

St Nicholas CofE Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125661
Local Authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	315279
Inspection dates	3–4 March 2008
Reporting inspector	David Westall

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	405
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lucy Kenyon
Headteacher	Louise Mohacsi
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2003
School address	Priory Road Kenilworth CV8 2PE
Telephone number	01926 853257
Fax number	01926 857314

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is larger than average. It serves an area which is generally more advantaged than most, and the percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The percentage of pupils identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. The vast majority of pupils are White British. Eight pupils are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language.

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 and improving school. The headteacher is a key strength and is the driving force for change. She has high expectations for pupils' personal and academic development, and communicates her vision clearly so that staff and pupils know what is expected. Because she uses a range of rigorous procedures to check the school's performance, she has an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses. Her skills in motivating staff, together with her tenacity and determination, have helped the school to improve since her appointment in September 2005. At that time, the school was at a low ebb and standards had fallen significantly since the last inspection, in both Year 2 and 6. Teaching has now improved the school has a clear sense of direction, and staff share a common resolve to secure further improvement. As a result, standards have risen. However, the headteacher is keenly aware that there is still work to be done to make the teaching more consistently good and to raise standards further. Despite the exemplary work of the headteacher and the good support provided by governors, leadership and management are satisfactory, rather than better. This is because the senior leadership team is recently established and subject leaders have not developed their roles enough. While the new members of the leadership team have made a good start, and the work of subject leaders is improving, too much responsibility for setting and achieving the school's goals currently rests on the headteacher's shoulders. Pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching and learning are satisfactory. Standards are above average in Years 2 and 6. These reflect pupils' satisfactory achievement from their starting points on entry to the Foundation Stage, which are generally above national expectations. However, they mask notable differences in pupils' progress, across the school, that result from variations in the quality of teaching. Good teaching is not sufficiently widespread. While some lessons are well taught, others include weaknesses that restrict standards from being higher and prevent pupils' progress from being good. Here, teachers do not always expect enough of their pupils, lessons sometimes move at a pedestrian pace, and questions are not consistently and effectively used to check pupils' learning. The curriculum is satisfactory, and a good range of visits, visitors and clubs enriches pupils' learning opportunities. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good, and stem from the supportive relationships that exist across the school. It is clear that pupils like and respect their teachers, and that these feelings are reciprocated. As a result, pupils know that teachers have their best interests at heart, and have good self-esteem because they know they are valued as individuals. All of these factors contribute to pupils' positive attitudes and good behaviour, and have helped to establish a happy and harmonious community where pupils get on well together. Pupils are polite, readily listen to others and accept differences of opinion. There are key strengths in the care and the pastoral support provided for pupils, and parents are justifiably confident that their children are well looked after at school. The support for pupils' academic development, while satisfactory, does not do as much as it could to promote pupils' progress. Teachers' marking does not always provide pupils with sufficient information about how to improve, pupils' knowledge of their learning targets is too variable, and many pupils are not yet sufficiently involved in evaluating their own progress in learning. The school has made satisfactory progress since its last inspection. Progress had been limited before the headteacher's appointment but has accelerated. The school is soundly placed to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children quickly settle into school routines, and grow in confidence and independence. As elsewhere, the teaching ranges from satisfactory to good, and is satisfactory overall. There is a sensible balance between direct teaching and opportunities for children to learn through focused play. The staff have made great strides this year in pulling together as a team to improve the planning and organisation. This is now satisfactory and underpins children's sound achievement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching so it is consistently good, across the school, in order to accelerate pupils' progress.
- Ensure the senior leadership team and subject leaders play a bigger part in improving pupils' achievement.
- Ensure that teachers' marking shows pupils how to improve and that pupils have a more secure understanding of their targets in learning and are helped to evaluate their own progress. 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 the next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children make sound progress across all areas of learning in the Foundation Stage. As a result, most reach the expected learning goals at the end of the Foundation Stage, and a significant minority exceed them. Standards in Years 2 and 6 are above average and represent satisfactory achievement, given the significant number of capable pupils in the school. There is a rising trend in pupils' standards that reflects improvements in the teaching. For example, standards in writing have improved because skills are taught with more precision and writing has a higher profile in the curriculum. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are making sound progress, together with the few who are at an early stage of learning English. More able pupils also make satisfactory progress, although occasionally they do not achieve as well as they should because their capabilities are underestimated by teachers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are keen to learn and enjoy school. As a result, the attendance rate is above average. Pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is good. Pupils develop constructive relationships with others, work and play together amicably and know the difference between right and wrong. They respond well when given responsibility, for example, as members of the active school council, when showing visitors around the school and when helping younger pupils. Pupils are safety conscious and show considerable care for the welfare of others. They enjoy a good range of physical activities and understand the importance of healthy eating. The school has achieved the Gold Healthy School Award. Pupils have a strong social and community awareness and are keen fundraisers for a range of charities. Their satisfactory academic progress helps them to be soundly prepared for their future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

