

# St Nicholas Church of England Primary School

## Inspection report

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Unique Reference Number	104922
Local Authority	Sefton
Inspection number	324131
Inspection dates	28–29 April 2009
Reporting inspector	Jean Kendall HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.  
The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	193
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Howell
Headteacher	Mrs Rebecca Woods
Date of previous school inspection	July 2006
School address	Nicholas Road Blundellsands Liverpool L23 6TS
Telephone number	0151 9241204
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## Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. The inspectors visited 11 lessons and made further visits to classrooms to sample pupils' work. They held meetings with governors, the parish vicar, governors, staff and groups of pupils and parents. They observed the school's work and looked at documentation, including the school's self-evaluation evidence, development plan and internal and external monitoring.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- The extent to which all pupils make progress and how much they enjoy learning.
- Pupils' personal development and how well the school cares, guides and supports them.
- How well staff know the pupils' capabilities and use assessment to meet their needs.
- How effectively leaders and governors drive and secure improvement.
- How well children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make progress and the quality of provision for these children.

## Information about the school

The school is slightly smaller than average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. There are few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The school has achieved the Activemark Gold, the Information and Communication Technology Mark and has Healthy School status.

There is a breakfast club and after school provision located at the school. This provision is not managed by the governing body and was subject to a separate inspection.

The headteacher took up her post permanently just before the inspection although she was previously in the role temporarily and was deputy headteacher at the school before that. Two experienced senior staff are sharing the deputy headteacher's role until an appointment is made.

## Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

1

### Main findings

St Nicholas Church of England Primary is an outstanding school that is underpinned by its strong Christian ethos which nurtures all aspects of children's development. Children flourish in this happy and caring environment: they grow in confidence and achieve highly in all aspects of their learning. All staff and governors are entirely committed to enriching the pupils' experience. They all play a full part in driving improvement and sustaining high standards in all aspects of their work. Strong teamwork, mutual support and a pride in the work of the school helps to create an extremely positive ethos for learning. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and is well supported by the senior leadership team and subject and aspect leaders. Her ambition for sustained excellence is shared by all staff. These factors together indicate that the school has excellent capacity for sustained improvement. It provides excellent value for money.

Pupils achieve consistently high academic standards and make outstanding progress in their lessons because teaching is consistently good, with much that is outstanding, and they receive excellent guidance and support for their learning. Staff know the pupils extremely well and, as a result, all pupils achieve exceptionally well, whatever their ability, talents or learning needs. Pupils' excellent attitudes to their work are also a key factor. They concentrate and persevere with challenging tasks, are supportive of one another and keen to succeed. Their enjoyment is evident in all they do. Teachers and teaching assistants strive to make learning fun. They make effective use of resources, including information and communication technology, to keep learning active, and go to great lengths to ensure that activities are varied and exciting. Their enthusiastic approach to teaching is reflected in the enthusiastic response of pupils and their joy in learning. It is clear that staff enjoy their work too: they take pride in both the quality of their own work and in the achievements of pupils in their care. The curriculum provides well for pupils of different abilities, through small group work, and good use is made of teachers' expertise by having specialist teaching in Years 5 and 6.

The school is popular with parents and those who responded to the questionnaire were very pleased with the quality of provision at the school. 'We're very grateful our children are in this excellent school' typifies the comments made. Pupils' behaviour during the inspection was excellent. They were welcoming and friendly and extremely polite and helpful. Their behaviour exemplified the tolerance and respect that is a key part of their behaviour code. Their confidence and well developed

language and social skills mean that they are very well prepared for secondary education and well placed to achieve their ambitions and aspirations.

The school is a highly supportive and cohesive community in itself and it has strong links with partners within the local community, particularly with the church. Its international links with Yi Feng Experimental School in Chongqing help pupils to learn about the different faiths and cultures around the world. However, pupils have limited understanding of the diverse religious, ethnic and socio-economic contexts across the United Kingdom.

The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Children make good progress in all areas of their learning and are well prepared to begin the National Curriculum in Year 1. Practitioners use assessment well to plan purposeful play and exploration opportunities for children during the year. These independent learning experiences support children's learning very effectively. However, the assessments do not accurately reflect children's stage of development on entry to the Reception class. On some occasions adult-led whole group teaching does not fully engage children's interest because sessions are too long or are not well matched to children's interest and level of understanding.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' knowledge and understanding of diversity in the United Kingdom.
- Further raise the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage and achieve improved outcomes by:
  - improving the knowledge and understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage through further training
  - improving the accuracy of assessment of children's stage of development.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1
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Pupils thoroughly enjoy their learning and achieve highly. They approach their work with energy and enthusiasm and are proud of their successes. In lessons, they are eager to contribute ideas and tackle the challenging tasks set by their teachers with confidence. For example, inspectors observed Year 6 pupils grappling with complex problems involving calculating the area of compound shapes. They showed perseverance and an excellent understanding of mathematical language. In all the lessons observed pupils demonstrated excellent concentration and application to the tasks in hand. They are able to work independently because their key skills are well developed and they have a strong desire to succeed. When pupils require more help, their needs are fully met through small group work, individualised work and support in class. This raises their self-esteem and improves their skills.

