

# The St Nicholas Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	120593
<b>Local Authority</b>	LINCOLNSHIRE LA
<b>Inspection number</b>	313685
<b>Inspection dates</b>	13–14 March 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	John Mason

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	187
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Kirstyn Canadine
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Anne Askquith-Ellis
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 October 2002
<b>School address</b>	Woad Farm Road Boston Lincolnshire PE21 0EF
<b>Telephone number</b>	01205 363210
<b>Fax number</b>	01205 369911

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

St Nicholas' is a smaller than average primary school. Most pupils live locally and come from a range of family circumstances, including many who experience aspects of social and economic disadvantage. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. About 20% come from minority ethnic groups, in the main from Eastern Europe, and the school has an above average proportion of pupils whose first language is not English. Close on one third of pupils, much more than the proportion nationally, do not follow through their whole primary education at the school. Children usually enter the Foundation Stage with well below average starting points. However, the attainment of each year group varies greatly because of the high levels of movement of pupils in and out of the school. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well over double the national figure, although the proportion of those with a statement of special educational needs is average. The school has recently gained the Artsmark Silver, Investors in People and Active Sportsmark 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 a satisfactory and improving school. It has been adversely affected by unforeseen staff absence in recent years, presenting considerable challenge to the running of the school and securing the quality of teaching and learning. Throughout this difficult period, the school has maintained an emphasis on effective care, guidance and support, which leads to the good personal development and well-being of the pupils. Pupils are happy and enjoy school. They feel safe and secure, sharing trusting relationships with one another and with adults, so that they can always turn to someone if they have concerns. They participate enthusiastically in physical exercise and sporting activities, which help them to implement well what they learn about healthy living. Attendance is only just average, as the school allows too much authorised absence.

The main outcome of the staffing issues was a significant drop in standards and achievement at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2006 and 2007. However, there is now much greater stability in staffing and, consequently, standards are improving in Key Stage 1. Pupils in Key Stage 2 were less affected by staffing issues and pupils' achievement in Key Stage 2 was satisfactory. Standards were below the national average but this represented satisfactory progress from the various pupils' starting points in the group. The current trend is one of further improvement.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers share a growing sense of teamwork and are keen to improve. A new and increasingly effective system for tracking individuals' progress and target setting informs teachers how well pupils are progressing, particularly in the key skills of literacy and numeracy. It is helping to guide planning of activities that challenge pupils to do their best. In the 'catch-up' classes for those pupils in Years 3 and 4 who underperformed in their Year 2 assessments, pupils' current progress is good, illustrating the new sense of momentum being established. The satisfactory curriculum has many good features, most particularly in the range of extended activities, but the school has yet to make secure links across the subjects to consolidate and extend learning.

The school works well in partnership with other agencies, especially to meet the needs of those pupils who are vulnerable or who need additional help with their learning. The Network Learning Community, a growing federation of local schools, is a source of strength and support in accessing wider provision. The school works well with those parents who are prepared to engage with the school. The strong, mutually supportive community spirit of the children also contributes to pupils from minority groups integrating well and overcoming language difficulties. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress, especially in spoken English, and their parents appreciate this. Those who find learning difficult are supported well and make satisfactory progress.

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The headteacher's strength and clear-sightedness has guided the school well through difficult times and a very able, new, chair of governors is developing the effectiveness of governors. However, some subject leaders and governors are only now beginning to access the training needed to make their roles fully effective in developing the curriculum and improved learning. Despite the staffing issues, effective steps have been taken since the last inspection to improve the quality of teaching and learning and develop assessment and tracking systems. The school has made significant strides in the last year in addressing pupils' underachievement and now has good capacity and the drive to improve further.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 3

Children make satisfactory progress, but their standards in phonics and writing are well below expectations. Good use is made of well-equipped indoor and outdoor areas to provide activities well suited to the children's development. Puppets are used well to capture their attention and improve their listening skills. Good home-school links with reading enable some pupils to make good progress. Teaching is satisfactory. The balance between adult-led and child-chosen activities is good, but occasionally children spend too long at one activity. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Assessment of learning is improving, helping to identify better how individual pupils can be supported.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise attainment in Key Stage 1 and Reception, by improved using of tracking, assessment and target setting so that teachers can better challenge all groups of pupils.
- Enhance the effectiveness of middle managers in raising standards and developing links between the subjects of the curriculum.
- Improve attendance through tightening up on authorised absence.
- Ensure all governors play a more active role in the development of the school and in liaison with parents.

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

Achievement is satisfactory. Pupils currently in Year 6 are on course to meet suitably challenging targets and to reach standards close to the national average. Their achievement is satisfactory given the high levels of mobility and the pupils' starting points when they arrive at the school. Although progress in the Reception Year is satisfactory, standards remain well below the level expected when pupils start in Year 1. In 2007, standards at the end of Year 2 were very low, especially in reading, representing unsatisfactory achievement. However, these pupils are now making good progress due to the 'catch-up' measures put in place by the school for Years 3 and 4. Pupils currently in Years 1 and 2 are now making satisfactory progress. Their standards are well below average but come from well below average starting points. However, many more are predicted to reach the national average than last year. Pupils who find learning difficult are supported well and make satisfactory progress throughout the school.

