

St Nicholas CofE VA Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120227
Local Authority	Rutland
Inspection number	313558
Inspection dates	11–12 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Robert Drew

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	104
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Deborah A Oakes
Headteacher	Mrs Barbara Crellin
Date of previous school inspection	22 September 2003
School address	Mill Lane Cottesmore Rutland LE15 7DL
Telephone number	01572 812337
Fax number	01572 812374

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than average, serving Cottesmore village and the surrounding area. The great majority of pupils are White British, while a very small number come from minority ethnic backgrounds. On balance, pupils are economically advantaged. Attainment on entry is above average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is below average. The school holds a wide range of the awards, including Investors in People, National Healthy School Status, Eco-School and the Rutland Quality Mark for Early Years.

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 satisfactory school. It has some good features. Standards are above average by the end of Key Stage 2 in English, mathematics and science. Achievement, or 'long-term progress', is thus satisfactory since pupils also arrive with above-average attainment. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress, due to the effective additional support they receive. All pupils make a successful start at the school because of high-quality teaching and organisation in the Foundation Stage. Generally, they then make the progress expected of them in Key Stage 1, so that standards in Year 2 tests are above average. They sustain similar progress in Key Stage 2. Results vary quite widely from year to year in both key stages and achievement lacks consistency. This partly reflects the school's small size, where each individual's performance can potentially have a marked impact on the overall picture. It is also the result of relatively high staff turnover and the subsequent discontinuity to learning.

Personal development is good and ensures effective spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are reflective, behave well and have positive attitudes. Despite the lack of cultural range in school, their knowledge and respect of other cultures in the United Kingdom and abroad is good. Pupils are active in contributing to their community, through environmental projects, improving play facilities or helping elderly local people, in particular through the School Council. This approach and good literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills ensure good preparation for future economic well-being.

A good curriculum and wide range of extra-curricular activities give ample scope for prompting the enthusiasm and interest pupils show. Residential visits are especially appreciated and contribute well to personal development. There are more opportunities for pupils to learn through a skills-based approach and the school is effective in setting up policies and procedures that care for, guide and support them well. Statutory requirements are fully met and arrangements to promote attendance, healthy lifestyles, positive behaviour and support for those with learning difficulties are all effective. The tracking of academic progress has improved and is now good and continues to develop. Within teaching and learning, some practice is good and there are outstanding lessons, but a significant proportion of teaching is satisfactory. The overall quality is satisfactory, matching its impact on progress. Consistently good features include relationships in the classroom, clear explanation by teachers and effective work by teaching assistants. In the best lessons, extremely high expectations, strong pace and the close match of work to different levels of ability are all very impressive. However, variable pace in a minority of lessons sometimes curtails pupils' learning as they lose concentration.

The headteacher has had a good impact on several aspects, especially good behaviour and the marked improvements to premises and facilities since the last inspection. However, less impact has been made on achievement. The management contribution of other staff is only partly developed. Whilst they have an improved awareness of their roles, they have not yet had the opportunity to translate this fully into practice. Self-evaluation is generally accurate, but in several key areas the school has evaluated its performance more highly than national criteria would merit. The Governing Body has a satisfactory impact on performance and a growing awareness of the need to raise achievement significantly. There are strengths and weaknesses in parental support and relationships. Generally, good support is expressed and a growing number of parents choose this school, with good collaboration in many situations. However, a significant minority replying to the Ofsted Questionnaire expressed concerns about their child's progress and the effectiveness of communication between the school and themselves.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Foundation Stage is well led and managed. Very good relationships exist between staff and children. The area is well equipped and effective and sometimes outstanding teaching makes a significant impact on progress. Children's strengths and weaknesses are accurately assessed and their development met by a good balance of activities chosen by the children and those directed by the teacher. By the time they leave the Foundation Stage, they show marked strengths, especially their disposition and attitudes, reading, writing and their physical development. Some aspects of children's mathematical development match national expectations rather than exceeding them.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement so that it is consistently good in each phase of the school and across the school as a whole.
- Strengthen the formal involvement of co-ordinators in setting and pursuing whole-school targets and in the monitoring of teaching in the subjects they lead.
- Take new and urgent steps to reduce discontinuity of staffing and increase the proportion of high-quality teaching.
- Improve communication between parents and the school creating a well-used and trusted process.

