

# St Nicholas Elstree Church of England VA Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117431
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	358139
<b>Inspection dates</b>	9–10 November 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Lynne Blakelock

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 aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	220
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Jose Faldes
<b>Headteacher</b>	Kate Johnston-Grant
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	22 November 2007
<b>School address</b>	St Nicholas Close Elstree, Borehamwood WD6 3EW
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors who observed nine teachers over 17 lessons. Meetings were held with members of the senior management team and middle leaders and with groups of pupils and members of the governing body. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documentation relating to pupils' achievement, examples of their work, the school development plan and policies and procedures to keep pupils safe. The inspectors analysed staff and pupil questionnaires and the 54 questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

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

- Why is attainment in writing lower than in other subjects and to what extent are pupils' targets helping to raise writing levels, especially those of boys?
- What is the quality of teaching and learning for pupils with the potential to reach higher levels and its impact on their progress?
- How effective is planning for learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage in ensuring that children of all abilities make at least satisfactory progress in the six areas of learning?

## Information about the school

This is an average-sized school. Over half of the pupils travel from outside the town to attend. An above average proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic groups. Although a large majority speak English as their first language, an increasing proportion speak English as an additional language, with 26 different languages represented. An average proportion are known to be eligible for free school meals. Of the average proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, most experience moderate learning difficulties. A higher proportion of pupils than is typical join or leave the school at other than the usual times.

The school has been awarded National Healthy Schools status and Activemark. It works in partnership with local primary schools and the hub secondary school in order to widen opportunities for pupils. The headteacher took up her post in September 2009 after the school had gone through a period of interim headships.

**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?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**3**

## Main findings

This is a satisfactory school. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory by the end of Year 6 and is reflected in their average attainment. They behave well and feel safe, in an ethos of Christian love and support in which they are developing satisfactory skills for the future. The school is on a journey of improvement, based on an accurate understanding of its performance and needs. As a result, the overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage, which was inadequate at the last inspection, is satisfactory. This is because provision is planned more carefully to ensure that the children have regular opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills across all areas of learning. However, not all of the staff have a detailed understanding of all of the learning and development requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage to accelerate the progress of the children. The outdoor area has been transformed although the full range of activities is not yet always fully represented.

The quality of teaching, which is satisfactory overall, is good in Years 5 and 6. In other year groups, lessons do not always provide a consistently good level of challenge to pupils, particularly for those capable of reaching higher levels. However in good lessons, tasks are more demanding, checking pupils' understanding of new skills and encouraging pupils more consistently to refine what they have learnt. Marking always tells pupils what they have achieved and sometimes tells them the next steps in learning. While still lower than in other subjects, boys' and girls' writing skills are improving because there is a clear focus on specific skills and regular opportunities to practise them, sometimes in other subjects. Both boys and girls know their literacy targets, which are a focus in most lessons and which they increasingly work towards in their writing. In some lessons, the stimulus and the style of learning do not engage all pupils equally, including in writing. However, all pupils make good progress when learning involves them and matches their needs.

The headteacher's focus on evaluating and addressing the quality of the school's performance, particularly the achievement of pupils, and the sound progress since the last inspection, result in a secure capacity for improvement. It is confirmed by the governing body, who although not yet having enough independent knowledge of the school's performance to influence its direction, regularly support and challenge it. Middle leaders' impact is variable because the extent of their monitoring varies. However, it is developing satisfactorily.

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

- Raise attainment and accelerate progress by ensuring that:
  - tasks always promote a good level of challenge, especially for pupils capable of reaching higher levels

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- marking informs pupils of the next steps in learning
- lessons engage all groups of pupils equally by taking into account their preferred styles of learning and by providing a relevant stimulus.
- Accelerate progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage by making sure that:
  - all staff have a good understanding of the learning and development requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage
  - the outside area is used to its full potential for focused group activities as well as child-initiated learning.
- Extend the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - all middle leaders monitor the quality of provision in their area in order to have independent knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses and so drive improvement
  - the governing body finds out for itself about the school's performance in all areas, to be able effectively to challenge its work and thereby influence its direction.
- Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****3**

