

# St Nicholas C of E Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	134238
<b>Local Authority</b>	Bath and North East Somerset
<b>Inspection number</b>	341443
<b>Inspection dates</b>	25–26 November 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Mary Harlow HMI

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

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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 of pupils on the school roll</b>	213
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Jill Webb
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Gillian Sutcliffe
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	3 October 2009
<b>School address</b>	Kilmersdon Road Radstock Bath BA3 3QH
<b>Telephone number</b>	01761 432101
<b>Fax number</b>	01761 436232
<b>Email address</b>	stnicholas_pri@bathnes.gov.uk

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 18 lessons and held meetings with staff, governors, parents/carers and pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including 128 parental questionnaires.

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

- Attainment, learning and progress throughout the school, particularly:
  - the progress of boys, more able pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities
  - pupils' achievement in writing.
- The effectiveness of both the monitoring systems implemented by leaders to check the pupils' progress and the strategies to improve standards in writing.

## Information about the school

This school is smaller than most primary schools and is situated close to the centre of Radstock. Most pupils are of White British heritage and very few are learning English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average; the majority of these pupils have speech, language and communication problems, moderate learning difficulties or behavioural, emotional and social problems. Many children attend the on-site privately run preschool, providing Early Years Foundation Stage provision, before starting school. This provision was not inspected by the team.

**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

St Nicholas Primary School provides a good and improving education. It is a vibrant, inclusive learning community where both pupils and adults want to be. 'Everyone goes above and beyond what is required.' 'My child loves coming and leaves happily bouncing and skipping.' These are the views of most parents. Inspectors agree.

All at the school care for the pupils exceptionally well and ensure the school's vision 'Learning for life' is a reality. As a result, most aspects of pupils' personal development are good; their spiritual development is outstanding. This is because the school goes the 'extra mile' to develop the pupils' self-esteem. Monitoring by senior leaders and governors is rigorous. All evaluate the school's work accurately, and this enables the school to set the right targets to get better. Staff are dedicated and keen to improve. All are ambitious for the future and this demonstrates the school's good capacity to improve.

A significant majority of children start school with some catching up to do. They settle into the Reception Year well and make good progress. This good progress continues across the school; by the time they leave, pupils attain average standards overall. Although in recent years pupils' attainment in writing has been below the national average, it is now improving swiftly due to excellent subject leadership and effective initiatives to raise standards in English. All groups of pupils are achieving well and there are promising signs that the attainment gap between boys and girls is closing. Nonetheless, there are not enough opportunities to develop the pupils' literacy skills, including speaking and listening, across the curriculum.

Pupils enjoy their learning, and their good attitudes and behaviour are key factors in their good progress. This is because teaching overall is good. Partnerships are a strength of the school. Nevertheless, more could be done to strengthen the existing, effective transition arrangements with preschool providers to ensure a seamless induction in Early Years Foundation Stage provision for the children.

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

- Raise standards and achievement in writing further, particularly for boys, by ensuring that:
  - more opportunities are created to develop pupils' literacy skills, including speaking and listening, across the curriculum
  - there is a sharper focus on all pupils' ongoing progress in writing in all subjects other than English.

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- Improve the effective transition arrangements with preschool providers by ensuring that:
  - links are strengthened further to share practice
  - children's induction to the Reception is seamless in all aspects of provision.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****2**

Pupils' positive attitudes to learning, good behaviour and hard work mean they make good progress in lessons. They respond enthusiastically to the consistently good or better teaching they receive, try with sustained endeavour to meet the high expectations set by staff and take delight in their accomplishments.

Pupils who struggle with aspects of their work make good progress in light of their difficulties because of support that is carefully tailored to their needs. The school's rigorous systems for tracking pupils' progress, coupled with good use of data by staff to identify pupils who are falling behind, ensures early, effective interventions to help pupils catch up. The school is successfully tackling the underachievement in writing in recent years, through effective learning initiatives such as 'Talk for Writing', good teaching of letters and sounds and the excellent family learning project. These are yielding improvements; in all lessons observed, boys' progress was good. There is strong evidence in pupils' books to show standards in writing are rising across the school and more able pupils are being challenged to achieve at the higher levels.

The school is quite right to be proud of its impressive indoor and outdoor learning environments; these are making a significant contribution to the pupils' enjoyment and achievement at school. Pupils benefit greatly from the wealth of opportunities such as film making, the school grounds project and energy saving initiatives designed to develop their basic skills and enterprise skills. The inspection found these to be good. The displays in the learning corridor are of a high standard and a fitting tribute to how effectively the school promotes the pupils' self-esteem. The 'Take One Picture' art work, exhibited in the National Gallery, is outstanding. Uplifting assemblies such as those on the Bible story of Moses do much to deepen the pupils' good understanding of social, moral and global issues. The school's Healthy School Award is a fitting testament to the pupils' excellent appreciation of healthy lifestyles.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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<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.

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<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective is the provision?**

Positive, caring relationships and excellent management of behaviour characterise all teaching. Teaching assistants play a full part in this and form good partnerships with the teachers and the pupils. Their carefully planned role ensures that pupils with additional needs are fully engaged and challenged appropriately to succeed, which they do. Accurate assessment is used effectively to target different groups including boys, more able pupils and those with additional needs. Tracking systems to check the pupils' progress are rigorous and teachers are increasingly using data effectively to inform planning. This is meticulous and appropriately matched to the pupils' needs. Marking is detailed. In the best lessons, teaching is lively, often inspiring and moves at a fast pace. Imaginative resources are used effectively to stimulate boys to write. Staff challenge the pupils to take the lead in their learning either independently or in groups. As a result, they are highly motivated, kept on their toes and no learning time is lost. Nevertheless, occasionally, the pace of learning slows when pupils spend too much time on the carpet, teachers talk too much and group work is not sufficiently monitored. Pupils know what to do to improve their work, particularly in writing. Pupils with additional needs appreciate their child-friendly education plans and the attractive kites to chart their progress. All pupils benefit considerably from the imaginative family homework projects such as the impressive models of castles on display. The creative curriculum is stimulating and motivates the pupils to learn. It has been thoughtfully designed to ensure pupils pursue a range of global themes. Nonetheless, there is still scope to extend the opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy and information and communication technology skills in all subjects. Classes are well organised with good

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quality cross-curricular displays related to projects.

