

St Nicholas Church of England Primary School, West Tanfield

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121524
Local Authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	339963
Inspection dates	15–16 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Lesley Clark

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	46
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Jean Skinner
Headteacher	Mr Richard Peach
Date of previous school inspection	11 September 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. The inspector visited seven lessons and saw four teachers teach. The inspector held meetings with the governors, staff and a group of pupils in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 who showed her their work in English and mathematics. The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including paperwork and policies relating to safeguarding, the school improvement plan, younger children's learning journals (detailed records of children's progress and development), and the school's tracking information. Twenty-two completed questionnaires from parents and carers, as well as completed questionnaires from pupils and staff were analysed.

- the impact of teaching on pupils' progress in English and mathematics and whether attainment is rising in these subjects
- the impact of the increased support given to pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- the factors which help children in the Early Years Foundation Stage to make good progress
- where leadership and management have had the most impact and whether this justifies the school's view that it has good capacity to improve.

Information about the school

This very small primary school serves a rural village and its surrounding communities. Most pupils are White British. None is at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average but varies considerably between year groups. An above average proportion has a statement of special educational needs. A quarter of pupils are identified as vulnerable. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. For the 18 months prior to the headteacher taking up his post in September 2009, the school was run by consultant headteachers from other schools, followed by an acting headteacher for two terms. The local authority supported the school during this period. All staff have changed within the last three years. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage share the outdoor provision with Key Stage 1 pupils and with the privately run nursery. This nursery was not part of this inspection.

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

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. Parents and carers are very satisfied with the good education their children receive. Lessons are interesting and fun and pupils thrive. Since the school's last inspection, as a result of the commitment and skills of the leaders, managers and governors, there have been considerable improvements in tracking pupils' progress more closely and raising their attainment. These factors have had a significant impact on accelerating pupils' progress. Attainment in English, mathematics and science is rising as a result. Well-thought-out assessment procedures ensure teachers meet the needs of all pupils well and that pupils know what to do to sustain their good progress. Self-evaluation is accurate. Good care, support and guidance and good partnerships with parents, carers and other providers, further underpin the school's success. This illustrates the good capacity the school has to improve further.

Pupils achieve well from their varying starting points because they are well taught. Attainment at the end of Year 6 varies widely in English, mathematics and science depending on the mix of pupils in the very small cohorts. Overall, it is broadly average. The school's focus on reading and mathematics this year is having a marked impact on pupils' progress, although pupils still have some gaps in their knowledge and skills, a legacy from the unsettled period the school went through just over a year ago. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because they are given good support to help them achieve their targets. However, teaching assistants are underused to support other ability groups. Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage because of good provision for learning both indoors and outside. In this key stage, opportunities are sometimes missed to extend children's problem-solving and creative skills, and for all adults to be involved in observing and recording children's developments. The overall good curriculum has strengths in its provision for pupils' independent learning in Key Stage 1. This is less strong in Key Stage 2.

Pupils behave well and willingly take on responsibilities. They relish working with pupils from other schools and the different clubs and sports activities. Attendance is above average and there are no persistent absentees.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in English and mathematics, by:
- - quickly filling in the gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills
- - giving pupils in Key Stage 2 more opportunities to learn independently and set their own challenges

- - using teaching assistants more effectively to support the learning of pupils of average ability and those of lower ability who are not on the school's register of special educational needs.
- Further promote children's learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage, by:
- - giving children more opportunities to solve problems and develop their creative skills
- - using teaching assistants more extensively to observe and record children's progress
- - ensuring that activities fully reflect children's interests.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils thoroughly enjoy their learning. They achieve well. They arrive in good time and quickly organise themselves for the first half hour's reading lesson. Pupils comment, 'We have done a lot of work since the start of the year!' Most are beginning to work well on their own, although some are less confident in working independently. Pupils are proud of their work and are eager to complete tasks well. They show no hurry to stop at playtimes. This is because lessons are lively and interactive. Teachers make extensive use of laptops and film clips to spark pupils' interest and meet their learning needs. Pupils find some of the work quite hard, especially in mathematics. This is because they have some gaps in their knowledge which they are filling at the same time as learning something new. They are not fully involved in setting their own individual challenges so they do not have a real input into what they need to learn next. They know, however, what to do to improve their work and this is having a significant impact on their progress. This is especially evident in writing, where pupils correctly identify shortcomings and set about putting them right. Attainment is rising as a result, with 40% currently exceeding expected levels in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are vulnerable, make good progress because they get effective help from teaching assistants. They are purposeful learners as a result.

Pupils like meeting their friends. They have a good awareness of how to be healthy. They are curious about the world around them and enthusiastically embrace new experiences. Pupils say, 'It's great working with other schools, it's fun!' As a result, they are developing a wider outlook both socially and culturally. Their engagement with people from different religious and ethnic backgrounds is more limited. The school council effectively represents pupils' views and takes responsibility for writing for the Parish News each month. Pupils agree that they are well prepared for the next stage of their education and that school keeps them safe. Currently, some feel vulnerable as a result of external tragic events, but they are reassured by the school's good care for them. They are adamant that there is no bullying, saying, 'It's a small school and everyone is friends.' With their satisfactory literacy and numeracy skills and growing confidence, pupils are satisfactorily prepared for their future lives.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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	3
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	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Teaching quality is consistently good with some outstanding elements. Questioning is a notable strength as is the extent to which pupils are involved in assessing their own learning. Teachers go out of their way to make learning fun, as in this example of marking which suggests that 'a handful of adverbs and a very large helping of interesting vocabulary,' will improve story writing. Other strengths lie in the use of assessment to determine what to teach next, the use of interactive technology to enliven pupils' learning and matching work well to pupils' different capabilities. Most teachers give pupils lots of times to discuss work with a partner, but fewer opportunities to organise themselves and work in groups. In part, this is because teaching assistants are used almost exclusively to work with pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities or those who are vulnerable.

