

# St Nicholas Church of England VC Primary School, Bromham

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	126307
<b>Local Authority</b>	Wiltshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	315486
<b>Inspection date</b>	25 June 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Patricia Davies

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>	4–10
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	83
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Peter Wallis
<b>Headteacher</b>	Paul Bacon
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	10 February 2003
<b>School address</b>	The Leaze Bromham Chippenham SN15 2EY
<b>Telephone number</b>	01380 850391
<b>Fax number</b>	01380 850391

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

St Nicholas is a small school. Most pupils live in the village where it is situated and the vast majority are from White British backgrounds. Numbers of pupils attending the school have fallen over recent years and some year groups are very small. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average, but is high in some year groups. The percentage with statements of special educational needs is above average.

There have been some changes to staff in the last two years. The current headteacher took up his position in January 2007. Substantial improvements to the school's accommodation have been made since its last inspection.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness of St Nicholas is satisfactory. Recent improvements have accelerated pupils' progress, although good progress is not yet consistent enough for achievement to be any greater than satisfactory. Pupils' personal development is strong and successfully nurtured within this small community. Parents particularly appreciate the school's friendly 'family' ethos and the care and concern it shows for their children's welfare. There are close links with the village, other schools and outside agencies. All these positive factors ensure that pupils feel happy and safe at school. Above average attendance reflects pupils' enjoyment of their lessons and everyday activities. Pupils and parents like the good range of extra-curricular activities. Sporting activities are extensive, popular and provide valuable opportunities for pupils to work together and take responsibility.

The small size of each year group largely accounts for some yearly variations in national test results. Nevertheless, there was a significant overall dip in performance at Year 6 in 2006. Staff and governors have worked closely with the local authority over the last eighteen months to turn things around and are now securing sustained improvement. As a result, while progress is satisfactory overall, many pupils have moved forward well during this school year and standards at Year 6 have returned to broadly average levels. The school's hard work has particularly paid off in writing, where it has succeeded in narrowing the gap between this subject and pupils' progress in reading and mathematics. The steps taken to increase independent learning in Reception and to build firm foundations in language and literacy skills mean that this year's group is progressing well.

Nevertheless, many of the school's improvements are relatively new and have not bedded in to the same degree in other year groups as they have in Reception. Therefore, while it is never less than satisfactory, the quality of teaching varies. Although the match of work and level of challenge are generally secure, opportunities are sometimes missed to involve pupils more in lessons or prepare them fully for their tasks. While pupils' good behaviour, attention and interest create a positive climate for learning, the school has yet to tap fully in to this potential for accelerating progress further. For example, there are limited opportunities to generate greater excitement about learning through, for example, educational visits that complement pupils' work in school and enrich their experience generally. This limitation is particularly marked in relation to extending pupils' appreciation of cultures other than their own.

The headteacher's drive to improve assessment has been an important factor behind the school's move forward. This information in particular has provided the school with clear direction, key priorities and a common purpose. The chair of governors has taken a strong lead in developing governors' capacity for evaluating the school's work and, therefore, supporting its improvement more effectively. The momentum of improvement has gradually increased, but the school recognises that it should now quicken the pace of development so that remaining inconsistencies in the school's provision and academic outcomes are resolved as soon as possible.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

A lively but ordered learning environment ensures children enjoy their work and behave sensibly in their independent 'play'. Relationships are strong, nurtured by the sensitive approach of staff to children's needs.

Staff have secured a good balance between direct structured teaching and opportunities for children to take more responsibility for their learning and develop independence. There has also been a strong focus this year on teaching letter sounds, with the intention of tackling weaknesses in this area and in early writing skills. The success of these two initiatives has lifted the quality of provision for children this year and ensured good progress. Attainment on entry to Reception varies, but is broadly as expected for children's age. The attainment of the current group was a little lower than expected when they joined the school, and low in language and literacy skills. Standards now, near to the end of the year, are broadly average across all areas of learning.

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

- Accelerate the pace of improvement to ensure that remaining inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and pupils' progress are resolved as swiftly as possible.
- Widen and enrich pupils' experience through the greater use of educational trips and visits, especially to extend their knowledge of cultures other than their own.

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**

Much effort has been devoted to improving achievement. Across the school, the large majority of pupils are now progressing well, but progress is still too variable for achievement to be better than satisfactory. The picture is similar for those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The fall in test results at Year 6 in 2006 related to mathematics, and most particularly to English. The school tackled both subjects, but gave considerable attention to writing, which it identified as the weakest subject in all year groups.

Results at Year 6 last year saw an improvement in mathematics, but not in English. English results fell again although, to some extent, the outcome was due to this group having a high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties. The current picture is much better and standards at Year 6 this year are broadly average in English, mathematics and science. Significantly, the disparity between progress in writing and progress in reading and mathematics is now much slimmer. Last year's Year 2 also had a high proportion with learning difficulties; results were lower than usual, and no pupils reached the higher Level 3 in writing. Standards are broadly average this year and there is clear evidence of higher level writing in the work of some pupils.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' enthusiastic participation in the early morning 'Fit Nick' activities readily demonstrates their enjoyment of school life and good understanding of how to keep fit and healthy. It also reflects their willingness to take responsibility – on this occasion as 'sports leaders' – and to work with others. Indeed, there are good relationships between pupils across all year groups.