The school's outstanding commitment to the care, support and guidance of all pupils is at the heart of its philosophy. Pupils are cared for sensitively. They in turn feel safe and protected. Those pupils whose circumstances have made them vulnerable are monitored assiduously. Supervision at the start and the end of the day is vigilant.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

Inspirational and exacting leadership by the headteacher, ably supported by an energetic, skilled senior and staff team, is ensuring that the school continues to improve. An infectious team spirit permeates throughout the school; all are ambitious to raise standards further and there is no complacency. Monitoring of teaching and learning by senior leaders is both accurate and rigorous. Subject leaders execute their role diligently. That said, their involvement in monitoring lessons is not sufficiently developed in all subjects. Leaders including governors know the school well and are setting the right targets to make it better. Monitoring by established governors is assiduous. Good use is made of their professional knowledge and expertise to evaluate the work of the school to hold it to account. Training plans for new governors are appropriate.

Needs of all individuals are analysed carefully and appropriate strategies are in place to ensure all groups of pupils progress at a swift pace, particularly boys and more able pupils in writing. Robust steps are taken to safeguard children and there are strong partnerships with parents and agencies. The school successfully reaches out to communities in the United Kingdom and beyond. It has good plans in place to develop this effective work further.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>

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<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

**Early Years Foundation Stage**

The children get a good start to their school life and make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The attractive indoor and outdoor learning environments are carefully organised to give the children good opportunities to develop and progress in all areas of learning. Children display a good awareness of the daily routines; this is a testament to the excellent levels of care they receive. They play happily and safely together and move around the indoor and outdoor classrooms confidently. Most can dress appropriately for learning outdoors which they enjoy. The children listen to stories attentively and demonstrate good control and an awareness of space as they move around the hall. There is a good emphasis on the teaching of letters and sounds and the manipulation of numbers coupled with an appropriate balance of whole-class, group and child-initiated activities. The children are enthusiastic as they discover mathematical shapes in the playground and accurately tell adults about the circles, rectangles and squares they have found. They can clap out the sounds making up key words and some can spell them accurately. The children are developing positive learning attitudes and their behaviour is good. In lessons, adults ensure the children know what they are learning and in particular how to improve their writing. Daily observations and focused assessments of children's learning and development are diligently carried out and recorded thoroughly.

Leadership is good and teamwork is strong. Parents appreciate the 'play and learn' sessions which help the children settle into life at school. However, more could be done to improve the effective transition arrangements with preschool providers to ensure a seamless induction for the children. Most children start school in the Nursery and Reception with levels below those expected for their age. Scrutiny of assessment information shows that by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, most children make good progress in all aspects of learning from their low starting points.



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*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
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

Parents' views of the school are overwhelmingly positive. Most parents who responded felt that their children enjoyed school and were kept safe. Other parents noted the dedication and approachability of staff. A significant minority of parents had concerns about the reward system for behaviour favouring pupils with behavioural difficulties; a few expressed concerns about the communication of the leadership; and several felt their views were not taken into account in decision making. Inspectors found no evidence to substantiate these concerns.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Nicholas VC 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 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 128 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	60	52	55	47	2	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	62	53	51	44	2	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	52	45	60	52	5	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	49	42	60	52	5	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	52	45	60	52	3	3	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	58	50	55	47	3	3	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	54	47	58	50	4	3	1	1
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)	34	29	73	63	3	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	38	33	68	59	9	8	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	29	25	63	54	18	16	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	37	32	62	53	15	13	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	45	39	52	47	14	12	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	52	45	56	48	8	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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.**



25 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Nicholas C of E Primary School, Radstock, BA3 3QH

I am writing to say thank you very much for giving us such a warm welcome during our recent visit to St Nicholas C of E Primary School. We were impressed with the way you greeted us so courteously with friendly smiles. We enjoyed talking with you about your work, listening to your excellent singing in assembly and seeing you eat healthily in your attractive lunchtime café as you chatted amiably. You go to a good school. Here are some of the special things that it does well.

- Your school looks after you exceptionally well and the adults want to do their best for you. Everyone in the school cares for each other and the older pupils look after the younger ones very well indeed. You behave extremely well.
- In the Reception class, you get off to good start in all aspects of your learning; you make good progress as you move through the school and attain average standards overall by the time you leave. Your spiritual development is excellent, as is your art work.
- The school council and eco committee take their responsibilities seriously. Your understanding of healthy lifestyles, conservation and environmental issues is excellent. We loved seeing the 'bug hotels', the storymaking chair, the ship, the totem poles and the planters full of vegetables in your superb outdoor learning environment.
- Your teachers plan interesting trips and fun activities which help you to enjoy school. The teaching in the school is good; on occasions, it is outstanding.
- You have a committed headteacher, caring adults and dedicated governors at your school.

We have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to raise standards in writing and improve the links with the preschool settings you attend before you start school.

It was a real privilege to visit St Nicholas C of E Primary School. Continue to work hard and, most importantly, enjoy your learning. Best wishes for the future. We hope that you achieve great things!

Yours sincerely

Mrs Mary Harlow

Her Majesty's Inspector

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