

# St Nicholas Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	115122
<b>Local Authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	311842
<b>Inspection dates</b>	19–20 May 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Michael Milton

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 category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	134
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Lorraine Holliday
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Hilary Dieu de Bellefontaine
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	17 November 2003
<b>School address</b>	The Street Tillingham Southminster Essex CM0 7TJ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01621 779263
<b>Fax number</b>	01621 778612

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This is a small village school with five classes. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning, behavioural, social and communication difficulties is above average, and four pupils have statements of special educational need. The majority of pupils have average socio-economic backgrounds. An above-average number of pupils join or leave the school at other than the usual times. Pupils' attainment on entry is below the expectations for their ages. The school has received the Artsmark and Activemark awards.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

St Nicholas is an improving school that provides a satisfactory education. It has some significant strengths as well as some aspects that require improvement. Parents are very happy with the school. One parent wrote, 'We are very pleased with the fantastic atmosphere and attitudes to child care and learning'. The headteacher has secured a staff team committed to improving the quality of care and education that the school provides for all pupils.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and improving. Teaching is already good in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. These pupils make good progress and, by the end of Year 2, standards are a little above average. Although Key Stage 2 teaching has some good features, it remains satisfactory because it is not resulting in consistently good learning and achievement. Pupils' progress is improving for particular subjects in each Key Stage 2 year group but their achievements over time are satisfactory and result in standards at the end of Year 6 that generally match national averages in English, mathematics and science. However, most pupils who find learning more difficult make good progress because their needs are identified quickly and there is a good range of very well organised provision.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. The pupils feel extremely safe at school; they play and work exceptionally well together, and think about what is important in life. Their behaviour is excellent and they are keen to learn. Pupils' contributions to the village and school communities are outstanding. The well-planned curriculum meets the needs of all pupils in the mixed-age classes. There is outstanding provision in addition to normal lessons, including a Year 6 residential visit to Ingleton and a very good range of sports clubs. Most pupils are strongly committed to healthy lifestyles. All adults work hard to provide very good levels of care and support, especially for vulnerable pupils, and these make a strong contribution to pupils' sense of security and confidence, which underpin learning.

Some pupils know what they have achieved and how to improve, through marking and target setting. The progress of each pupil is carefully monitored and reviewed each term to identify any pupils who are underachieving or need extra support. These good systems help pupils to achieve well in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, but are not yet sufficiently effective in Key Stage 2.

Although leadership and management are effective in promoting pupils' outstanding personal development, they are satisfactory overall because they are not having sufficient impact on improving pupils' achievement and the effectiveness of teaching in Key Stage 2. The well structured development plans for English, mathematics and science are helping pupils to learn more, but their criteria for success do not focus sharply enough on measuring improvements in pupils' progress and this has slowed the rate at which standards have risen. The effective governing body gives good support to the school. The school has a sound capacity for improvement because the accurate, frank self-evaluation involves all stakeholders, the school's development planning is beginning to have an impact in most of the areas where improvement is needed, and there are developing strengths to leadership and management.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Children's overall standards when they join the Foundation Stage are below those expected for their ages. They make good progress. The few children facing particular difficulties with

speech and language also make good progress, especially in their personal, social and emotional development. When they join Year 1, most children have reached the nationally expected standards for this age. Teaching is consistently good, with a good balance of adult-directed and child-initiated activities. The good assessment system monitors the progress of each child accurately, and assessments are used to plan activities that meet children's differing learning needs. The classroom has interesting resources that are organised into clear learning areas, together with good, stimulating displays. The satisfactory outside area has a small covered section and allows a reasonable amount of outdoor learning. However, there is good collaborative planning with Years 1 and 2, which includes a day each week when children work and play in the school's grounds and the village. This has improved children's learning. One parent wrote about this outdoor learning day, 'Welly Wednesday is a fantastic idea, and a great way to inspire children'.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Ensure that there is consistently good teaching and learning in Key Stage 2.
- Make rigorous use of the good systems for assessment and monitoring the progress of individual pupils to ensure that all pupils make good progress.
- Sharpen the criteria for success used in the action plans for English, mathematics and science so that they measure specific improvements to pupils' standards.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

By the end of Year 6, standards are broadly average and pupils' achievements over time are satisfactory. In Year 2, standards are a little above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils make particularly good progress in writing because target setting is effective and teaching makes good use of visual resources to encourage pupils to write. In Key Stage 2, pupils' rates of progress are improving quickly for certain subjects in particular years. For example, Year 4 pupils are making good progress in writing and science. Pupils' rates of progress are improving because teaching is becoming more effective and there are improved strategies to help pupils who find learning more difficult and those who are underachieving. Gifted and talented pupils make good progress in each key stage and achieve above-average standards. However, inconsistencies in teaching and learning still have a negative impact on pupils' overall achievement in Years 3 to 6. The academic targets for the ends of Years 2 and 6 are sufficiently challenging but are not used to full effect in raising standards. In 2007, the Year 6 targets were missed for pupils reaching the expected Level 4 and above but exceeded for those reaching the higher Level 5.

