

# St Nicholas Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Child Okeford

## Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|-------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 113796      |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Dorset      |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 325886      |
| <b>Inspection date</b>         | 12 May 2009 |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | Kevin Hodge |

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.

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| <b>Type of school</b>  | Primary  |
| <b>School category</b>   | Voluntary aided  |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>   | 4–11   |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>  | Mixed  |
| <b>Number on roll</b>  |  |
| School (total)   | 121  |
| Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS | 0  |
| Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years                                     | 0  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>   | The governing body   |
| <b>Chair</b>   | Marianna Tavener   |
| <b>Headteacher</b>   | Susan Marsh  |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 1 June 2006  |
| <b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>                              | Not previously inspected                                     |
| <b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>   | Not previously inspected                                     |
| <b>School address</b>  | Station Road<br>Child Okeford<br>Blandford Forum<br>DT11 8EL |
| <b>Telephone number</b>  | 01258 860581   |
| <b>Fax number</b>  | 01258 860581   |

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

They evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and looked at the following specific aspects:

- the quality of pupils' writing skills, particularly for boys
- the way the school helps pupils improve their own work
- how the school promotes community cohesion.

Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, looking at pupils' work and school documents. Parents' questionnaires and discussions with pupils, two governors and staff also contributed to the judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were justified in nearly all areas, and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

## Description of the school

St Nicholas Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School is a smaller than average school whose pupils are, apart from a very small minority, White British. The number known to be eligible for free school meals is low. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including statements of special educational needs, is higher than that seen in most schools. These pupils have mainly speech, language and behavioural difficulties although a very small number have particular medical or emotional learning needs. The Early Years Foundation Stage children are taught in a Reception class and share an outside activity area with the adjacent privately run nursery. Years 3/4 and 5/6 are taught in two mixed-aged classes. The school has several awards such as 'Activemark' and 'Artsmark Gold' reflecting its commitment to developing pupils' creative talents and healthy living.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

St Nicholas Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School provides a good standard of education. It has some outstanding features, particularly in the way pupils behave, their enjoyment of learning and in the extent pupils feel safe in school. The warm and friendly welcome that greets visitors is reflective of the excellent attitudes that are nurtured in pupils by caring and enthusiastic staff. The excellent personal development of pupils is a direct result of the high standards of care that pupils and parents appreciate immensely. One parent reflected the views of the vast majority who replied to the inspection questionnaire by saying, 'It's a wonderful school which provides a varied education for children.' Pupils' emotional needs have a very high profile and 'special groups' help individual pupils to cope very well with specific difficulties. Not surprisingly, pupils make good progress in their work and really enjoy attending. Parents also commented favourably about the school going the extra mile to extend the pupils' artistic and musical abilities. 'We like making things, learning to play musical instruments and we especially like 'Golden Time' on Fridays', some pupils told inspectors. The very effective teamwork is promoted by the very clear direction and high expectations set by senior staff. As a result, the school has good capacity to make further improvement.

Children start school with skills and experience that are typical for this age group. They get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage class. Increasingly, this very secure start and good progress are being reflected in improvements in Year 2 national tests results, which rose significantly last year in reading and mathematics. Writing, although improved, lagged behind the other subjects. Pupils' good progress is fostered well as they move up through to Year 6, where pupils reach above average standards of work. Although this progress sometimes varies in aspects such as writing, they make good progress and achieve well through the school. The work to improve pupils' spelling, punctuation and to encourage them to use a wider vocabulary is beginning to take effect, aided by the school's effective approach to assessment routines. For some pupils, in particular in Years 1 and 5, improvements have taken longer to take effect. There is still scope for pupils to become more confident in the width of vocabulary used. Work in art and music is particularly good and pupils reach better than the expected levels in these areas. Pupils' skills in information and communication technology are also better than expected and a 'media week' being held this term is raising the subject's profile even more. Target setting helps pupils to know what to aim for to improve, but the approaches vary slightly between classes. Some pupils found it hard remembering their targets or how they can help them gauge general improvement. Support for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well managed. It makes sure such pupils achieve as well as their classmates, particularly those who have severe emotional or medical needs.

Laying the groundwork for this good progress is the typically good teaching. Particular strengths are the way in which teachers promote relationships and devise enjoyable and more practically based activities. Activities in the Early Years Foundation Stage develop children's basic skills well and their independence is encouraged effectively as they often make conscious choices of which activities to follow. This good start underpins pupils' confidence in assessing more difficult choices, which continues to develop as they move through the school. Teachers also use technology such as interactive whiteboards to bring lessons alive. In some activities, the knowledge pupils are expected to learn is not always related to their day-to-day experiences to help them apply their understanding. In some activities, pupils could be more actively involved in their learning.