Pupils' satisfactory progress through the school is reflected in the satisfactory quality of both teaching and the curriculum. While attainment is average by the end of Year 6, test results show improvement. This is aided by the school's accurate and detailed data. This is increasingly resulting in support groups to fill gaps in pupils' learning, including for those who join the school at other than the expected times. Such pupils also make sound progress. Attainment in writing is rising as the school focuses on specific skills, especially in extended writing. Pupils who speak English as an additional language and those from minority ethnic backgrounds make satisfactory progress. Along with pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, they are identified swiftly and appropriately so that they make the progress expected of them. Pupils tell of their enjoyment of learning. This was evident in an effective numeracy lesson in which pupils had been successful in calculating angles in a triangle and on a straight line. Several pupils were able to evaluate succinctly whether a golf flag is an isosceles triangle as learning was extended. Such problem-solving activities incorporated pupils' targets as pupils increasingly took ownership of their progress. In a practical science lesson, learning was over-directed and while the purpose of the lesson was achieved, opportunities for pupils to extend their learning were restricted.

The school's ethos and the curriculum result in pupils' good understanding of how to keep safe and their effective spiritual development. Within a caring environment and a culture of care and support for their peers, pupils behave well. Responsibilities mirror this, with older pupils working as mentors to younger pupils. Pupils from Year 1 onwards participate in a wide range of leadership tasks, such as the school council and the eco council, promoting their overall good spiritual, moral, and social development. Their involvement in the community is a developing aspect. Their cultural development is sound, with the

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school making use of pupils' varied backgrounds and beliefs in a more structured way to expand their understanding of the practices and lifestyles of others. Their average attendance contributes to their sound preparation for the next stage of their education. The school's regular teaching about healthy lifestyles, such as the 'Happy Healthy Week', ensures that a growing number of pupils are adopting healthy eating choices and keeping fit.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

<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

## How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and leads to sound progress through the school. A common strength is pupils' clarity about the purpose of learning which is revisited through the lesson. Positive relationships between staff and pupils encourage positive attitudes in lessons. While the school has accurate information about the levels at which pupils work, it is not always taken into account when setting tasks, resulting in work that can be too hard or too easy. In particular, work for more able pupils is not regularly planned carefully enough to promote higher-order skills. Teaching in Years 5 and 6 incorporates careful questioning and tasks which check pupils' learning by requiring them to transfer their skills. Pupils know their targets in literacy and try hard to achieve them. Similarly, marking invariably tells them what they have achieved. Less regularly does it inform them of their next steps in learning. Increasingly pupils are starting to assess their own learning.

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Literacy and numeracy are taught discretely each day, in the school's determination to raise standards in English and mathematics. Most learning takes place through separate subjects, although themed days and weeks, which pupils enjoy, provide opportunities for them to practise a range of skills and to learn for themselves. There is comprehensive coverage of personal, social and health education issues which promote pupils' good well-being. The school's links with other schools result in specialised musical and sports provision and a broad range of popular after-school activities, justifying the school's healthy school and Activemark awards. Pupils with particular skills and talents have some provision at other schools although planning to meet their needs and talents in lessons is a developing aspect. The provision for pupils who find aspects of learning difficult is satisfactory.

The school has appropriate systems to support and guide pupils. Pupils trust the staff and feel able to confide in them. Links with outside agencies are utilised well to meet the range of pupils' needs and ensure that those with concerns and worries can settle better to learning. The school's recent strategies are improving the attendance of pupils, which is average and improving. Transition arrangements are being broadened to meet better the needs of pupils and to build up their confidence in facing new challenges. The breakfast club, as well as providing a nutritious start to the day, offers a range of activities to promote pupils' personal skills and their learning.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>3</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

Since her appointment, the headteacher's has focused on raising pupils' attainment. This, and her robust evaluation of the school's performance, have resulted in improvements which provide a secure foundation on which the school can build. Accurate data about pupils' progress is collected and the headteacher's knowledge about the quality of teaching is leading to appropriate staff training to raise standards through the school. Although staff share her vision and drive, the impact of their work is only just beginning to show, including that of middle leaders. Similarly, the governing body, which has good potential, is not gathering enough information for itself to be able to steer the school. Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. There are strong links with the church, and the school is developing a range of other partnerships to strengthen provision, especially the curriculum. Relationships with parents and carers are positive and the school is beginning to build-up the quality and quantity of its consultations with them so that they can better support their children's learning. All pupils are valued for who they are and the school's equality of opportunity and freedom from discrimination, which is sound, is demonstrated in the appropriate and growing information that it has about