Pupils attain high standards in standardised tests and assessments. All groups, including pupils from white and minority ethnic backgrounds, those of high ability and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make significantly better

progress than similar pupils nationally. The school has achieved consistently high standards for the last three years in reading, writing, mathematics and science at both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. Work in pupils' books indicates that attainment is also high in other subjects, such as religious education, history, geography and art.

Pupils behave exceptionally well in and out of lessons. They have a mature and thoughtful attitude toward one another and keen awareness of their rights and responsibilities. They are fully involved in shaping and reviewing the school's behaviour code. They feel safe and are aware of potential hazards, for example, those associated with the road outside school and building work in the grounds. A very small number of parents expressed concerns about bullying, but pupils are confident that any issues they raise will be dealt with effectively by teachers. There are no recorded racist incidents. Pupils have an excellent understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. Many take advantage of the healthy and nutritious school meals and they achieve highly in a wide range of physical activities. Pupils make an excellent contribution to school life. Their well developed social skills and self-esteem equip them well in taking positions of responsibility. School councillors actively represent the views of their classmates enabling all to take a full part in decision making, for example, in redesigning the outdoor areas. In the wider community, pupils work well to raise money for local causes and those less fortunate than themselves in other parts of the world. The high standards reached by pupils in lessons, their good attendance and exceptional attitude to work mean that they are extremely well equipped for secondary education and well placed to achieve their aspirations.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	1
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	1
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	2
How well do pupils behave?	1
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	1
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	1
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	1
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	1

## How effective is the provision?

Teaching is consistently good and much is outstanding. Teachers have high

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

aspirations for their pupils and plan lessons carefully to ensure activities are well matched to their prior learning and interests. This ensures that all pupils, whatever their ability, talents or learning needs, achieve exceptionally well. Lower achieving pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive excellent support through small group work and individualised support. Higher ability pupils are given suitably challenging activities to extend their learning and skills. Teaching assistants are very well prepared and make an important contribution. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge, they give clear explanation and allow pupils opportunities to explore their learning through practical tasks. In an excellent Year 6 science lesson, pupils were able to explore their understanding of sound and vibration independently because they had a secure grasp of the key concepts.

Teachers make excellent use of assessment to inform their planning and check that pupils are making good progress. They use dialogue effectively in lessons to assess pupils' understanding and enable them to explain their different methods and strategies. Teachers' marking and feedback to pupils is extremely helpful. Older pupils make good use of the time they are given at the start of lessons to reflect on the comments on their written work and decide how they are going to act on the advice. Younger pupils are well supported through individualised help. The school promotes self-assessment and peer-assessment very effectively. Pupils fully understand their learning targets and know how they can improve the quality of their work. In one excellent example, pupils in Year 4 demonstrated a secure knowledge of success criteria for writing. They thoroughly enjoyed marking the work of 'Caspian', an imaginary pupil who frequently visits for help with his work.

The curriculum gives pupils excellent opportunities to achieve and develop their personal skills. It meets pupils' needs and enriches their experiences through a host of exciting activities. Themed work, residential visits, day trips and visitors to the school help pupils to learn about the wider community. The school uses the curriculum well to extend pupils' knowledge of other cultures, faiths and traditions. Links with Yi Feng Experimental School in Chongqing have helped pupils learn about Chinese culture. Some pupils have visited the school and all pupils are benefiting from the long term visit of the school's language teacher who is helping them to understand and learn about her language and culture. Participation in extra-curricular clubs is high and the school ensures that all pupils have access to them by offering subsidies or additional support for pupils with particular needs.

Care, guidance and support are integral to all aspects of the school and are outstanding. Staff know the pupils exceptionally well and constantly promote their personal development and academic achievement. Vulnerable pupils, including those who are not achieving their challenging targets and those with learning difficulties and or/disabilities are identified early and given additional support. This helps them to develop their skills and grow in confidence.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

The quality of teaching	1
The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1

The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1
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## How effective are leadership and management?

