

St Nicholas CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123147
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	314514
Inspection date	11 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Judith Dawson

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	66
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	9
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Father Tony Hogg
Headteacher	Mrs Margaret Kelly
Date of previous school inspection	20 June 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Sarajac Avenue East Challow Wantage OX12 9RY
Telephone number	01235 763858
Fax number	01235 763858

Age group	4–11
Inspection date	11 November 2008
Inspection number	314514

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This very small Church of England primary school serves pupils from East Challow and surrounding villages. A very small minority of pupils are from Traveller families. Most pupils have attended an independent nursery on the school site, with which the school has strong links. Very few pupils are from non-White British backgrounds. No pupils have statements of special educational needs but an average percentage of pupils have moderate learning difficulties. The school has gained the Activemark award. Major building refurbishment at present is causing some disruption to the accommodation and grounds.

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 Church of England Primary School provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. A caring and friendly environment exists where the welfare of all pupils is paramount. Good relationships with other agencies, including the Traveller Support Service, ensures pupils and their families have the support they need. Pupils enjoy school, their personal development is good, and they generally behave well. It is a tribute to the school's efforts and pupils' enjoyment of school that attendance is now slightly above the national average from below average at the time of the last inspection. The school makes good use of a wide range of partners that benefit pupils. It has close links with the local church and is an active member of WASPS (a partnership of 12 primary schools and the Secondary Sports College and a special school). These links provide additional support for pupils and teachers and make a good contribution to pupils' personal development and wellbeing. However, there are few links with wider communities, both nationally and internationally, restricting the pupils' understanding of other cultures. There is satisfactory potential for future improvement.

Although there are fluctuations from year to year because of the very small number of pupils, standards in the national tests for eleven year olds are broadly average. Given individual pupils' starting points, this represents satisfactory achievement. In the last two years, over a third of the Year 6 cohort have had learning difficulties. These pupils achieve well but have an impact on overall standards, particularly as, in 2008, one pupil represented 14% of the total. No pupils attained the higher levels in mathematics. These more able pupils make less progress from Year 2 than pupils with learning difficulties as they are not always provided with sufficient challenge.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers generally cope well with the large age range in each class. They have good relationships with the pupils in their class and lessons are lively and interesting. Pupils of similar abilities generally work well together, whatever their age, and teachers plan appropriate work for each ability group. This works well for pupils with learning difficulties as the small steps in learning help them to make good progress. All pupils have targets for improvement but teachers do not always make it clear what needs to be achieved to attain higher levels. Pupils do not have long-term aspirational targets to stimulate more rapid learning. As a result, although pupils work hard and respond to their teachers' good marking, their progress is limited because they do not know what they should or could achieve. The curriculum caters satisfactorily for the different age groups and is enhanced by a good range of visits and visitors. There is an impressive number of additional activities for such a small school.

The headteacher and other teachers, all of whom have a range of leadership and management responsibilities, have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Plans for improvement are relevant and clearly linked to the school's needs, although they are less specific about how these plans will be realised and how the impact of improvement will be monitored. Governors give sound support to the school and are proud of its caring ethos and position within the community, but most have limited involvement in school management or the monitoring of the school's effectiveness.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Attainment on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) varies between being in line with and below the expected levels for four year olds. Children's skills in communication, language and literacy, especially linking letters with sounds, are normally below those expected for their age. During their time in the EYFS, all children make good progress and most reach the expected levels by the time they reach Year 1. This is due to good teaching which nurtures positive relationships. As a result, children's personal development is good. Children are well cared for, feel safe and happy in school. They quickly learn class routines because of the good links with the Nursery. Children mix well with adults and each other and behave well. They begin to develop an understanding of the world around them and how to adopt healthy lifestyles. During the inspection, some were tasting exotic fruits and describing what they thought about them, whilst others cared for 'patients' in the surgery role play area. This, combined with the rigorous teaching of linking sounds to letters, contributes to the development of children's literacy skills. The colourful and well organised classroom and outdoor area offer children a range of interesting tasks across all areas of learning. The Foundation Stage is well led by the class teacher who knows the children well and who monitors progress effectively. She is in the process of amending her curricular planning to fully meet the new requirements of the EYFS framework. Day to day planning meets the needs of both the EYFS and Year 1 pupils well, because the combined class makes transition to Key Stage 1 very smooth.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure teachers have a clear understanding of what each year group should be achieving in order to set long term learning targets that challenge pupils of all abilities, especially the more able.
- Fine tune the staff and governor's monitoring of school performance and their evaluation of the impact of any initiatives.
- Broaden pupils' knowledge and understanding of national and international issues and of other cultures.

