Arrangements to help children settle into Reception, and to transfer to secondary education, are smooth. This helps pupils become confident in dealing with new situations. A strong focus is given to promoting safe and healthy lifestyles.

Academic guidance is satisfactory. Recently established systems for assessment in English and mathematics are now being used appropriately to monitor and track pupil performance and set targets for achievement. Assessment procedures are not well developed in other subjects. Pupils appreciate having their own learning targets. As one pupil explained, 'It's good to know your targets because they help you get even better.' Personal support for pupils with learning difficulties, and those identified as gifted and talented, is satisfactory

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Following a period of unsettled leadership, the recently appointed headteacher provides strong leadership and clear direction for improvement. He has implemented effective systems for monitoring school performance. Gains have been made in the quality of teaching, curriculum provision and resources. These developments, together with initiatives to improve performance in English and mathematics using local authority support, have resulted in improved progress and achievement and good personal development. Staff morale is high and the commitment to achieving the school's aims is a shared one.

The school has an accurate understanding of its performance. Planning for improvement is thorough and takes into account the views of all stakeholders. The resulting development plan is an effective tool to move the school forward. The quality of teaching is monitored regularly

by the headteacher. The school is currently developing the management expertise of subject leaders to enable them to play a full part in managing the subjects for which they are responsible. However, teachers' increasingly secure knowledge of pupil progress, stemming largely from improved assessment and tracking procedures in literacy and numeracy, enables challenging targets to be set.

The role of governors has strengthened. They play a satisfactory part in financial and strategic planning and are gaining confidence in their role of 'critical friends'. Given the determination and clear vision of the headteacher, supported by the new deputy headteacher and an increasingly effective leadership team, the school has good capacity to improve.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

- Thank you for making the inspection team so welcome and talking to us about the school and the things you do. We are pleased that everything is at least satisfactory and that some things are good.
- Your behaviour is excellent and this helps you to enjoy your work.
- You play together well and make sure that everyone is included in playground games.
- We are pleased that bullying is rare and sorted out quickly when you tell an adult.
- The school council is a good way for you to let the headteacher and staff know your views about the school.
- The youngest children get off to a sound start in the Reception class.
- The adults in the school help you to make progress and reach standards that are above those of other pupils of your age.
- You have good attitudes to your work and appreciate that your teachers try to make learning fun.
- You have a lot of interesting topics and stimulating things to do, such as when other adults come into the school for the Chinese Day or in Food Week.
- You are cared for well and know that you have someone to go to if you have a problem.
- You know how to stay fit and healthy and to stay safe.
- Mr Etherton and the staff have planned some things to help you to make your work better. We also think that these will help and hope that you will concentrate on these too. We have asked your teachers to:
 - make sure that marking always tells you how to improve and we hope that you will try to do this in the next piece of work.
 - tell you how well you are doing in every subject like they do in English and mathematics
 - think even more carefully about how subjects are planned and taught.

Very best wishes for the future