The headteacher sets an excellent direction in promoting success and improvement. She is aided by very effective senior leaders, including governors, who help develop close teamwork where all have a desire to improve further. The headteacher leads the school with a high regard to ensuring pupils, staff, governors and parents feel involved in the success of the school. Self-evaluation takes into account the views of parents and pupils to guide developments. The checks on teaching and planning are regular and helpful. Observations pick out positive aspects clearly, but do not sufficiently pinpoint those which improve pupils' learning further. Subject leaders lead their subjects very well. Overall, the school's checks on its performance accurately identify its strengths and areas for development. Governance is good. Governors are well informed and act as good 'critical friends' to ensure the school continues to improve, not least by helping to raise significant funds for recent building works and improvements.

As the senior leaders promote high levels of pastoral support, pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is excellent. The pupils show very high levels of consideration for others and work well together. For example, the school's 'peer mediators' do a great job of reducing any playground problems or upsets. The school's links with local schools and the community include activities to broaden pupils' skills in music and pupils regularly cook at Christmas for local senior citizens. A weekly focus in each class on world affairs helps ensure that pupils have a good understanding of other cultures and issues facing people around the globe. Recent class-based activities looking at day-to-day living in Pakistan, combined with their good knowledge of other faiths and cultures, give pupils a good sense of community cohesion and awareness. Pupils enjoy influencing improvement in the school through their work on the school council. Through its good curriculum, which includes a modern foreign language, strong art provision, instrumental music tuition and excellent extra-curricular activities, pupils have a varied diet of academic, cultural, sporting and creative activities. The pupils successfully compete in sporting events with other schools. Revisions to make topics and activities even more appealing are currently underway. Activities in the Early Years Foundation Stage are well planned and outside resources are very well used. Pupils say they are well prepared for their next schools and their high levels of maturity help in this respect.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Excellent pastoral care ensures that children are very happy and make a secure start to school life. Children make good progress in all aspects of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum so they often exceed average levels when they reach Year 1. They enjoy working together and readily respond to adults and classmates. This lays the foundation for the effective way pupils work together later in the school. Staff devise a good balance of indoor activities that children can choose for themselves and those that they are directed to undertake. This includes use of computers to aid the teaching of letter sounds and early experiences of learning simple musical conventions such as taking turns and following a conductor. The outside area is large, well equipped and used enthusiastically by children to complement their indoor activities. Staff record how well children make progress, although on occasions they could do more to extend some children's thinking when they are engaged in their tasks. The school makes excellent provision for the children's welfare by having a clear awareness of their individual medical, social and academic needs. This aids their personal, social and emotional development which is extremely good, with children learning the benefits of sharing and helping friends with their work. Children develop good basic communication, number and writing skills. Good leadership

of the age group has ensured that effective links are developed with parents who recognise the good start their children have.

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

- Help pupils, particularly for some in Years 1 and 5, develop greater confidence in using a wider vocabulary to enhance their writing abilities.
- Improve the consistency of target setting between classes so that pupils have a clearer understanding of how targets can guide and improve their work.

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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> |
|--|-----------------------|

### 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> | 2   |
| 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  | 2   |

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?</b>       | 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? | 1 |
| 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

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>How well do learners achieve?</b>   | 2 |
| The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners   | 2 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 2 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress                           | 2 |

<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.



## Personal development and well-being

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>How good are 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 |
| The extent to which learners enjoy their education  | 1 |
| The attendance of learners  | 2 |
| The behaviour of learners   | 1 |
| 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 | 2 |

## The quality of provision

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>       | 2 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 2 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?   | 2 |

## Leadership and management

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>                                       | 2   |
| 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  | 2   |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation  | 2   |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated   | 2   |
| How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?   | 2   |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money  | 2   |
| 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  |

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

26 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Nicholas Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Child Okeford,  
DT11 8EL

Thanks for making us feel really welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed meeting and seeing all the activities you do. Yours is a good school that has some excellent features to it. You are great ambassadors for your school by being so well behaved and helpful, so keep it up.

Here are some of the things we found out:

- You make good progress in your work and you reach above average levels by the time you leave.
- The children in the Reception class have a happy start to school.
- All of you work really hard, behave brilliantly and get on with each other, particularly in the playground as well as around the school. Well done school mediators!
- You said the teachers and helpers make sure that you feel very safe and really look after you. We think you are right.
- You do some really good work in art and music. It is great to have so many musical instruments for you to learn.
- Links with local schools and the community are good and they appreciate your help. Well done on your sporting successes.
- The teachers make most lessons interesting and fun. The work some of you did on learning about the Ancient Greeks after the SAT tests was very good.
- The headteacher, staff and governors are working together very well to make your school a very welcoming, caring and happy place to be.

We have asked the school to look at two things to improve:

- To help you to be even more confident in writing really good stories and accounts.
- To explain more clearly the way targets are used in each class so you all have a good idea of how to use them to help you improve your work.

Yours faithfully

Kevin Hodge

Lead inspector