

St Nicholas and St Laurence CE VA Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113834
Local Authority	Dorset
Inspection number	338249
Inspection dates	3–4 March 2010
Reporting inspector	David Curtis

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	213
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Anthony Stephens
Headteacher	Joanne Williams
Date of previous school inspection	29 January 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Seventy per cent of the inspection time was spent looking at learning, including the 18 lessons observed. All nine class teachers were seen teaching their own classes. Meetings were held with staff, members of the governing body, parents and carers, the school council and a group of pupils from Year 6. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at the school improvement plan, data relating to pupils' progress, minutes of governing body meetings, notes of visits from the school improvement partner and documentation relating to safeguarding pupils. They looked at the 126 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, and those returned by staff as well as pupils in Years 3 to 6.

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

- the progress of boys in communication, language and literacy in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and in literacy in Years 1 and 2
- current attainment in Year 6, especially in English
- evidence to show whether there is a greater consistency of attainment at the end of Year 6 compared to previous years and whether there is now a clear upward trend
- the effectiveness of initiatives to promote the national and international dimensions of community cohesion.

Information about the school

This is slightly smaller than the average size primary school. Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is in a Reception class. There are single-age classes for Years 1 and 2. There are three mixed-age classes for Years 3 and 4, and for Years 5 and 6. Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, most of whom have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, is below the national average.

The school shares the same campus as Scallywags Nursery School, Wyvern Special School and The Wey Valley School

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. It has made significant progress since its previous inspection. Critically, attainment at the end of Year 2 is average, whereas from 2005 to 2007 it was low. The successful teaching of letters and sounds in both the Early Years Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2, together with motivating boys as writers, mean that the gap between boys' and girls' performance in literacy is closing rapidly. Attainment at the end of Year 6 shows a very variable trend over the last five years, with significant swings within subjects from low to high. Previous weaknesses in attainment at the end of Year 6 and previous issues with poor attendance had a negative impact on pupils' progress and achievement. Evidence from the inspection, supported convincingly by school data, shows that attainment at the end of Year 6 is average in both English and mathematics. Pupils currently in Years 4 and 5 work at above average levels and are on track to reach their challenging targets. Attendance, while much improved, remains marginally below the national average, primarily as the result of families taking holidays during term time.

A significant increase in the proportion of good teaching has had a positive impact on improving attainment and on pupils' good progress and achievement. There are strengths in the teaching of key skills. Marking is good and pupils say that they know how well they are doing and how to improve their work. Teachers plan a good range of tasks to meet pupils' differing learning needs, but there is insufficient emphasis on telling pupils what they should achieve by the end of lessons. As a result, there are times when pupils do not make maximum progress in lessons. Pupils have detailed targets in writing, linked to National Curriculum levels, but this is not consistently the case in reading and mathematics. As a result, pupils are not always clear as to what they need to achieve to move, for example, from a Level 3a to a Level 4c.

The majority of parents and carers returned the questionnaires and gave positive views of the school. However, there was a recurring issue amongst a minority of parents, especially in written comments relating to concerns over the school's homework policy and the way in which the school deals with challenging behaviour. Inspectors found behaviour in the school to be good. However, they agree that the school does not communicate effectively with all parents.

The headteacher leads successfully a strong senior leadership team who, together with a dedicated staff team, are committed to raising attainment. School self-evaluation is accurate and improvement areas link closely to improving pupils' performance across the school. Taking into consideration that the school has moved from satisfactory to good since its last inspection and its strengths in leadership and management, including the governing body, the school has good capacity for further improvement.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment so that it is consistently above average at the end of Year 6 by:
 - embedding the successful strategies to improve the consistency of good teaching and learning
 - providing, in lessons, stronger focus on the different outcomes for pupils, especially in what they are expected to achieve by the end of the lesson
 - ensuring that pupils' individual targets in reading and mathematics are linked more closely to National Curriculum levels.
- Work with parents, carers and pupils to ensure that attendance is at least 95% with effect from the next academic year onwards.
- Review the school's policies for homework and behaviour and share the outcomes of this review by July 2010 so that parents and carers have a clear understanding of both policies.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

There is no evidence that issues with attendance link to pupils not wanting to be at school. Pupils enjoy school and their lessons. In most classes, pupils show interest and enthusiasm in lesson introductions, with many often 'bursting' to answer questions. They particularly enjoy using the whiteboards and/or interactive whiteboards to show their understanding of ideas to both teachers and classmates. Pupils work together most successfully in pairs. In a numeracy lesson in Years 5 and 6, pupils made excellent progress in solving complex problems linked to percentage discounts because of strengths in collaborative thinking and working. Pupils show strengths in working independently in lessons, for example in numeracy in Years 3 and 4, when matching fractions to decimals. Occasionally, the pace of work slackens when there is insufficient challenge in terms of the amount of work pupils are expected to produce. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because they receive effective support from teachers and skilled teaching assistants. There is no significant variation in progress between groups of pupils. There are significant strengths in the high quality work pupils produce in art and design, in both two and three dimensions. In Year 6, pupils take their roles as peer mediators and playground leaders seriously and perform their duties conscientiously. The school's strong Christian ethos is evident in pupils' enthusiasm for learning. They show a good understanding of other faiths, especially in their places of worship, such as the mosque and the synagogue. Through 'International Days' and (United Kingdom) 'County Days', pupils develop a growing awareness of life and customs in a range of diverse communities, for example the Notting Hill Carnival.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers ensure that at the beginning of lessons they share the learning objective with pupils. During lessons, there is evidence of teachers making regular assessments of pupils' learning and, where identified, amending planning to address areas where pupils are insecure. In a numeracy lesson in Years 5 and 6, the teacher recognised that pupils needed another lesson to consolidate their problem-solving skills. Teachers make good use of interactive whiteboards to teach new skills, knowledge and understanding. They work in effective partnership with teaching assistants. On occasions, work is not sufficiently challenging with pupils asked to do more of the same, rather than extending learning.