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

Pupils arrive with above average standards and their overall achievement is satisfactory. Achievement has varied significantly from year to year, though tracking of progress is now better placed to limit this. Standards are above average at the end of Key Stage 2. This is achieved while teaching and learning are at less than maximum efficiency and the school is aware of the scope for even higher attainment. In Key Stage 1, problems with under-performance in writing and mathematics have been dealt with well and current Year 2 pupils include a greater proportion working at higher levels. Gifted and talented pupils achieve in line with their peers, while those with learning difficulties make good progress because support is well organised and effective.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils gain an awareness of spiritual matters partly through collective worship, but also from lessons where there are good opportunities to reflect. They show commitment to serving the school and the wider community. They know how to lead healthy lives and many participate frequently in sport. They understand how to stay safe and are free to enjoy school and show enthusiasm. Their love of school is also evident in well above average attendance rates. Pupils have a good awareness of cultures other than their own. Awards for sports programmes, environmental work and other issues show the strong personal development of the great

majority. Key academic skills and attitudes are good, giving a good basis for future economic well-being. Day-to-day behaviour is good overall and much is very impressive.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Consistently, lessons benefit from pleasant, constructive relationships and pupils are committed to school. Teachers' explanations and instructions are generally clear and well pitched. Teaching assistants are consistently effective.

In the best lessons, pupils listen attentively but also work imaginatively and independently. Expectations in those lessons are extremely high, but pupils meet them. This is because teachers match work extremely effectively to meet the varied needs of pupils. However this is not yet consistent practice across the school or in all lessons. Pace is satisfactory rather than good in a significant proportion of lessons. Here the use of lesson objectives and data to set the level of challenge for classes or individuals is satisfactory. Consequently pupils' attitudes to learning are less strong and some pupils can become inattentive.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum which has both breadth and balance. Additional elements, such as modern language and specialist music provision strengthen it further. The curriculum is relevant and stimulating, promoting good and sometimes outstanding teaching when delivered with pace and strong management of pupils. Not all teaching fully exploits the possibilities of the curriculum. A wide range of extra-curricular activities, including sport, clubs and Extended School activities contribute effectively to pupils' good personal development. Visits offer valuable opportunities for personal confidence to develop, especially the annual residential at Beaumanor. The school rightly sees the scope for further improvement by completing the adoption of a skills-based approach to schemes of work.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Good, caring attitudes and effective systems typify the school's work. As a result, care, guidance and support are good and lead to effective personal development. All statutory requirements are fully met. Support for pupils who find learning difficult, and for their families, is well organised and effective. The systems for tracking academic progress have improved recently and are now good; however, teachers use this information inconsistently to matched tasks to pupils' different abilities.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. However, given the context of good behaviour, good attendance and positive attitudes to learning, the school is aware that achievement could be higher. The headteacher has done well to make the school increasingly attractive in the village and beyond. She has led improvements to facilities, the curriculum and personal

development. Staffing discontinuity has hindered improvement and new strategies are required to ensure more stability. Self-evaluation identifies strengths and weaknesses reliably but tends to over-estimate the quality in several aspects of the school's work. Governors have a satisfactory impact. They show a growing awareness of their scope for acting as 'critical friend' to the headteacher. Monitoring is satisfactory, identifying major needs, but is less frequent than it might be and has not involved subject leaders significantly until very recently. New post-holders are now in place, demonstrating a clear understanding of how to contribute to school leadership. Coupled with the headteacher's existing expertise, this provides the school with a good capacity to improve.

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

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	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	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
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	2
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

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	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

13 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Nicholas CoE VA Primary School, Cottesmore, LE15 7DL

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school last week. I especially enjoyed talking with the group who came to see me at lunch time. Your school gives you a satisfactory overall education and does several things well. It is committed to making things even better and has a good ability to improve.

It already helps you:

- reach above average standards by the time you leave Year 6;
- behave well and have positive attitudes to learning;
- experience a good range of topics in lessons and activities after school such as sport, music and residential trips;
- contribute well to other people, in school, in the village and even overseas.

This is because the school has:

- many lessons with good teaching and some which are outstanding;
- clear guidance from the headteacher and her staff about how to act and become mature, how to be healthy, safe and responsible;
- a Foundation Stage that gives you all a good start.

If the school is to continue to improve it needs to:

- make sure your progress or 'achievement' is good, rather than satisfactory;
- raise teaching quality so that satisfactory lessons become good or outstanding ones;
- make more use of subject co-ordinators in setting targets for the whole school and helping other teachers get you up to those high standards;
- help all parents, not just the majority, feel confident about sharing their views and ideas with the school.

Best wishes for the rest of your time at St Nicholas,

Yours sincerely,

Robert Drew Lead inspector