The good curriculum is successfully adjusted to meet the needs of pupils. The strong focus in Key Stage 1 on pupils working independently is a strength that has yet to filter through to Key Stage 2. The school is embracing a more creative curriculum through implementing special themes, such as a 'Money Week' when pupils put their enterprise skills to the test. Varied enrichment opportunities, including learning to play musical instruments, as well as educational visits, further enliven pupils' learning.

The school has well-organised arrangements to ensure that pupils are well cared for. It has close links with parents and carers so they can support their children's learning and

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

personal development effectively. The school works well with outside agencies to ensure that vulnerable pupils and their families have good support. The impact is seen in the narrowing gap in the attainment of different groups of pupils and their above average attendance.

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?

After a year of settled leadership and management, the school is thriving. The leadership's ambition and drive are evident throughout the school. Pupils' progress is coming on in leaps and bounds, with examples of exceptional progress. Governors sensibly provided for the headteacher to have a minimal teaching commitment this academic year, in order to give the school a head start. His systematic and methodical approach is mirrored throughout the school, underpinning pupils' good achievement and ensuring it is sustainable. Leaders and managers keep a close check on the work of the school, especially the quality of teaching and learning and track pupils' progress carefully. They take appropriate action to tackle weaknesses and promote equality of opportunity well, ensuring there is no discrimination. Good partnerships with local schools, funded by the local authority, successfully extend and enrich pupils' learning. For example, an innovative 'World Cup' project, introduced by this school, is promoting pupils' cultural awareness successfully through sport and the creative arts. The school's commitment to community cohesion is developing well, with strengthening parish and local community links. The school is aware there is more to do to promote national and international links. Governors are fully involved, know the school well and ask challenging questions. They ensure that adults and pupils are safe. The school has clear policies and procedures to ensure that pupils are protected but is in the early stages of reviewing the effectiveness of these.

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

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

The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
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
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Most children attend the on-site nursery and are familiar with the outdoor learning area when they start school in the Reception class. Home visits and 'taster days' ensure that children are confident and ready to learn right from the start. Starting points are generally below average. Children make good progress during the course of the year because they are well taught. Most children are working within expected levels by the start of Year 1. Children, especially the more able, benefit from working alongside pupils in Years 1 and 2 as they strive to read and write as well as they do. Staff take particular care to make sure that children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are fully included, ensuring that everyone learns sign language so they can communicate fully with those whose speech and language is delayed. The provision is well led and managed. Children largely lead their own learning. They move freely from indoors to outdoors, spending the odd 10 minutes on a focused task with an adult before resuming their pursuits. They devise imaginative games and organise themselves and others extremely well. They are well cared for and thoroughly enjoy their learning. Children have lots of interesting activities to choose from but not many problems to puzzle out for themselves. For example, when staff provide mask templates for children to colour in and cut out, it limits children's potential to design and make their own. Not all adults observe and record children's ongoing development, which restricts the information available to teachers to enable them to plan activities which closely match children's needs. Parents and carers are closely involved in their children's learning and make regular contributions to children's 'learning journals' which are displayed on large boards to make it easy for staff to see at a glance what children know and can do.

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

Two-thirds of families returned the questionnaires. Parents and carers are unanimous in their opinion that their children enjoy school and are safe. They think teaching is good and that staff deal well with behaviour. Overall, they are very happy with their children's experience of school. Inspection findings agree with their views. A tiny minority expressed reservations about the level of communication from school and are concerned about their children's achievement and self-esteem. The inspector looked at these aspects carefully and concluded that the school gives good support to all pupils, including those who are vulnerable or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and that pupils achieve well. The school sends out a great deal of information to parents and carers, communicating via newsletters and information sheets almost every week.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Nicholas Church of England Primary School, West Tanfield 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 inspector received 22 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 46 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	14	67	7	33	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	17	81	4	19	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	12	57	9	43	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	12	57	8	38	1	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	16	76	5	24	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	14	67	7	33	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	14	67	7	33	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)	16	76	3	14	1	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	13	62	7	33	1	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	12	57	9	43	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	14	67	7	33	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	8	38	12	57	1	5	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	15	71	6	29	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 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	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 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">■ 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 pupils' 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.



17 June 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Nicholas Church of England Primary School, West Tanfield, Ripon, HG4 5JN

Thank you for your friendly welcome. I very much enjoyed my time in your school. A special thank you goes to the group of children from Class 2 who spent time showing me their work and talking to me about school. You go to a good school and adults take good care of you. You clearly enjoy learning and I was impressed at how early you get to school and how quickly you begin your reading tasks at the start of the day. You behave well and work hard in lessons. You are well taught and your teachers spend a lot of time making lessons fun and interesting. I was pleased to see you know what to do to make your work better, especially your writing. Your headteacher works hard, too, and that is why your school is changing so quickly and you are finding learning harder but more fun.

This is what I have asked you school to do next:

- To help you do better in English and mathematics I want teachers to help you fill the gaps in your learning, set you work to do on your own in groups, and for you to set your own challenges. I think all adults in the classroom could help everyone to learn, not just those who find learning difficult. You can help by asking questions and saying when you do not understand.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage need lots more problems to solve because this helps them to learn and think things out for themselves. All the adults need to share in observing children's progress so that the tasks they set suit individual children even better.

I hope you enjoy these new challenges and continue to come to school early, work hard and produce your best work.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Lesley Clark

Lead inspector

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