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pupils' achievement and well-being. While the school's promotion of community cohesion in the locality is satisfactory, it is a developing aspect nationally and internationally.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<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>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Most children start Nursery with levels of knowledge and skills that are in line with expectations. They settle well into the safe, secure, and welcoming environment because the staff have met with them and their parents or carers, invited them into the Nursery, and know their needs and interests.

Provision for the children in Nursery and Reception is satisfactory and improving. Planning ensures that they have sound access to all aspects of learning, both indoors and outside, although the excellent outdoor area is not always utilised fully to maximise learning. Activities promote soundly their creativity, physical skills and knowledge and understanding of the world as well as their literacy and mathematical development. Resources are satisfactory overall although some are out-dated or quite old. Children's interest and enjoyment are strengthened by the much improved balance between adult-led and child-initiated learning. As a result, children have many more opportunities to learn for themselves, become more independent and to develop a wide range of personal development skills.

From the start, the staff emphasise safe and thoughtful behaviour which is reinforced throughout the day and which children increasingly model. They enjoy being given responsibilities, which contribute well to their good personal development and thrive on the praise given to them by the staff.

Children now have a satisfactory start to their education. The new leader and manager of the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved the planning and organisation of teaching.



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However, not all staff have a clear enough understanding of the learning and development of children through the stage to enable them to quicken the pace of their learning, especially through the quality of their questioning. The children's learning journals show that they are developing a good range of knowledge and skills towards their early learning goals. By the end of the stage, children's attainment is average, reflecting their satisfactory progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage.

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

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

## Views of parents and carers

A small minority of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. Of those, the vast majority were very supportive of all of the school's work. A small number of comments were received, which praised in particular the school's individual care for pupils with specific issues and the running of the school. Similarly, a few concerns were raised about the availability of reading materials for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and whether teaching about letters and sounds is introduced early enough. All comments have been shared with the headteacher, while preserving parents' anonymity. She is keen to ensure that parents and carers understand the school's teaching and learning policies, including those raised about the practices in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Comments include parents' and carers' queries about transition arrangements, which the school is already addressing.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Nicholas Elstree Church of England 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 54 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 220 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	36	67	17	31	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	33	61	20	37	1	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	27	50	27	50	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	27	50	26	48	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	30	56	24	44	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	25	46	29	54	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	27	50	27	50	0	0	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)	23	43	25	46	2	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	23	43	29	54	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	20	37	28	52	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	20	37	33	61	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	28	52	26	48	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	34	63	20	37	0	0	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 all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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 pupils' 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.**



11 November 2010

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of St Nicholas Elstree Church of England VA Primary School,  
Borehamwood, WD6 3EW**

On behalf of the inspectors, thank you for welcoming us into your school. We enjoyed the two days that we spent with you. It was helpful to be able to talk to you and to find out from you your thoughts about your school and your learning. We are pleased that you like being there, behave well and get involved in lots of activities.

Your school gives you a satisfactory education. The headteacher and the staff, together with the governors, are making sound progress in moving the school forward. You enjoy school and behave well. You make satisfactory progress in your learning and your attainment levels are average. This is because teaching is overall satisfactory. You know your targets, which are helping you to move forward, including in writing skills. Marking tells you what you have done well.

We have asked the school to make improvements so that you can make further and quicker progress. These are setting work at just at the right level, especially for those of you who can reach higher levels and making sure that planning of your work always takes into account the interests of all of you and how you like to learn. We have also asked your headteacher, who works hard for you, to make sure that marking of your work tells you what to do next to improve it. We are delighted that the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved. It can be even better so we have also asked the headteacher to make sure that full use is made of the fantastic outside area and that all the staff have a really good understanding of learning throughout the stage. Lastly, the middle leaders and governors are going to find out more about their areas and the school so that they can help to move it forward more quickly.

We hope you will help the staff by working as hard as you can.

Yours sincerely

Lynne Blakelock

Lead Inspector

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