

# St Nicholas' CofE Primary

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	134611
<b>Local Authority</b>	Warwickshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	328932
<b>Inspection dates</b>	13–14 November 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Barbara Atcheson

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 controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	307
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	49
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Sue Heap
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sally Staley
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	20 September 2005
<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>	St Faiths Road Alcester B49 6AG
<b>Telephone number</b>	01789 762578
<b>Fax number</b>	01789 400503

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors

## Description of the school

This is a large school where the vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than average, as is the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. In the past, there has been a high turnover of staff but staffing is now stable. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) consists of two Reception classes. There is a privately run nursery on the school site and in May 2008 an onsite Children's Centre was opened. This is now used by parents to access a variety of support agencies.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school with some outstanding features. Parents appreciate the good leadership and good quality of teaching and learning. One parent, reflecting the views of many, said, 'I am very impressed with the standard of teaching and management. The dedication, commitment and enthusiasm of all I have met concerning the school is exemplary.' The headteacher and senior leaders have successfully established a clear direction for the school. Staff share a high level of commitment to raise achievement further. Everyone is actively involved in implementing improvements. Significant changes to the curriculum over the last year mean that it is now outstanding. The introduction of a thematic, practical approach has had a high impact on pupils' learning, in particular boys' enthusiasm for writing. Improvements to the quality of teaching and learning mean that it is now good overall. Consequently, the downward trend in results of Year 6, seen in 2005–2007, has been halted, standards have risen and pupils make good progress across the school. Pupils build successfully on the good start they make in the EYFS, so that by the end of Year 6, standards are above the national average in English, mathematics and science and above the national average for the higher levels.

The warmth of the relationships with all staff enables pupils to become confident learners who benefit from the help given by skilled teaching assistants and support staff. For the most part, learning is exciting and meaningful. However, there are times when teachers spend too long talking to pupils and the pace of learning slows and interest wanes. The school has strong systems for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning. These are not always sharply focused on the improvements that need to be made in order to help teachers increase challenge, particularly for higher achievers.

Pupils are captivated by all that this school has to offer and say that they would not change a thing. The school is a thriving, harmonious community. It has an ethos which promotes aspiration and celebrates achievement. As a result, pupils' personal development and well-being and their behaviour are outstanding. They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and actively make healthy lifestyle choices that are continued outside school. Pastoral care is outstanding. Pupils are confident that staff will help them when problems arise. Systems are securely in place to ensure that pupils are safe and happy in school, and to support those who are vulnerable or have particular needs. Very strong links with local agencies and the community are used very effectively to enhance provision for pupils' welfare and to extend opportunities for learning.

Senior leaders, including governors, have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Systematic and comprehensive checks on performance provide the drive for the school constantly to improve itself. It has made good progress since the previous inspection and successfully implemented major improvements which have raised achievement and standards. This demonstrates that the school has a good capacity for further improvement.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Sensitive induction arrangements ensure that children settle quickly and soon enjoy exploring all the activities on offer. They are extremely well cared for and feel secure and valued in the safe, stimulating environment. The staff understand each child's particular needs and are fully committed to helping them progress well in their learning and personal development. Good

leadership ensures that children are well taught. They make good progress in all areas of learning within a well-resourced, open learning environment, shared by the two classes. The excellent Early Years curriculum, combined with good teaching, encourages children to become independent learners. An overheard conversation between a group of boys summed this up: 'Come on guys, let's get to work!' They then went on to 'pilot' a plane of passengers to Dubai!

Behaviour is exemplary. Children thoroughly enjoy learning, particularly their swimming lessons in the school pool. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified early and good relationships with outside agencies help to support their needs. The school benefits from increasingly good relationships with an attached privately run nursery. Regular observations and assessments ensure the planning of the children's next steps in learning and a relevant balance of activities. An outdoor area is partially covered. The school has well-planned improvements to develop this area further.

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

- Ensure that teachers capitalise on opportunities during lessons for pupils to work independently and use their initiative in order to accelerate the rate of progress.
- Ensure that the monitoring of teaching and learning is more focused on where improvements might be made in order to increase challenge, particularly for more able pupils.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Children join the school with knowledge and skills below the level of a typical four-year-old and make good progress in the EYFS. By the time they enter Year 1 the majority have reached the levels expected at the end of the Reception Year in all areas of learning, with the exception of writing, which is below. Particularly good progress is made in this area through Years 1 and 2. Good progress overall enables pupils to reach levels that are above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2.

As a result of a whole-school review in 2007, stringent targets and measures were introduced, together with a new curriculum in order to deal with a three-year decline in standards in years 3 to 6. This, combined with good teaching throughout Years 3 to 6, has meant that the school has now successfully reversed the downward trend. Unvalidated data show that in 2008 standards at the end of Year 6 were above the national average in English, mathematics and science. A significant proportion of pupils attained the higher levels in writing and mathematics. Examples of pupils' work and school data indicate that this upwards trend is set to continue.