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

With such a small number of pupils in each year group comparisons with national standards need to be treated with caution. In 2008, for example, the seven pupils in Year 2 attained standards in the national tests that were significantly above average although the usual outcomes for the end of Key Stage 1 are broadly average. In the same year, only seven pupils took the national tests for eleven year olds. Those with learning difficulties achieved well because of the good support they received. Almost all pupils made at least satisfactory, and most made good progress in English, although progress in mathematics was satisfactory. The school's tracking shows that the most able pupils generally do not achieve as well as their peers. Provisional test results for 2008 suggest that standards are higher than in 2007 but remain broadly average. The school's assessments show a similar picture for the present cohort.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils have a good understanding of how to take care of themselves. They know that exercise is good for them and appreciate the range of sporting opportunities available. The school council was involved in discussions with the new cook to ensure healthy meals. Pupils are well aware of how to use tools in design and technology, and the internet, safely. Their spiritual, moral, and social development is good. Pupils are sensitive to the needs of others, especially those less fortunate than themselves. They have a strong sense of right and wrong and generate their own class and playground rules. They participate in a good range of musical activities to the delight of the parents and community. Pupils' understanding of cultural diversity is limited because they have little contact with people from other cultures. However, they make an impressive contribution to national and international charities. They develop satisfactory skills to support their future economic wellbeing.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers and support staff work together well to cope with the range of age groups within each class. They question pupils effectively in lessons, extending learning well. Pupils benefit from opportunities to evaluate their learning and that of their peers, giving them an understanding of how well they have learnt. Resources are used satisfactorily, including the use of information and communication technology (ICT), which has improved significantly since the last inspection. Sometimes, however, the pace of learning dips because pupils spend time, for example, cutting out 'speech bubbles' or drawing pictures as their main task. The good relationships between adults and pupils gives pupils confidence to ask for help and to 'have a go' at answering questions even if they are not confident of the answer. Consistent systems for managing behaviour prompted one parent to comment on the excellent support for a child with behavioural difficulties. Effective classroom organisation and use of space enables pupils of like abilities to work together. Teachers inform pupils what they must, should and could achieve in each lesson, based on their mixed age ability groups. However, pupils are sometimes unaware of what they need to do to improve in the long term. Teachers do not always expect enough of them.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

There is a broad and balanced curriculum. The core subjects of English, mathematics and science are planned for effectively. Staff use assessments well to identify pupils with learning difficulties who need additional help and require support. However, it has not been extended to provide more support or challenge for the most able pupils. Suitable time is allowed for the other subjects, including French, and provision for ICT has improved significantly since the last inspection. The school is beginning to develop links between subjects which would make learning more meaningful for pupils. However, these have not yet been fully incorporated into the planning. A wide range of external links contribute to pupils' good personal development and wellbeing, and ensure that transition from the Nursery to school and to the secondary school is as smooth as possible. Although pupils learn about other faiths and countries within the

curriculum, provision to extend pupils' understanding of national, European or worldwide issues, beyond supporting charities, and contact with people of other cultures or faiths, is limited.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school has impeccable systems for safeguarding pupils and ensuring their welfare. All adults have been trained in first aid and there are good systems for ensuring pupils are kept safe during the building work. Good communication and support for parents ensures that pupils who need additional help receive the best possible care. Pupils receive wise advice to support their good personal development and wellbeing. The Christian ethos of the school helps ensure that pupils develop a strong sense of personal responsibility and good self-esteem. There are some good aspects to academic support, for example, marking that encourages pupils and helps them to improve. Homework is also marked thoroughly and parents receive help to support their children. Pupils have short-term targets and know how well they have achieved their tasks. They are taught how to make their own judgements about the quality of their work and that of their peers. However, this guidance does not extend to helping pupils set longer-term, aspirational personal targets for learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The good ethos of the school, where pupils enjoy learning and playing together and behave well, is a tribute to the pastoral leadership of the headteacher, staff and governors. It is very inclusive; Traveller families are made welcome and good support is provided for pupils with learning or behavioural difficulties. Day to day organisation and administration is effective. Staff make good use of the available space and there have been sensible arrangements to ensure 'business as usual' during the building work. The headteacher has observed lessons, providing valuable feedback to teachers. However, these observations need fine-tuning to focus more clearly on how well pupils learn. The headteacher and staff, after some good recent self evaluation, have put in place a range of measures to help improve pupils' achievement. The literacy coordinator, for example, analysed pupils' weaknesses in the 2007 national tests for eleven year olds. As a result, a concentration on improving reading skills and opportunities for extending speech has improved standards in English. However, not all monitoring is developed sufficiently well to clearly identify the impact of the initiatives put in place. Plans for improvement appropriately identify the need to accelerate progress, especially for the more able pupils. Governors are receiving training to develop their monitoring role.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ 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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which 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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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

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

24 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Nicholas CofE Primary School, Wantage, OX12 9RY

Thank you all very much for your friendliness and help during our visit to your school. We enjoyed talking to you and watching you working hard in your lessons. We believe that your school provides you with a satisfactory standard of education.

We were impressed with your good behaviour and the way that you respect your teachers and each other. We saw how well you carry out your responsibilities. You and your parents told us that you are well cared for in school and that it is a happy place. We agree with you. We were so pleased to see that you are rarely absent from school now. This is a good sign that you enjoy your learning. Well done!

Children in Reception have a good start to school. They make good progress because they are taught well. Most of the rest of you make satisfactory progress during your time in school. Those of you who find learning difficult make good progress because of the good extra help you have. Your teachers make learning interesting. They also give you wise advice, when marking, about how to improve your work. We have asked them to make sure that you know what is expected of pupils of your age, over time, so that you can aim high and astound your teachers with your skills. Make sure you rise to the challenge, won't you? We have also asked them to help you learn more about life beyond the villages in which you live. We want you to know what is happening elsewhere in England, in Europe and the world to help you develop more understanding about your place in the world and the life of others.

Finally, we have asked all the adults in charge of the school to become more involved in checking how well you are all doing, and how good any changes are, at making things in school even better.

We wish you all the very best in the future.

Yours sincerely

Judy Dawson

Lead Inspector