

St Nicholas CofE (C) First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124243
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	328087
Inspection date	17 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Alison Cartlidge

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.

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	350
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
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jill Collins
Headteacher	Tim Moule
Date of previous school inspection	24 January 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Belvide Gardens Chillington Drive Codsall Wolverhampton WV8 1AN
Telephone number	01902 434126
Fax number	01902 434133

Age group	3–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following.

- Provision and progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Pupils' writing opportunities across the curriculum.
- The impact of subject leaders in identifying specific priorities for improvement.
- Pupils' response to pastoral care, especially in developing safe lifestyles.
- How well resources have been used to support learning and standards.

Evidence was gathered from discussions with pupils, members of staff and governors; observations of teaching and learning; views of parents; scrutiny of pupils' work and school documentation. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors 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 where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Pupils come to this large first school from the village of Codsall and the surrounding area. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a Nursery and two Reception classes. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The school has a well below average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Most of these pupils have speech or language difficulties. A new headteacher joined the school in January 2009. The after-school club is run by a private provider and was not part of this inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Pupils achieve exceptionally well at this outstanding school. Their exemplary behaviour and willingness to learn enable them to respond very positively to teachers' dedication and enthusiasm. Children make an extremely good start to their education in the Nursery and Reception classes. In Years 1 to 4, outstanding teaching ensures that pupils build very quickly on what they have already learnt. As a result, most pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make outstanding progress, and standards by the end of Year 4 are exceptionally high in English, mathematics and science. Standards in writing are not quite as high as they are in reading and there are some missed opportunities for pupils to improve their writing skills through the work they do in other subjects. Senior leaders are aware that pupils could be given more opportunities for carrying out their own investigations and research.

Pupils' outstanding personal development is evident in their thorough enjoyment of school and, as a result, rates of attendance are well above average. Many pupils demonstrate pride in their school with comments such as, 'We learn a lot from this school' and 'We're all healthy and happy'. Excellent care, guidance and support ensure that pupils' academic and personal development is monitored rigorously. Teachers use praise very well to encourage pupils and build their confidence. In conversations with inspectors, pupils showed much appreciation for the level of support they receive from members of staff and said that they find the marking and target setting process to be very helpful.

Teachers prepare lessons very thoroughly and include fun activities to make learning interesting. They provide clear explanations for tasks and have very good knowledge of the subjects they teach. They ask probing questions to ensure that pupils are thinking carefully. As a result, pupils learn very quickly and are able to get on with their tasks sensibly. Pupils at risk of not meeting their challenging targets are soon identified and given support to get them back on track. Teachers and teaching assistants provide very good support for groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, enabling them to make very rapid progress towards their individual targets.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They are exceptionally polite and friendly and show a great deal of respect for the views of others. Pupils contribute to the community exceptionally well. They take responsibility very seriously and the school and eco councils are very proud of their achievements. For example, they are helping to develop an organic garden and older pupils help younger ones at playtimes. Pupils' high academic standards and exceptionally good personal development prepare them extremely well for the next stage of their education and the world of work in later life.

Pupils know that they can approach any member of staff if they have a worry and consequently they feel very safe at school. As one pupil commented, 'Teachers care for us and make us safe.' Pupils have a very thorough awareness of the dangers in life and can point out a vast array of potential hazards associated with various activities. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are fully in place. The school works very closely with external agencies, including parents, other schools and the church, to support the well-being of all its pupils.

The excellent curriculum covers all subjects fully and pupils are especially enthusiastic about the many practical activities provided. Pupils' personal development is catered for exceptionally well and helps pupils to lead very safe and healthy lives. For example, pupils take frequent exercise in lessons and clubs and make healthy snack choices at playtime. The curriculum

includes very thorough opportunities for pupils to learn about other cultures. The creative arts are promoted very effectively, with a very good proportion of pupils learning musical instruments and contributing towards school productions.

Outstanding leadership and management ensure that all leaders remain focused on pupils' achievement and on seeking ways to expand the pupils' experiences. Exceptionally high standards have been successfully maintained since the last inspection, demonstrating the school's excellent capacity to improve further. Systems for self-evaluation are very thorough, enabling the new headteacher to establish a thorough understanding of what works well and what could be improved further. Other leaders have a positive impact on provision in the subjects they coordinate. Governors are very supportive and knowledgeable and are rightly aware that they could become even more rigorous when monitoring the school's work. Governors and administration staff are especially vigilant in ensuring that resources are used effectively to boost pupils' learning. The school's contribution towards community cohesion is outstanding. Consequently, all pupils do equally well at the school and develop a very good awareness of the importance of respecting cultural diversity. There is a very strong sense of common values and understanding of why discrimination is unfair.

Parents are very pleased with the provision for their children. Most parents who wrote to the inspection team said that they were delighted with every aspect of the school.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Most children are working at or beyond the expected levels for this age group on entry to the school. They make exceptionally good progress in all areas of learning and consequently standards are well above average when children start in Year 1. Thorough induction arrangements enable children to settle into school routines rapidly and to become confident and happy individuals. Adults work together very well, planning an extensive range of interesting and purposeful activities linked to a common theme. Teachers' expertise is effectively used to lead groups in different areas of learning. As a result, children thoroughly enjoy learning. For example, Nursery children were seen gaining much pleasure from acting out and talking about a story concerning a bear going into space, and counting out 'treasure' found in the sand. In the Reception classes, children developed their understanding of addition very well by making up their own sums out on the playground. Adults use challenging questioning extremely effectively to encourage children to talk about what they are learning. As a result, children are keen to contribute their ideas. Children's personal development is excellent. They become independent, play together happily and make sensible choices as they work. Members of staff are exceptionally successful in promoting the children's welfare and they assess the children's learning rigorously. Leadership and management are excellent. Senior members of staff have clear plans to make provision even better; for example, they are right to have identified the need to increase the opportunities children have for taking the initiative in their learning by helping to plan topics.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide pupils with greater opportunities for carrying out their own investigations and research and to write independently across the curriculum.

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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?	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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
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?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ 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/or disabilities make progress	1

¹Grade 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

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	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	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

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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 eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

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

18 March 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of St. Nicholas Church of England First School, Wolverhampton WV8 1AN

- Thank you for welcoming us to your school and for sharing your work with us. We are pleased that you thoroughly enjoy coming to this outstanding school. Here are some of the best things we noted about your school.
- You make an excellent start in the Nursery and Reception classes where you do lots of fun activities.
- You make excellent progress in Years 1 to 4 in English, mathematics and science.
- You behave exceptionally well and take responsibility very well. Congratulations to the school councillors for your successful campaign to help to keep the cloakrooms tidy.
- You have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe and healthy.
- Teaching is outstanding and your teachers help you to enjoy school by making lessons fun.
- You study an exceptionally wide range of interesting topics.
- Adults in school are especially kind and caring and look after you very well.
- Your headteacher, teachers and governors are excellent at making plans to help the school become even better.
- Your parents and carers are very pleased that you come to this school.
- What we have asked your school to do now.
- Give you plenty of opportunities for carrying out your own investigations and research and for writing about your own ideas in various subjects.

What you can do to help your teachers.

- Try especially hard when you are writing about what you have learnt.

We thoroughly enjoyed talking with you about your school and wish you well for the future.

Yours faithfully

Alison Cartlidge

Lead inspector