



# St Nicholas CE Primary

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 134238  
**Local Authority** Bath and North East Somerset  
**Inspection number** 294119  
**Inspection dates** 3–4 October 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Clive Lewis

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Kilmersdon Road
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled		Radstock
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11		Bath BA3 3QH
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01761 432 101
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	231	<b>Fax number</b>	01761 436 232
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Esther Parker
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Gill Sutcliffe
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected		

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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

St Nicholas is a spacious, attractive, purpose-built school, which has been open for one year. It is an amalgamation of former separate infant and junior schools and drew most of its pupils and staff from these two schools. A new headteacher and deputy headteacher were appointed to open the school. The school is situated in an area of significant deprivation. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage.

## **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 school. The strong and inspiring leadership of the headteacher has enabled the school to get off to a good start in almost all areas of its provision. The impressive new building and the outstanding learning environment have had a very positive effect on pupils' self-esteem. As a result, behaviour and attitudes are good. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the new school, one writing, 'The school has a wonderfully positive attitude, helping pupils of every ability reach their full potential.'

Children enter Reception with levels of attainment well below those typically found. Children make satisfactory progress in their Reception year. The attainment of pupils in other year groups when the school opened was below or well below average. In Years 1 and 2, pupils achieve well as a result of good teaching and a range of well-planned programmes designed to improve attainment. In Year 2, the high teacher-to-pupil ratio and the imaginative group arrangements provide a significant boost to pupils' learning. Although standards in Year 2 are improving, they remain below average. Similarly, in Years 3 to 6, pupils achieve well, and standards in Year 6 are broadly in line with national averages. The school has introduced a number of imaginative curricular initiatives to support pupils' writing skills. These are having a positive impact, although standards of writing across the school remain below average. The quality of teaching and learning is good. However, in some lessons, teachers could make better use of opportunities to improve pupils' speaking skills.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They obviously enjoy coming to school and demonstrate their enjoyment by working hard and participating eagerly. However, although the great majority of pupils attend school regularly, the attendance of a minority of pupils is a cause for concern. Pupils are given good quality care, help and guidance. As a result, they gain a good understanding of what is needed to lead healthy and safe lives. Through a wide range of extra-curricular sport activities, they have plenty of opportunity to put their understanding into practice. Their involvement in charitable work, participation in local events and the contributions they make through the work of the school council all provide ways for pupils to make a positive contribution to their local and wider community. A good range of teaching styles and groupings helps pupils to develop skills of working collectively, collaboratively and individually. Good individual academic support is provided and the school ensures both children and their parents know the key learning targets for improvement.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in writing throughout the school.
- Strengthen provision for improving pupils' speaking and listening skills.
- Investigate ways of improving the attendance of the minority of pupils who do not attend school regularly enough.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils of all abilities have made good progress and achieved well in their first year at St Nicholas. When children start in Reception, they display skills which are well below the level typical for their age, particularly in speaking and listening. Very recently, increased numbers led unavoidably to the formation of two mixed-age Reception/Year 1 classes. In one of these classes, where the majority of the Reception children are taught along with a minority of the youngest Year 1 pupils, children make good progress. In the predominately Year 1 class, where there is a more formal Key Stage 1 style of teaching, the Reception children do not make as good progress. As a result, Reception children are making satisfactory progress overall. In the recent national tests, Year 2 standards were below average, with writing a significant weakness. Following well-targeted intervention strategies, pupils are now achieving well in Years 1 and 2, although standards remain below average. In the 2006 national tests, Year 6 pupils did very well in mathematics, with approximately half achieving higher levels, but standards in writing were below average. Current standards in Year 6 are broadly average and pupils are achieving well because of very good teaching. Writing is an acknowledged weakness that the school is tackling vigorously with a range of programmes.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils are keen to express their very positive views about the school. They enjoy a good range of extra activities and, for example, keenly get involved in the Eco Group. Older pupils enjoy taking on extra responsibilities, which they undertake with a cheerful smile. Behaviour is good throughout the day.