Those with English as an additional language make good progress but are held back in writing when they find that patterns in grammar and spelling in their mother tongues differ from those in English. Many begin to thrive once they gain confidence in expressing themselves through the English language.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils value their friendships and good relationships with teachers and other adults. These promote good attitudes to learning.

The manner in which they respect each others' differing cultures and backgrounds and learn from them is outstanding.

Assemblies celebrating pupils' achievements and demonstrating their musicianship earn the appreciation of all. Pupils behave and concentrate well, reflecting teachers' expectations. They are happy and enthusiastic in their learning, working really well in partner and group activities. Prefects and school council members relish their responsibilities, priding themselves in supporting younger pupils and being involved in decision making and contributing well to community cohesion. Pupils' preparation for the next stage of their education and their future economic well-being is satisfactory. However, absence authorised by the school is too high.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Most teachers plan activities which ensure learning is enjoyable and interesting but, in some classes activities do not challenge the most able enough. They have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and this is why pupils have such positive attitudes and behave well. Recent work to elicit responses from pupils through gesture and talking with partners is helping both pupils and teachers to assess how well learning is understood. In younger classes, 'carpet time' activities are sometimes too long and hence pupils become restless. Teaching assistants support pupils' learning well in individual and group work, but are underused in demonstrating tasks for pupils. Particularly good teaching in the catch-up class in Years 3 and 4 is helping make up for interrupted learning in earlier years.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

While meeting the requirements of the National Curriculum, particular emphasis is placed on speaking, listening, reading, writing and mathematics, in order to deal with the 'learning gap' of the last few years. The school is beginning to develop more practical activities which link the subjects, but recognises that more can be done. Inconsistent use is made of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning. Where teachers feel confident using these resources, the new computer facilities are enriching learning; for instance, when Year 1 pupils enjoy developing their mathematical skills independently in the computer corner. A rich and varied range of enrichment activities extends pupils' learning.

Music has a high profile and visits to the theatre enhance pupils' cultural awareness. Very good links with the local church and diocese consolidate pupils' spiritual and moral values. Strong links with Boston United Football Club do much to help raise pupils' aspirations. Some teachers use French well to make pupils aware that all languages are unfamiliar to someone, thereby assisting in the integration of minority groups.

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

#### **Grade: 2**

The sensitive and caring manner in which staff know and respond to pupils' social and emotional needs is a strength of the school. The individuality of pupils is openly recognised and success is always celebrated. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are robust. Provision for personal, social and health education is good. In this caring and nurturing environment, pupils are helped

to reach the more challenging targets they are set. However, their targets are not always in simple enough language that they can understand easily. Marking in key subjects is regular and consistent, giving clear pointers on how pupils can improve their work. Pupils with English as an additional language are supported well. Outside support agencies supplement the school's own internal systems well so that help is swiftly on hand for any pupils experiencing social, emotional or academic difficulties.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

School leaders know the strengths of the school and areas it needs to develop well. The headteachers clear vision for improvement is well shared by a newly promoted deputy and all members of staff are now committed to raising standards. Not all subject leaders are experienced in their roles. However, the school is investing well in training for staff. Monitoring of teaching and learning is accurate and hence the school is well placed to improve the quality of teaching further. Challenging targets are now set and the tracking of pupils' progress is beginning to be much more effective, although the systems used in English and mathematics are not yet used in science. The school promotes equal opportunities well for both pupils and staff. The governing body has been revitalised by a new chairperson appointed within the last year. It is growing in capacity to involve itself in the work of the school and improve the involvement of parents.

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

### 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	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 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	3
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	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?	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	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

17 March 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of The St Nicholas Church of England Primary School, Boston PE21 0EF

Thank you all for your welcome when Mr Herbert and I visited you recently. We enjoyed meeting you very much. It was lovely to see you enjoying both your learning and your Fit Kids exercise sessions so much. Both you and your parents tell us that your school has improved in the last year and we agree.

Many of you have difficulties with English, which you do well to come to terms with. By the end of Year 6 you make the progress we would expect of you and reach standards which are close to those of most children nationally. Those of you who have to learn English and whose parents speak very little or no English make good progress. This is because you are supported not only by your caring teachers, but also by the help you receive from other pupils through play, friendship and their understanding of your circumstances. A real strength of the school is the way you all get on very well together and develop socially. Although quite a lot of you did not do well in assessments when you were in Year 2, the school is taking good steps to help you catch up. Your parents recognise this too in comments they sent us.

All in all, we agree with the teachers that St Nicholas is a satisfactory school which is improving. You are well cared for and enjoy a good range of extra activities, especially in music and sports. This helps you all to enjoy school. The links to the church in assemblies and through other activities often enable you to show the kind and giving side of your characters, as shown in the way you support new pupils to become part of the St Nicholas School community.

We have asked the school to do four things to help improve it. You can do your part by taking greater responsibility for improving the standards you reach, especially those in Key Stage 1, and improving your attendance. We have also asked teachers to make closer links between subjects to help you learn better and governors to involve parents more in the decisions the school has to make about its future. We wish you all well for your futures.

Yours sincerely

John Mason

Lead Inspector