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher provides clear vision and forward looking leadership fully focused on enriching pupils' experiences and maintaining high standards. Staff and governors have high levels of confidence in her and all play a full part in driving improvement. Excellent systems are in place to evaluate the impact of the school's work, monitor the quality of provision and secure improvements. Systems to track pupils' progress are comprehensive and used effectively to identify where support is needed for both staff and pupils. Equality of opportunity is promoted through all aspects of the school. All staff have high expectations of what each pupil can achieve and set high targets for themselves as well as for all pupils. The school successfully ensures that all pupils have access to the range of activities on offer and all pupils achieve highly. The experienced governing body knows the school well and provides excellent professional challenge and support. They give health, safety and well-being of both staff and pupils a high priority. At the time of the inspection, good safeguarding procedures were in place.

The school's engagement with parents is good and improving. Relationships are positive and there are clear communication channels. The school has excellent partnerships with outside agencies. Its strong links with the church enhance pupils' experience and help them understand the local community. Work within the school cluster enables staff to benefit from sharing best practice and working with colleagues from other schools. The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion. The school community itself is extremely supportive, with tolerance and respect at the forefront of its work. The school is active in the local community and has beneficial international links which help pupils understand faith and cultural differences. However, the school is aware that pupils have limited understanding of the diverse religious, ethnic and socio-economic contexts across the country. It has a strategy in place to extend its links with other schools.

### *These are the grades for leadership and management*

The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1



## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the Reception class from a range of pre-school provisions with skills and knowledge that are broadly in line with expectations for their age. The school's induction procedures are good and this helps children settle quickly and feel happy and secure. Children make good progress in all areas of learning to achieve levels that are above average by the time they start in Year 1. They make particularly good gains in their language skills and personal, social and emotional development and this supports them well in continuing to learn. Children are enthusiastic and confident learners. They are provided with a good range of independent learning experiences which are well matched to their learning needs. These experiences are well linked to the central learning objective or theme. Children thoroughly enjoy opportunities to explore, investigate and create within these planned activities.

Practitioners use assessment well to plan purposeful play and exploration opportunities for children during the year. However, the assessments do not accurately reflect children's stage of development on entry to the Reception class. On some occasions adult-led whole group teaching does not fully engage children's interest because sessions are too long or are not well matched to children's interest and level of understanding.

Children have a good understanding of how to keep safe. Safeguarding procedures are good. Children show consideration for each other when sharing equipment and have a well developed sense of fairness. The school has developed the outdoor space very effectively and this provision is vastly improved since the last inspection. Children enjoy moving between the classroom and outdoor space and are guided well to experience the whole range of activity.

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

## Views of parents and carers

All parents who responded to the questionnaire were happy with the school's provision overall. Parents made many positive comments such as, 'It is a pleasure to see a team of staff all working together as a whole unit, all for the benefit of our children.' All parents agreed that the school keeps their child safe and the vast majority said that their children enjoy school. Almost all parents felt that their child was well supported to make progress and develop personal skills. A very small number felt that behaviour was a concern and a small number also thought that they could be better informed about the progress their child is making.

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Nicholas Church of England Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of

the school. If a parent has more than one child at the school, we ask them to record an answer against all the questions, for each of their children.

The inspection team received 50 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 146 parents and carers registered at the school.

	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Never
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	38	12	0	0

## What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

- Attainment:** the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
- Progress:** the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
- Achievement:** the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, training or development. This may refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding or desired attributes. Attributes include qualities or personal competencies which are important to the development of the pupil; for example personal, social, cultural, emotional or health.
- Capacity to improve:** the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
- Leadership and management:** the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.



30 April 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Nicholas Church of England Primary School,  
Liverpool, L23 6TS

Thank you so much for making us welcome and helping us when we came to inspect your school recently. We thoroughly enjoyed our visit to your school. We enjoyed talking with you, observing your lessons and looking at your work. You expressed your opinions very clearly.

We found your school to be outstanding in all major aspects of its work.

Your enthusiasm for learning is evident in all you do and this helps you to achieve highly. Your behaviour is exemplary and you can be proud of the way you all represented your school. We were particularly impressed by your mature and caring attitudes toward each other and your excellent attitudes to work. You told us that teachers make learning fun for you. We certainly found this to be the case. We loved hearing about teddy's trip to Austria from the pupils in Year 1 and were pleased to meet 'Caspian' and see how well pupils in Year 4 help him with his work. Your teachers work very hard to give you memorable and enjoyable lessons.

You also told us that you feel safe and well cared for by your teachers. We found that their care, guidance and support of you are excellent. They know you very well and are very committed to making sure you all achieve the best you can. Your headteacher and the governors provide the school with excellent leadership and we are sure that the school will carry on enriching the quality of your education. There are a couple of points that we have asked all the teachers in your school to do to make it even better. We have asked them to help you gain more knowledge and understanding of the diverse groups in our country. For children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, we have asked teachers to think about ways they can make whole group teaching more interesting for them.

We would like to wish you every success for the future,

Jean Kendall on behalf of the inspection team  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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