

# St Nicholas Church of England Infants' School and Nursery Class, Wallingford

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	123163
<b>Local Authority</b>	Oxfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	314521
<b>Inspection date</b>	11 October 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Keith Sadler

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>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3-7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	160
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Philippa Bomford
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Francis Taylor
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	20 October 2003
<b>School address</b>	St Nicholas Road Wallingford OX10 8HX
<b>Telephone number</b>	01491 836408
<b>Fax number</b>	01491 836408

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- What are the elements of the pupils' achievements that lift it to outstanding?
- Is the quality of teaching and learning outstanding and, if not, what are the limitations?
- Is leadership and management outstanding?

Evidence was gathered from analysis of pupils' work, analysis of school documentation, observation of lessons, conversations with learners, and discussions with the headteacher, teachers and governors. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspection 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 in this report.

## Description of the school

St Nicholas' is smaller than most primary schools. It has a 39 place nursery which serves the whole of Wallingford and some surrounding villages. Apart from these children, most pupils come from the local area, which is made up of a both privately owned and social housing. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. One is at an early stage of learning English. Pupils' social circumstances are broadly average.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

This popular school benefits from strong parental and community support. It provides an outstanding education for its pupils. Outstanding leadership and management lead to the positive outcomes in pupils' excellent achievement and exemplary personal development. Parents are almost unanimously supportive of the school. One parent summed up the many positive views expressed when she wrote: 'St Nicholas is a great school. It has a feel about it which is welcoming, warm and very supportive whilst also challenging'. This view encapsulates all that is excellent about the school. There is indeed a strong and nurturing environment in which pupils are very quickly helped to feel safe, confident and mature. The staff are always looking to make positive changes that enhance pupils' learning. As a result, pupils' progress is impressive. From entering the Foundation Unit with skills which are below those expected, children settle quickly and most achieve the expected goals for pupils on entering Year 1 with over half exceeding them. By the end of Year 2, standards are exceptionally high particularly in writing and mathematics. These high standards mark excellent achievement.

Outstanding achievement and high standards are the result of the excellence of the school's provision. The care, guidance and support provided are excellent. There is rigorous monitoring of how well pupils are doing and highly effective pastoral care. There are excellent systems for tracking pupils' progress and this information is used outstandingly well to set challenging targets for pupils. Moreover, the school's assessment processes are grounded in the belief that pupils should assess their own success and that of their peers. This leads to pupils having a clear idea of what is expected of them and what constitutes success in lessons. For example, pupils invariably check the success criteria for each lesson so they know exactly what they have to do achieve them. They also know what the next steps are for them.

Links with parents are another key focus and this partnership brings out the best in pupils. Those who have learning difficulties make excellent progress because their needs are quickly and accurately identified and high quality individual learning plans are prepared to ensure that they receive all the support they need.

Pupils enjoy school very much and behave exceptionally well. This is because they are cared for outstandingly well. As one pupil said, 'When I don't understand, I ask the teacher if she can explain it in a way I can understand it. She never minds'. The arrangements for safeguarding pupils are exemplary and exceed all current requirements. Their personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils develop an excellent awareness of their personal safety and how to lead a fit and healthy lifestyle. Their manners and politeness are exemplary. They talk enthusiastically about lessons and learning and take a full part in helping to make the school an enjoyable and safe place to be through their role as school councillors and helpers. Because teachers frequently plan activities for working in pairs and groups, the pupils develop the essential skills of cooperation and independence in learning which help them when they move on to junior school. A good example of this is the way that pupils frequently check their peers' work and make constructive suggestions about how their friends may improve by matching the success criteria for lessons. As a Year 2 pupil said, 'I look at the success criteria on the board to check I have met it'. In addition, children in the Foundation Stage Class have to self-register on the interactive white board and select if they are having school meals or sandwiches.

The quality of the curriculum, and teaching and learning is outstanding. Strengths of the teaching include the provision of interesting and exciting activities that are pitched at just the right level to enable all groups of pupils to achieve well. Teachers ensure that classrooms provide a calm and purposeful atmosphere where they, and support staff, question pupils very well. The curriculum has a richness that promotes pupils' enjoyment of school exceptionally well. Links between subjects are very well established and there are exciting themed weeks, such as the cultural weeks, in which topics are augmented through visitors to school and a wide range of events, trips and activities outside lessons. The quality of the presentation of pupils' work both on display and in pupils' books is impressive and it helps to create a lively learning environment and promote pupils' self-esteem exceptionally well. The school places a particular emphasis on the development of personal and social skills. This is linked to a clear policy to promote such values as tolerance and respect by a regular school-wide 'Value of the Month'. Taken together with the programme for citizenship education this supports the pupils' personal development exceptionally well.

The headteacher provides inspirational leadership and she is pivotal to the school's success. She encourages and enables those around her to improve their own expertise and be adventurous in all that they do. As a result, all the staff that have responsibilities fulfil them very well. The self-evaluation of the school is excellent and is based on accurate and thorough monitoring. However, the school has been too modest in some of its judgements about provision and standards.

Governance is excellent. Governors are highly supportive, have a very good understanding of the school's performance and challenge the school very well. They are also directly involved in the monitoring of the impact of the improvement projects that are clearly identified in the school development plan. This has led to very effective steps being taken since the previous inspection to improve provision and standards. One example of this is the improvement in standards in the Year 2 tests. These have been exceptionally high for the past two years in writing and mathematics. In reading, standards are significantly above average. This improvement indicates the school's excellent capacity to maintain its quality and performance. The school works in close partnership with other schools in the local cluster and benefits from the expertise in sports from the local secondary school. Excellent use is made of local authority external support particularly for pupils that have learning difficulties and disabilities. In addition, the school's partnerships with other schools have resulted in many joint initiatives including finding ways to extend the school's provision beyond the normal school day.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 1**

The Foundation Stage unit caters for the needs of the children excellently. Children are exceptionally well cared for and staff expectations for children's progress are high, particularly in their personal, social and emotional development. Children thoroughly enjoy learning and quickly become confident. Many parents commented on how well their children settle. One wrote, 'My child is very happy to come to the Foundation Stage unit and always comes home excited about what she has learned'. Activities are stimulating and challenging and meticulously planned and assessed. Care is taken to ensure that there is a good balance provided between those activities that are planned by staff and those chosen by children. Progress, particularly in children's personal, social and emotional development and communication, language and literacy skills is excellent.

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

- There were no areas for improvement

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**Annex A**

## Inspection judgements

<b>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</b>	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	1
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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	1
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	1

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	1
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	1
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1

<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>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

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**Annex B**

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

29 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Nicholas Church of England Infants' School and Nursery Class,  
Wallingford, Wallingford, OX10 8HX

I really enjoyed visiting your school. Thank you very much for the friendly way you welcomed me and for your help in finding out about the school.

Both you and your parents told me that you love school and that you feel safe and well cared for. I am not surprised. Yours is an excellent school and everybody who works there tries hard to help you to do well. Your teachers work hard to make sure that lessons are made interesting and exciting. Your headteacher has done an excellent job to make sure that everyone helps you all to work and play together in such a friendly way and to make the school successful. I was very impressed with your excellent behaviour and your positive attitudes to each other. Your teachers help you to learn exceptionally well and also make sure that everyone feels part of the family of your school. I was particularly impressed in the way that you check your work against success criteria and also how you mark work for your friends.

You work hard in lessons so that you learn lots of new things. Your progress is excellent and you attain very high standards particularly in writing and mathematics.

Thank you once again for being so helpful to me.

With very best wishes for your future

Keith Sadler

Lead Inspector