Teachers make the curriculum interesting and accessible to pupils, with good examples of pupils using their literacy skills in their study of history. The success of the 'Rainbow' programme which promotes pupils' personal, social and health education impacts positively on pupils' personal development.

The majority of parents and carers feel that their children are safe in school and this is echoed by pupils. Transition arrangements into Reception, from Reception to Year 1 and from Year 6 to Year 7 are good and valued by parents and carers. There is very effective support for pupils with special educational needs, including the use of outside agencies. The school works hard to promote good attendance, although there is a clear recognition that more needs to be done.

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and all staff work effectively as a dedicated staff team with a shared vision for the school's future. The school has benefited from external support, including that given by the School Improvement Partner in the '3 to 2 Programme', with the impact clearly evident in what is now a good school. There is significant improvement in the involvement of all leaders in monitoring pupils' performance in their subjects. Subject self-evaluation forms provide a good analysis of performance and link closely to action plans focused on raising attainment.

The governing body is very supportive and shows a high level of challenge, especially in holding the school to account for pupils' attainment and progress. The school's promotion of community cohesion is good, as is evident in the appointment of a community cohesion manager and the successful impact on pupils' cultural awareness through 'International' and 'County Days'.

The school's strong Christian teachings are evident in the way that all pupils are treated equally and there is no underachievement amongst particular groups. There is no evidence of any discrimination within the school. Procedures for pupils' safeguarding and child protection are robust and have a positive impact on the day- to-day lives of pupils. Links with the schools on the campus are effective in supporting pupils' learning, as are those with the Chesil Partnership of Schools.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children start school with skills, knowledge and understanding that are broadly typical for their age, except in communication, language and literacy, where their skills are below typical expectations. Children make good progress and by the time they start Year 1, attainment is above average. For many, progress in writing is outstanding. Currently, children do not spend sufficient time developing their speaking and listening skills. Behaviour is excellent and children show good manners in their use of 'thank you' and 'excuse me'. Relationships between children and children and adults are very good. Children enjoy question and answer sessions, for example when counting seeds and working out how many are left if you take two away from 10.

Teaching and learning are good, with the teacher and teaching assistant working as a very effective team. Good links are established with parents and with pre-school settings. 'Learning Journeys' show parents the progress their children make in all areas of learning. There is a good balance of the teaching of key skills and activities that children choose themselves. Strengths in leadership and management include a strong focus on meeting the needs of boys through physical play, outdoor exercise and topics, such as 'The Jungle'. Effective strategies are in place for the early identification of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
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 of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The majority of parents and carers who completed the questionnaires were positive about the school. In written comments, there was a trend showing that parents are happy with teaching and learning, that their children like school and that staff are helpful and approachable. However, in all questions, there was a minority of negative responses, with particular concerns raised about homework and dealing with unacceptable behaviour. While inspectors support the positive views of parents in

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relation to the inspection outcomes, they feel that the school needs to review its communication with parents. The inspectors found no evidence to substantiate any individual concerns, although these were linked to issues with communication between home and school. These concerns were summarised and reported to the school without identifying any individual.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Nicholas and St Laurence CE VA Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 126 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 213 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	75	60	47	37	4	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	72	57	51	40	3	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	55	44	60	48	9	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	52	41	63	50	6	5	3	2
The teaching is good at this school	62	49	55	44	5	4	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	50	40	61	48	14	11	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	50	40	68	54	5	4	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	41	33	71	56	9	7	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	60	48	52	41	11	9	2	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	53	42	52	41	14	11	5	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	43	34	63	50	13	10	3	2
The school is led and managed effectively	49	39	63	50	6	5	6	5
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	63	50	53	42	9	7	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



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5 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Nicholas and St Laurence CE VA Primary School, Weymouth DT3 5DQ

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave my colleagues and me when we visited your school. In particular, I would like to thank all of you in Years 3 to 6 who completed the questionnaire, the school council and those from Year 6 who met with us. I am delighted to tell you that you go to a good school. These are some of the things that the school does especially well:

- you make good progress in your learning and the standards of work you reach in literacy and numeracy are improving all the time
- behaviour is good and you get on well with each other and adults
- those of you in Reception get off to a very good start in school
- in lessons, you work very well in pairs, especially in solving problems
- you feel safe in school and those of you in Year 6 enjoy the extra responsibilities you have
- those who lead and manage your school are determined that you should achieve your very best.

I have asked your headteacher, teachers and governors to do the following in order to make your school even better:

- make sure that the work you do continues to improve, with teachers telling you in more detail what you should achieve by the end of lessons and giving you more detailed targets for reading and mathematics
- ensure that you come to school regularly and do not miss out on important learning
- make sure that all parents and carers understand what you should be doing for homework and that parents and carers understand how staff deal with inappropriate behaviour, should it occur.

Yours sincerely

David Curtis

Lead inspector

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