Throughout the school pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive a high level of support and as a result make similar progress to their peers.

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

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' enjoyment is reflected in high levels of attendance and their enthusiasm for learning. They feel safe and well cared for and are adamant that bullying does not happen. Exciting opportunities like reciting poetry whilst on a visit to the Malvern Hills and strong links with the community and the church ensure that pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils are caring and considerate to each other as well as courteous and polite, forming strong relationships both with each other and with adults. School councillors have played an active role in bringing about improvement to the curriculum and the re-organisation

of school meals. Pupils have a good grasp of basic skills and work cooperatively with each other. This, combined with opportunities to work with Rolls Royce and local secondary schools and to save money with the school bank, means that these pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Pupils clearly enjoy their lessons and are confident and well-motivated learners. Questioning is used well to both challenge and check previous learning. Good use of 'talking partners' focuses pupils' learning as they sensibly check ideas and thoughts with each other.

In many lessons there are strong links between subjects, particularly history, science and literacy, as seen in two lessons on the Great Fire of London. Teachers' good use of interactive whiteboards makes lessons more interesting and teaching assistants support learning well. The high quality of marking throughout the school ensures that pupils know how to improve their work. Most lessons are well planned, taking into account the needs of different groups of pupils in the class; however, more able pupils are not sufficiently challenged on all occasions. In some lessons, teachers' introductions are too long and consequently there is insufficient time for pupils to complete their tasks.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

Changes made to the way in which the curriculum is planned have given rise to stimulating learning which thrills and excites pupils. This has led to improved achievement and standards throughout the school. A real strength is the way in which links in learning are made through the school's thematic approach to planning. This has led to a more practical, relevant way of learning which carries on outside school. Two Year 5 boys divulged at lunchtime that they could not wait until the end of school because it was 'Thursday Club'. When asked what they did that was so exciting, they replied 'write stories'. The school makes full use of its swimming pool and children learn to swim from Reception upwards. It makes good use of teachers' expertise in teaching French and sport. The range of well-attended extra-curricular activities is outstanding. Pupils are excited by the choices available to them. Provision for gifted and talented pupils is good, with a variety of opportunities, including the Fibonacci Group for talented mathematicians.

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

#### **Grade: 2**

Care, guidance and support are good overall. A matter of health and safety has been brought to the governors' attention. Pastoral care of pupils is a real strength of this school. This is reflected in the outstanding behaviour of pupils and the way in which their successes are recognised and celebrated. In an outstanding assembly, confident pupils received awards for many diverse achievements, including lifesaving and fishing. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well supported in class and make good progress. Groups of pupils are equally well supported in the many and varied intervention groups available. A variety of targets can be seen in classrooms and in pupils' books, and pupils have a very good understanding of these. Teachers' helpful comments when work is marked clearly outline the next steps that pupils need to take to improve their work further.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

Good leadership by the headteacher and her senior leaders has united the staff in their mission for continuous improvement. Members of the senior leadership team appreciate the fact that they feel trusted and they have been given the scope to introduce new and often innovative measures. Sustained hard work related to these measures has successfully brought about rapid improvement. A considered and well-structured plan aimed at providing an excellent education for the pupils is at the heart of this improvement. The school's self-evaluation is good and takes full account of parents' and pupils' views. Comprehensive systems exist to monitor and evaluate the work of the school. However, the monitoring of the quality of teaching is not yet as incisive as it could be and so does not always highlight where teachers need to improve. Governors play an active and very effective role in monitoring the work of the school. As a result, they have a very comprehensive picture of how well it is doing and the impact of their decisions. The school strongly promotes community cohesion both locally and internationally.

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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?	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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	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?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	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?	1
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	2
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

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

17 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Nicholas' C of E Primary School, Alcester B49 6AG

We really enjoyed coming to your school the other day to find out how well you are doing. We think that you go to a good school and we know that you and your parents and carers think that too. We saw how much you enjoy yourselves in lessons, singing in assembly and playing outside.

We liked these things.

- You all make good progress in your learning.
- You behave extremely well, get along with each other and feel safe in school.
- The school council has very good ideas about how to make things better.
- You have an excellent understanding of how to live healthily.
- Your school has very strong links with your parents, the community and the church.
- There are plenty of exciting things for you to do both in school and on visits and in clubs.
- Staff look after you extremely well and show you how to improve your work.

The school is working hard to make things even better for you. We have suggested two areas that could be improved.

- Make sure that introductions to lessons do not last for too long so that you stay interested and have plenty of time to think about your work and get it finished.
- Help teachers to know what they can do to make their lessons even better.

You can help by telling your teachers about what activities really help you to learn quickly. We hope that you will continue to enjoy coming to school and to try your hardest so that you become even more successful in the future.

Yours sincerely

Barbara Atcheson

Lead inspector