

St Nicholas Church of England Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113437
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	311268
Inspection date	12 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Paul Sadler

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	345
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jean Salt
Headteacher	Paul Walker
Date of previous school inspection	6 May 2003
School address	55 Woolbrook Road Sidmouth EX10 9XB
Telephone number	01395 514146
Fax number	01395 577064

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. He evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the extent to which pupils make the best possible progress in their learning; the quality of the curriculum and its delivery through teaching; whether teachers set appropriately challenging targets for pupils, and the use of these to generate appropriate targets for the whole school. Evidence was gathered by observing lessons, scrutinising documents and the limited amount of pupils' work available, and from discussions with staff and pupils. Other aspects of the school's work were not evaluated in detail but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The majority of pupils live in this coastal town. Almost all pupils are of White British background and the proportion who speak a language other than English at home is low. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average, as is the proportion with statements of special educational need.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher both took up their posts on 1 September 2007.

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. The great majority of parents and pupils agree: 'We are delighted with the progress our son has made ... he feels happy, safe and secure and loves going to school' is a typical statement. Aspects of the school's work that parents single out for particular praise are the preparation and support for new pupils when they start in Year 3, and the help given to those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Some parents feel, however, that such needs are not always identified at an early enough stage.

The school's values and Christian ethos lead to outstanding spiritual, moral and social development among the pupils. Pupils behave well and have a mature understanding of the feelings of others, as shown by the mentoring of new pupils by those in Year 6 and by pupils' excellent contribution to the wider community, for instance, in setting up email contacts with inner city schools where their teachers have previously worked.

Pupils achieve well and reach above-average standards in their work. The proportions attaining the higher Level 5 at the end of Year 6 in English and science are well above average. All pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make good progress from starting at the school in Year 3 to when they leave in Year 6.

Teaching is good because teachers know their subjects well and teach in an interesting way, for instance, through effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) or by using pupils' skills to demonstrate to others what can be achieved, for example, in dance. In some lessons there is a heavy reliance on published materials and pupils have limited opportunities to work together or to develop their independence.

The curriculum is satisfactory. Pupils are taught what is required and there is a very good range of additional opportunities provided through clubs for sport, the arts and other interests, and through educational visits. Activities such as cycle training develop an excellent understanding in the pupils of how to stay safe. The curriculum is not always used to take advantage of the available opportunities for pupils to apply their skills in realistic situations, for instance, by using mathematical skills in subjects such as geography and science.

Pupils are cared for well by staff, and so they feel safe and secure at school. Child protection arrangements are effective. All safeguarding checks have been carried out, but the requirement to have a single record of these is not yet in place.

Teachers assess pupils' work regularly and accurately. Pupils making less than the expected progress are identified and given additional help. Teachers explain to pupils how they can improve their work and set targets for them to achieve. Most pupils, especially those in Years 5 and 6, have a very good understanding of how to improve their work and of how their performance compares with national standards. Until very recently, however, this information had not been used to set the required targets for the school's overall performance; these have been unrealistic and have not been achieved.

Leadership and management are good. Under the leadership of the previous headteacher a thorough and accurate evaluation of the school's performance was completed. New senior leaders have already identified areas for further development, including the need to offer pupils more opportunities to develop their autonomy and independence, and develop the curriculum to ensure that all pupils get a good range of opportunities to apply their skills. Subject leaders are enthusiastic and diligent; however, some would benefit from further training to ensure that

their subject is taught effectively throughout the school. Leaders and managers have formed excellent partnerships, for instance, with other schools, the church, town council and external agencies. Governors support the school well and challenge staff to make further improvements. Overall, effective improvements have been made since the last inspection and the school is in a good position to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase opportunities for pupils to apply the skills they have acquired in literacy, numeracy and ICT in a range of situations, and help them develop more autonomy and independence in their learning.
- Ensure that the targets set are challenging and realistic and utilise the school's knowledge of the progress of individual pupils.
- Complete the required single record of the details and checks made on staff.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

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

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
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?	2

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?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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?	No
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**

13 September 2007

Dear Pupils

St Nicholas C of E Junior School, Sidmouth, EX10 9XB

I very much enjoyed talking and listening to you and seeing your work when I visited your school recently. I want to thank those of you who took time to talk to me. I especially enjoyed attending your assembly.

You and your parents are right to believe that your school is a good one. These are some of the most important things about it.

- You make good progress in your work and reach above-average standards by the time you leave Year 6.
- You behave well, get on very well together and help each other. I was especially impressed by the way Year 6 have been helping Year 3 as they start school.
- The school's links with the church, and the values the school promotes, are excellent in helping you to understand others' feelings.
- You know how to keep healthy and safe. Activities such as cycle training help you to do this.
- You are taught well. Teachers explain things clearly. They and the teaching assistants help you when you find the work difficult.
- In some lessons you are not given enough chance to learn on your own or by sharing your ideas with other pupils.
- There are lots of interesting clubs and visits.
- You do not always have enough chances to use your skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT in other subjects.
- You are well cared for by the staff and feel you can talk to them easily. Your targets help you to improve your work, but the staff do not yet use this information to set the targets for Year 6 tests.
- The staff and the governors lead the school well. Your new headteacher and deputy headteacher have already spotted some things that could be improved.

I have asked the school to give you more opportunities to work on your own and together, and to use your skills to solve problems in other subjects. You can help by telling the staff your ideas, perhaps through the school council. I have also asked the staff to set the school's targets more carefully. The school must have a list of the details of all the staff and the checks made on them, and I have asked that this is finished as soon as possible.

Thank you again for your help, and good luck in the future.

Mr Paul Sadler Lead Inspector

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Lead Inspector