

Inspection of a good school: St Nicolas' Church of England Combined School

Rectory Road, Taplow, Maidenhead, Buckinghamshire SL6 0ET

Inspection dates:

28 and 29 June 2023

Outcome

St Nicolas' Church of England Combined School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to attend this friendly and welcoming school. Pupils feel safe here and they know that this is a place where everyone can be themselves, regardless of background or beliefs. One parent commented how they valued the 'inclusive community'. There are very few instances of bullying. Pupils say that on the rare occasion it does happen, they are confident to speak with a trusted adult. Pupils know that all adults in the school will address their concerns. Leaders' records confirm that this is what happens consistently.

Leaders set high expectations of all pupils. All members of the school understand and rise to these. Pupils behave well because they want to learn free from disruption. Adults in the school make sure that this happens. Teachers design lessons carefully to keep pupils engaged and to meet their needs. As a result, pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve well.

Pupils really thrive at this school. Leaders ensure a high level of pastoral care for all pupils. Parents value this. One parent summed up the opinion of many by saying 'the school has created a nurturing, safe and caring environment'.

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

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum. They have identified the key knowledge that pupils need to learn. This builds in a carefully planned sequence right from the start of early years to the end of Year 6. Teachers teach the curriculum well to pupils so that they build up key knowledge over time.

Teachers have good subject knowledge. In most subjects, teachers design tasks that develop pupils' knowledge and understanding well. This includes ensuring that pupils develop a strong subject-specific vocabulary. In these subjects, pupils explain their ideas with confidence and achieve well. However, sometimes, in some subjects teachers

provide work that does not deepen pupils' understanding effectively. In these few subjects, pupils do not consistently achieve as well as they could.

Leaders prioritise reading. They have designed and embedded a highly effective reading curriculum. Children learn to read right from the start of Reception using a well-structured programme. Leaders have made sure that all adults have appropriate training to teach reading. Pupils who are struggling to learn to read receive effective support promptly. This ensures that they quickly learn to read fluently.

Leaders identify the needs of pupils with SEND effectively. Leaders ensure a carefully considered provision for pupils who may need additional support. Teachers provide suitable adaptations to the curriculum to enable pupils with SEND to learn alongside their peers. This means that all children keep up with the curriculum.

In some subjects, teachers routinely check how well pupils are learning. They identify gaps in knowledge and address these swiftly before moving on to new content. In these subjects, pupils remember their learning and achieve well. However, this is not yet the case across the whole curriculum. In a few subjects, teachers do not check how well pupils have remembered previous learning precisely enough. Teachers often introduce new ideas before checking that pupils' existing knowledge is secure.

Leaders have prioritised pupils' wider development. Pupils enjoy a wealth of clubs during lunchtime and after school. Leaders make sure that pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils are encouraged to attend these clubs. Leaders and teachers carefully create assemblies and lessons which allow pupils to understand the importance of being part of a fair and kind society. Pupils have a clear sense of right and wrong. They do not tolerate discrimination, unkindness or unfairness. Pupils gain a good understanding of the world around them. Every week, they debate the impact of current issues from different perspectives including moral, economic and environmental.

Leaders and governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. Governors carry out their statutory duties effectively. They work well with leaders to continue to improve the school. Staff are proud to work in the school. They say that leaders are mindful of their workload and well-being when changes are being considered.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that safeguarding is a priority for all adults. Leaders have trained staff well on how to identify pupils who may be at risk of harm. Staff respond immediately to any safeguarding concerns about pupils. Leaders have established effective systems to record and monitor potential safeguarding issues, which all staff use. This means that leaders can make sure that pupils and families get the help and support they need.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. They understand how to behave if they find themselves in unsafe situations, including when online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few foundation subjects, teachers do not consistently design tasks that enable pupils to communicate their understanding in sufficient detail and depth. This sometimes hinders pupils' learning. Leaders should ensure that curriculum implementation enables pupils to demonstrate secure knowledge and understanding in all subjects equally well.
- In foundation subjects, teachers do not check how well pupils have remembered their learning precisely enough. This means that gaps in knowledge are missed and teaching does not always match what pupils need to learn next. Leaders should ensure that assessment is used effectively in foundation subjects to support pupils to achieve 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 February 2014.

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

Unique reference number	138121
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10269086
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	218
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Paul Tracey
Headteacher	Rebecca Holmes
Website	www.stnicolastaplow.com
Date of previous inspection	21 February 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There has been a new headteacher since the previous inspection.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- The board of trustees manage 'The Busy Bunch' after-school provision at the school.

Information about this inspection

The inspector carried out this graded inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, other senior leaders and the special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator. Meetings were also held with subject leaders, staff and pupils.

- The inspector met with the trustees of the school, including the chair of the board of trustees.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, the inspector looked at curriculum planning, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms, around the school and at playtime and lunchtime. They spoke with pupils about their views of the school and their learning, behaviour and safety.
- To inspect safeguarding, the inspector spoke to staff, pupils and governors. A range of safeguarding information was scrutinised, including the school's policies and records. The inspector spoke to pupils and observed relationships between pupils and adults. The inspector also met with the designated safeguarding lead.
- As well as speaking to parents at the school gate, the inspector considered responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View. Staff's views were taken into account through a number of meetings, as well as their responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Paul Hemmings, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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