Pupils understand that it is important to eat good food and take regular exercise to keep healthy so that they can concentrate better. They talk sensibly about issues such as the importance of recycling and the benefits of their healthy tuck shop. They say that they feel safe and secure in school because adults are kind and fair to them. They explain with enthusiasm how they support their own school community and enjoy being involved in decision-making through the school council. Spiritual, moral and social development is good and the children's understanding of other cultures, faiths and religions is satisfactory.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching has improved during the course of the year as a result of monitoring and well-focused professional development. Teaching in the predominantly Reception class is good. Children enjoy a well-planned and wide range of teacher-led and

free-choice activities inside and outside the classroom in a secure outdoor environment. However, provision for the Reception children in the predominantly Year 1 class, whilst satisfactory, is not as effective or supportive of the youngest children.

In Year 2, teaching is good because of the imaginative use of time and space during the mornings, when the focus is rigorously on literacy and numeracy. It is similarly good through Years 3 to 6. There is some outstanding teaching in Year 6. Here, the two teachers have very high expectations and use assessment information very well to group pupils and plan appropriate lessons. Teachers throughout the school support the less able well and provide appropriately challenging work for the more able. Very good relationships lead to good behaviour and positive attitudes and these help pupils make good progress. However, there is scope for teachers to encourage better responses from pupils in order to improve their speaking and listening, which are weak.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The good curricular provision captures pupils' interests. It helps them enjoy school and make good progress. The new building has been painstakingly turned into a wonderful learning environment that provides a rich variety of experiences for all. The quality of art work on display is particularly high.

As well as a strong and appropriate emphasis on improving literacy and numeracy skills, the curriculum has a good focus on promoting personal, social and health education as well as computer and creative skills. A strong focus on improving the historically weak levels of writing skills throughout the school is beginning to show some positive results. For example, clearly targeted 'boy-friendly' activities have led to an improvement in boys' attitudes to story-writing. A very good range of enrichment activities, such as clubs, residential visits and educational outings, contributes well to the progress and personal development of the pupils. Occasional weeks devoted to specific subjects and themes and the school's strong links with other providers make the curriculum even more fun for pupils.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher has a very clear focus on ensuring that every child is treated equally and cared for properly. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are robust and fully meet new legislation. Children who are being looked after by the local authority are carefully supported and achieve as well as their friends. Links with many agencies are effective in supporting individual needs. However, without any input from the educational welfare service it has been an uphill task to address the poor attendance of a small but significant number of pupils.

When planning how best to support pupils, teachers place a strong emphasis on boosting self-confidence, and this is having a positive impact on pupils' achievements. Target setting, individual self-reviews by pupils at the end of lessons as well as some

really good marking all support pupils' learning very well. One boy said, 'If you didn't have targets there would be no point – a target gives you something to head towards.'

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Consistently good quality leadership and management have ensured the rapid development of a distinctive school ethos and improving progress for pupils. The headteacher's strong leadership and direction ensure that no stone is left unturned in the school's aim to give its pupils the best possible education. She is very well supported by the senior leadership team and the core subject leaders, who share the very clear vision.

The monitoring of teaching and learning and other areas of the school's work is regular, rigorous, shared and very effective. Links with parents are improving owing to the good range of initiatives designed to encourage their involvement in their children's education.

Governance is good. Governors have a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Resources are used very well. Systems for self-evaluation are good. The school development plan accurately prioritises the important areas for development.

Although good progress has been made in the first year, the senior management team are not resting on their laurels and realise that significant improvements remain to be made, in writing, for example. However, the progress made in the school's first year shows that there is good capacity for further improvement.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
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	NA

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
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	2

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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.

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

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

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We enjoyed visiting the school and seeing you at work and play. You gave us lots of comments that helped us to form a good picture of your school.

We think your school is a good school. This is what we found out:

- Your teachers and other adults in the school help you to learn well.
- You behave well and you know how to tell right from wrong.
- You clearly enjoy coming to school because there are lots of interesting activities for you to take part in.
- Your school is helping you to stay healthy by encouraging you to eat healthy foods and take regular exercise.
- You get on very well together and support each other in lessons and around the school.

There are two things we have asked your teachers to do that would make it even better:

- Continue to work hard to improve your writing.
- Help you to improve your confidence in speaking.

And one thing we think some of you could do that would really help:

- Make sure you all attend school regularly.

We think that your school, with its wonderful new building, is one of which you should be proud. We are confident that, with your help, the school will improve still further.

I wish you well in your future education.