There are some common strengths that thread through all of the teaching. Across the school, teachers manage pupils' behaviour well, know what they expect pupils to learn and explain tasks clearly. Consequently, pupils are usually confident about tackling their work. Teaching assistants support pupils effectively, especially those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In the good lessons, skilful teaching enables pupils to do well. However, pupils' progress slows in satisfactory lessons. In these, teachers do not always have sufficiently high expectations for pupils' potential achievement, and questions are not always used well enough to probe pupils' understanding. In addition, the pace of learning falters, often because teachers talk for too long and pupils are not actively involved in their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum makes satisfactory provision for all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Basic skills in literacy and numeracy are given sufficient emphasis, and an improved programme has helped to raise pupils' writing standards. Opportunities for pupils to develop their decision-making skills and to use their initiative are limited in lessons. The school appropriately recognises that too little attention is generally given to the development of pupils' scientific investigation skills. However, this is beginning to be addressed, particularly in Year 6. A good range of visits and visitors enriches the curriculum. These are very popular with pupils and help to bring learning alive. On a recent trip to France, for example, pupils found a visit to a war cemetery moving. One felt that the graves 'looked like snow because there were so many of them'. This type of experience, coupled with the good programme for their personal and social development, means that pupils are developing as thoughtful and reflective young people. The school provides a good number of lunchtime and after-school clubs that also enrich pupils' learning opportunities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Individual pupils are valued and cared for from the moment they step through the Reception class door to the time that they leave in Year 6. Pupils feel safe and know that the staff will listen if they have any problems. Child protection procedures are robust, and regular health and safety checks are carried out. Thorough and effective procedures help children to settle into the Foundation Stage and to transfer confidently from Year 6 to the next stage of education. Strong links are established with external agencies to provide support for pupils when this is required. Support and guidance are good for pupils' personal development, and satisfactory for their academic development. While pupils are given learning targets, their awareness of these, and their involvement in evaluating their own progress, is too variable. In addition, while teachers mark pupils' work conscientiously, and often provide encouraging remarks, opportunities are often missed to help pupils to understand their next steps in learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school's self-evaluation procedures are sound. Consequently, the strategic plan identifies the right areas for attention and the school has a clear sense of direction. The headteacher's monitoring and evaluation procedures are thorough which enables her to know the school well. The work of the senior leadership team and subject leaders is generally developing well. However, some key staff have only recently taken on their new roles and this restricts their contribution to school evaluation and improvement. The school's partnership with parents is sound, and many parents recognise that the school is improving. Nevertheless, some parents believe there is scope for the school to improve its communications with them. School governance is good. The governors are astute and well informed and monitor the school's performance carefully. They ask suitably challenging questions to hold the school to account and help guide its work.

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 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	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	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 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?	3

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	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	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**

- 5 March 2008 Dear Children Inspection of St Nicholas C of E Primary School, Kenilworth CV8 2PE Thank you for welcoming us into your school and for being so friendly, polite and helpful. Here are some of the things we found out.
- The school is providing you with a satisfactory education.
- The headteacher is doing her job very well, and the staff are hard working.
- You enjoy school, like your teachers and have lots of friends.
- Your behaviour is good.
- The staff take good care of you.
- You understand the importance of healthy eating and exercise.
- You enjoy the many visits, visitors and school clubs the school provides. We found a few things that the school needs to improve.
- We would like some of the teaching to be even better so you can make good progress.
- We would like the headteacher to have more help from other staff to lead and manage the school.
- We would like more of the teachers' marking to show you how you can improve your work, and for teachers to help you to judge your own progress. You can help by remembering your targets in literacy and numeracy and trying hard to achieve them. It was good to meet you. We really enjoyed our time at your school. Best wishes David Westall Lead inspector

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Best wishes

David Westall
Lead inspector