

# Inspection of a good school: St Nicolas Church of England Primary School, Abingdon

Boxhill Walk, Abingdon, Oxfordshire OX14 1HB

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Inspection dates:

21 and 22 February 2023

## **Outcome**

St Nicolas Church of England Primary School, Abingdon continues to be a good school.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils respond positively to leaders' very high expectations of behaviour. This means that the school feels calm wherever you go, and pupils feel happy and safe. Pupils say that bullying is very rare and that if it were to occur, teachers would deal with it effectively. In lessons, pupils work hard and take pride in their learning. Pupils of all ages are keen to describe their learning. This is seen both in the very youngest children right through to the older pupils in Year 6. They say that their teachers are good at ensuring everyone gets the help and support they need.

Social times are happy, with pupils joining in and sharing in each other's games. Pupils take their responsibilities seriously. They take turns as lunch monitors and elect house council representatives. Older pupils enjoy listening to younger pupils read. They can recollect and explain how important learning to read was when they were younger. Pupils are eager to make book recommendations and write book reviews about stories they have enjoyed. Pupils keenly feel that their school is a community where learning is valued, and that staff want all pupils to achieve their very best.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of this school and describe how much care staff take of their children. Staff are proud to work at the school, and share leaders' very high ambitions. Leaders are committed to creating a curriculum which is unique and reflects the school's place in the local area. In many subjects, such as mathematics and physical education (PE), learning is carefully sequenced to precisely build pupils' knowledge, leading to rapid progress. This helps staff to have a deep understanding of how knowledge and skills develop over time. Lessons are planned to build on prior learning and prepare pupils for the next stage. Teachers make sure that those who need the most help are supported quickly. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are

given effective support to help them learn independently. They make good progress and feel included.

However, leaders know that, in a small number of subjects, the knowledge pupils will learn has not yet been precisely ordered. They are acting on this, ensuring teachers can work together to fully develop every curriculum from Reception to Year 6.

Reading is a priority. Well-trained staff ensure phonics teaching and interventions are expertly delivered. This means the majority of pupils learn to read confidently and fluently. In Reception, teachers help children regularly practise their reading and writing as soon as they start in the school. Older children use the library, and recommend books for others. Leaders provide training for parents to ensure that they can support their children at home. The school encourages family reading by inviting Reception Year parents in to read to children as the weekly 'Mystery Reader'.

In early years, children's learning of reading, writing and mathematics is planned to create a secure foundation for the future. Leaders say, 'Young children's emotions are bigger than their words.' Teachers focus on communication to help children learn how to express how they feel. Learning play activities link with each term's themes, such as 'All About Me' or 'Spring'. Activities are carefully chosen to build fine motor skills and physical development. Teachers systematically adapt children's early years learning towards preparation for Year 1. This transition is carefully planned, meaning that children settle quickly once they start.

Pupils behave very well around the school. They are respectful of each other and adults. Adults know pupils well and are quick to identify where a pupil may need more support. Leaders carefully consider support for disadvantaged pupils by ensuring they have opportunities. These include the school's numerous after-school activity clubs as well as the breakfast club. The school has a number of pupils from families with parents in the services. These pupils are warmly welcomed into the school community.

Leaders know that not all pupils attend as well as they should. They have begun to implement a new strategy that identifies which families need the most support in ensuring their children are in school regularly. However, this has not yet fully had the impact needed for all families. While leaders work closely with some families, they know that continued work is needed to further improve attendance.

Leaders plan education to be as wide as possible. Pupils learn about how to treat themselves and others well. Leaders make sure that the relationships and sex education and health education curriculum is understood by parents and is age-appropriate. Celebration assemblies inspire and reward pupils who have responded well to the week's themes, such as 'Hope' or 'Teamwork and Cooperation'.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders regularly review safeguarding processes, including revisiting effective and well-established routines, to see if they can be made even better. They regularly review and consider the support they give to vulnerable pupils and their families. All staff receive regular training. This enables them to identify, record and report any concerns about pupils' safety or well-being. Key staff have regular contact with local agencies. They work closely with families. One family described this as 'a lifeline'.

Pupils are taught how to stay safe and healthy. Teaching about healthy relationships allows pupils to articulate any worries they have. Pupils know whom to talk to if they have a concern.

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

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, the curriculum is not yet as well planned as it is in others. This means that teachers are not always clear on what has been learned before to ensure they can identify where pupils have gaps in their knowledge. Leaders should continue to work with teachers to fully implement their curriculum plans, providing the required training and support.
- Some pupils do not attend school as regularly as they should. Analysis of attendance and development of actions to improve all pupils' attendance have not always been sufficiently prioritised. Leaders know this, and now must continue to implement their new strategy, prioritising the right action and support to help all pupils attend well.

## Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 2013.

## How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

## Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	123166
<b>Local authority</b>	Oxfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10256534
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	417
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Katrina Hancock
<b>Headteacher</b>	Andrew Spooner
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.stnicolasprimary.co.uk">www.stnicolasprimary.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	23 January 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The headteacher and other members of the leadership team have been in post since before the previous inspection.
- The school is part of the Diocese of Oxford. The last section 48 inspection took place in October 2016 and found the school to be outstanding.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator, curriculum leaders and other staff.
- The inspector met with three governors, including the chair of governors. He talked to a local authority representative and a representative from the diocese.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and PE. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector listened to a sample of pupils read.
- The inspector examined a range of documentation provided by the school, including leaders' self-evaluation and improvement plans.
- The inspector scrutinised safeguarding records, checked staff's safeguarding awareness and met with the designated safeguarding leads.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View. He also took into consideration the responses to the confidential staff and pupil surveys.

### **Inspection team**

Ed Mather, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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