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

### **Grade: 1**

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They learn a great deal about their own culture, and learn effectively about the richness and diversity of cultures in Britain. Pupils' respectful behaviour reflects their strong moral development. Pupils adopt safe practices in lessons and in the playground and have an exceptionally good understanding of how to stay safe in a range of out-of-school situations. They report that isolated incidents

of bullying are quickly resolved. Pupils make outstanding contributions to the school and village communities. Pupils contribute to the parish woodland project, about half enter the village's flower show, and all contribute regularly to church services. In school, older pupils act as play leaders and serve lunch. Most pupils are strongly committed to healthy lifestyles. Many pupils eat fresh fruit and vegetables each day, more than half attend a sports club and swimming standards are high. Pupils' thoroughly enjoy school. However, attendance rates are average because some families have difficulties due to the long distance they live from the school, and others take holidays during term time. Pupils are well prepared for later life because they have excellent attitudes and social skills together with sound skills of literacy and numeracy.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Developing strengths in teaching include the effective use of the interactive whiteboards, planned opportunities for speaking and listening and the use of teaching assistants to help pupils learn in all parts of lessons. In both key stages, some lessons provide pupils with good opportunities to use their initiative and work independently. There is good teaching and learning in Key Stage 1 because pupils are taking responsibility for their learning, and assessment is used to give them clear guidance on how to improve their work. Key Stage 2 teaching is only satisfactory, as it does not yet enable pupils to make consistently good progress. Pupils find the short-term target setting, self-assessment and detailed marking helpful but these are not used rigorously enough to improve pupils' rates of progress in all subjects in each class. In both key stages, questions that lack precision sometimes slow pupils' learning.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The broad, balanced curriculum promotes good progress in Key Stage 1, although recent initiatives are not yet reflected in pupils' current achievement in Key Stage 2. Nevertheless, excellent enrichment activities, including special arts projects, music festivals and special themed weeks such as the India and mathematics weeks, add significantly to pupils' motivation and enjoyment. Key Stage 1 pupils have an enjoyable weekly outdoor learning day, which enhances their progress. All Key Stage 2 pupils learn the recorder and benefit from links with three local sports clubs. They also enjoy the specialist teaching of religious education, science and physical education for one afternoon per week. Effective provision for developing pupils' understanding of the diversity of cultures in Britain includes visits by representatives from different British minority ethnic groups and by African and Indian dancers and musicians.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

Inspection evidence supports the parent who wrote, 'The staff are welcoming, open and friendly, and I know any concerns will be immediately and appropriately addressed'. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are in place and meet requirements. The necessary health and safety checks are made with appropriate follow-up action. Highly effective personal support and guidance is a key factor in pupils' outstanding personal development and well-being. The school provides good support for parents through, for example, well attended courses and a family sports event. Termly meetings for each class teacher with the headteacher and special educational needs

coordinator review the progress of each pupil and agree steps to address any underachievement. The use of this good system is not yet effective enough in helping all pupils to make good progress during Key Stage 2.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The headteacher's sound leadership secures the good quality of care and promotes the development of pupils' excellent personal qualities, but it has not ensured consistently good progress in Key Stage 2. Leadership has been effective in improving the curriculum and pupils' achievement in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 but recent initiatives have yet to impact fully on standards and achievement in Key Stage 2. The results of the good quality monitoring and evaluation are used to identify appropriate targets for improvement. However, recent planning has not focussed closely enough on outcomes for pupils and this has slowed the rate at which standards have risen. The governing body acts as a critical friend and knows the school's strengths and weaknesses well. There is a strong commitment to ensuring that all pupils benefit from and enjoy their education. There is effective leadership of provision for pupils who face learning and behavioural difficulties.





## 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?	3
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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
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	2

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
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?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
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	3
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

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

21 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Nicholas Church of England Primary School, Tillingham CM0 7TJ

I really enjoyed visiting your school and meeting you. I enjoyed talking to you in lessons, at lunch and in meetings with members of the pupil forum and Year 6. I am very grateful to so many of your parents for returning the questionnaires. It was interesting to hear from you that you enjoy school, feel very safe, and that you live healthy lifestyles. Your new playground equipment looks wonderful and you are very lucky to have a swimming pool. It was very good to listen to your singing in assembly.

The teaching helps pupils to make good progress in classes 1 and 2, while in classes 3, 4 and 5 you make good progress with some subjects and satisfactory progress with other subjects. The school is really good at helping you develop as people and, as one of your parents wrote, 'The children at St Nick's are confident, well-adjusted individuals who are enjoying school'. The staff work hard to provide interesting things for you to learn both in normal lessons and from visitors and visits, special weeks and clubs. All adults work hard to take a great deal of care of all of you.

You enjoy lessons and are grateful that teachers help you when you face difficulties with your work. However, not all lessons are helping you to learn as much as you can. Teachers' marking and your targets are helpful to you, but they are not helping you to improve your learning quickly enough in some subjects. The school is going to work on these to find the small improvements that will help you learn even more.

Your headteacher and the staff work hard to improve the education that the school provides for you. Examples of these improvements include 'Welly Wednesday' and more science investigations. The staff plan these improvements carefully but the way they measure their success does not include enough about how much more you are learning as a result of their hard work.

You can help the school to improve even more by continuing to behave well, making the most of all the good opportunities it provides, and thinking carefully about how you can make even more progress with your work.

With best wishes

Mike Milton

Lead inspector