Pupils' interest and application are also readily evident in lessons. Pupils rise to the challenge of exploring the complexities of 'Romeo and Juliet', for example, or the reasons why the Elgin Marbles should return to Greece. They make valued contributions to the school through their school council and whole-school forum. On a broader front, fundraising events and composting

activities reflect a wider sense of responsibility to others and to the environment. Good behaviour shows a well-developed respect for the safety of others and pupils are well aware of the importance of having good security arrangements at school. These positive qualities prepare them well for moving on to other schools and adult life, although they have yet to reach quite the same level of success in their academic achievements.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching is never less than satisfactory, but there is not yet enough that is good to ensure consistently good progress. Improvements to planning ensure that the purpose of each lesson is clear. Consequently, pupils remember and, in most cases, understand what they have to do. There is an industrious atmosphere in classrooms and pupils work with good levels of concentration. For the most part, these positive features are present because the match of work and the level of challenge are about right for all ability groups, including the more able.

Where there are shortcomings, too few pupils get the chance to share their ideas during discussion, even though many have their hands up and are keen to contribute. Sometimes, there is insufficient preparation for complex tasks so that pupils do not get as much from the activity as they should. Occasionally, pupils' mistakes are not spotted quickly enough, or staff do too much to help them so they cannot then tackle a similar problem on their own.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

While the curriculum is already sufficiently broad and balanced, recent improvements are mostly at an early stage of development. However, the adoption of new national strategies for English and mathematics has secured the systematic teaching of skills in these subjects and introduced exciting topics and activities to encourage writing.

The strongest aspect of the school's curriculum is its extra-curricular activities, which offer pupils a wide range of sport in particular, including hockey and gymnastics, and the chance to take part in competitive events with other schools. Some useful links are made between subjects; music is beginning to flourish and pupils in Year 6 benefit from learning to speak French. Nevertheless, the school has yet to make full use of the educational opportunities offered by trips and visits out of school to build on pupils' good interest and extend and enhance their learning. The school particularly recognises that it is not yet doing enough in this respect to encourage pupils' knowledge of cultures and traditions beyond their own.

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

#### **Grade: 3**

Parents clearly see the benefits of this small school community for developing children's well-being, confidence and self-esteem. There is a conscientious regard for safeguarding pupils and these arrangements are secure. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well organised so that their needs are identified quickly and appropriate support put in place.

There has been considerable improvement to the assessment of pupils' progress and this information is used to check progress at regular intervals and to set targets. Much is still new,

however. For example, learning targets have yet to be shared with pupils so that they know what they are and what they are aiming for, and marking does not always identify for pupils what they should do to improve their work.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The school's leadership and governance have come a long way over the last eighteen months. The headteacher's drive on assessment has been influential in raising awareness of where improvements are needed and placed the responsibility for improving academic performance firmly with all staff members. Another crucial step has been to raise expectations of progress in order to reinforce the need for pupils to catch up on slower achievement in the past. Accelerations in progress over the course of this year show that the school is moving in the right direction and has the capacity to take things forward. The pace of improvement has been adequate up to now, but is not yet fast enough to resolve the remaining inconsistencies in its effectiveness in the quickest possible time.

The school's view of itself and its choice of priorities are clear and accurate. Subject leaders play a greater role in evaluating the school's work, and local authority support has been used well to develop the monitoring skills of leaders at all levels. Governors have ensured that they know much more about what the school is doing, and increased their expertise in the analysis of academic data. In this way, they are now better placed to offer the school sharply focused challenge and support.

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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>	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	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

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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	3

<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	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	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

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Nicholas C of E Primary School, Chippenham SN15 2EY

Thank you very much for welcoming us to your school and into your lessons and activities. We very much enjoyed our visit, and this letter is to tell you some of the things we found. My colleague was very impressed with your enthusiasm for the daily 'Fit Nick' activities and by how well you all worked together and took responsibilities as 'sports leaders'. Many of your parents wrote to tell us how much they like your school, and particularly its 'family' atmosphere.

We found out that yours is a satisfactory school. Many of you make good progress, but not yet everyone. All the staff and governors are doing lots of things to make the school even better and ensure that you all progress well.

Here are some other important things about your school:

- Those of you in Reception get off to a good start.
- You all behave well, work hard in lessons and are interested in what you do.
- Staff have focused very closely on improving your writing so that your progress in this subject is catching up with reading and mathematics.
- You like the wide choice of clubs and sports and many of you take part.
- You feel safe at school and know there is someone to go to if you have any concerns.
- Staff are keeping a careful and regular check on your progress and expecting much more of you.

This is what your school has been asked to do to make things even better:

- Make improvements much more quickly so that all your lessons are taught well and you all make good progress all the time.
- Enrich and widen your learning through more trips and visits that are linked to what you are doing in lessons, and to help you learn more about cultures beyond your own.

With all best wishes for the future,

Yours sincerely

Patricia Davies Lead Inspector