

# St Nicholas School

Reedham Drive, Old Lodge Lane, Purley, CR8 4DN

**Inspection dates** 21–22 May 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Teaching is good, and so pupils learn well across the school.
- Pupils make good progress and achieve well. Those who are eligible for additional government funding perform as well as other pupils.
- The provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Good teaching ensures that children make good progress in their learning, in the development of their social skills and in their ability to communicate effectively.
- Leadership and management are good. The relatively new senior leadership team has worked effectively with the staff, especially those new to the school, to maintain good provision.
- The curriculum meets the needs of all pupils. A programme of visits and school clubs do much to broaden pupils' learning.
- Pupils' attitudes are outstanding, as is their behaviour. Attendance is high.
- Pupils make excellent progress in their personal development.
- Pupils are well looked after and cared for. Their knowledge of how to keep themselves safe is outstanding.
- Parents and carers are pleased with the school and happy that their children are safe, enjoy school and are making good progress.
- All staff share the leaders' enthusiasm and high expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Very good relationships between pupils and adults and between the pupils themselves are evident throughout the school.
- Strong links with the adjacent primary school provide very good opportunities for all pupils to interact with mainstream pupils.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The proportion of outstanding teaching is not high enough to ensure all pupils make maximum progress.
- Pupils do not make outstanding progress in their communication skills, including reading and writing.
- Leaders do not make best use of assessment information to compare pupils' achievement with those of the same age and starting points in other schools.
- The presentation of pupils' progress data does not give staff or governors a clear enough picture of how well pupils are doing as they move through the school.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited all classes. Fourteen lessons were observed, each taught by a different teacher. Eight lessons were observed jointly with a member of the senior leadership team.
- Meetings were held with members of the leadership team, three governors and an officer from the local authority. Inspectors collected pupils' views of the school from the many conversations that were held with individuals and small groups throughout the two days.
- Inspectors took account of the views of 11 parents as expressed in the on-line survey, Parent View.
- Inspectors analysed the 37 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- A wide range of documentation was examined, including information about pupils' progress, attendance records, safeguarding procedures, the school's own judgements about its strengths and areas for improvement and development planning.

## Inspection team

Mike Kell, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Veronica Young

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- St Nicholas is a larger than average special school, in which a large majority of pupils are boys. There are just a few children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. A tiny proportion of pupils are children who are looked after by the local authority.
- Predominantly, the school caters for pupils with moderate learning difficulties, speech and communication difficulties and autism. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- Two of the three senior leaders, including the headteacher, have been appointed to their current post since 2012.
- The school receives additional government funding, pupil premium, for nearly half of its pupils, which is high compared with the national average. This is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and or who are looked after by the local authority.
- Pupils come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, with White British being the predominant group. A small number of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- All pupils have regular opportunities to work with pupils from Beaumont Primary School, which is next door to St Nicholas.
- There has been a high turnover of staff since 2012. Almost half of the class teachers have joined the school since then.
- The school provides an outreach service to local primary schools.

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

- Raise the quality of teaching so that more is outstanding by ensuring that staff consistently:
  - make full use of their knowledge of pupils' prior learning when planning activities
  - use the full range of communication strategies, including on wall displays where appropriate
  - plan to develop pupils' reading and writing skills in all subjects.
- Improve the impact of leadership and management by:
  - ensuring that all staff assess pupils' learning accurately and robustly
  - analysing, interpreting and presenting assessment data in a way that provides a better understanding of pupils' progress towards end of key stage targets, and their achievement compared with pupils of the same age and similar ability nationally.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils make good progress. Teaching that is typically good enables pupils to acquire new skills and knowledge, and to develop greater understanding of the subjects that they study.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get off to very good start and make good progress in acquiring early literacy and numeracy skills. They also show particularly significant improvements in their social development, such as their awareness and acceptance of others.
- Despite some historical assessment data being insecure, there is sufficient information to show that pupils make good progress over time. The proportions of pupils making expected progress and more than expected progress are broadly in line with national expectations.
- Achievement is not outstanding because teaching does not always recognise pupils' different communication approaches. Pupils' reading and writing skills are not developed enough through different subjects and by the displays and posters around the school.
- There is no difference between the achievement of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding and their classmates. Nor is there any significant variation in the proportions that make either expected or more than expected progress in English and mathematics.
- Pupils from different ethnic backgrounds are equally successful. The very few pupils who are looked after by the local authority and those who speak English as an additional language do as well as others. Boys and girls make similar progress.
- Pupils make good progress in developing numeracy skills. In the majority of cases they make similarly good progress in developing their ability to communicate effectively. This includes the development of reading skills. Teaching of the early stages of recognising letters and being able to make their sounds (phonics) is effective.
- The link with Beaumont Primary School is an important contributor to pupils' progress and achievement. It provides many opportunities for them to interact with, and learn from, their mainstream peers.
- Further evidence of pupils' good progress is the school's success in enabling a small number to transfer into a mainstream school. In some cases this means moving into a secondary school at the end of Year 6.
- The more able pupils typically make good progress. Classes are determined by age, and so are of mixed ability, but individual class teachers ensure that this group makes good progress by providing suitably challenging work.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is typically good, and occasionally outstanding. Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is consistently good.
- Excellent relationships and very positive interactions between pupils and adults are significant factors in the good progress that pupils make.
- Some pupils with the most complex needs occasionally display challenging behaviour. Staff manage this efficiently, making good use of the school's behaviour management procedures and pupils' individual behaviour plans. As a result, even those pupils with the most complex needs behave well and their behaviour does not disrupt the learning of others.
- Most teaching is effective because staff enable pupils to make good progress by providing work that is challenging and interesting. They do this by using their knowledge of pupils' abilities and what they have learned previously to plan activities that build on these prior achievements.
- Teaching is not outstanding overall because, occasionally, not enough attention is paid to the range of ability in a class. As a result, pupils may have work that is too difficult or too easy and so they do not make the progress they are capable of.
- Teaching makes a very significant contribution to pupils' social and moral development. Adults' use of very well-established routines and their insistence on pupils taking turns and showing respect for

one another result in harmonious classrooms.

- Pupils generally make good progress in their language and communication skills. This is because teachers employ a variety of approaches, such as signing, use of symbols and picture exchange to match each pupil's preferred approach. Sometimes, this is less evident and pupils' learning slows. Well-presented and informative displays do not always use symbols and pictures as well as text and so not all pupils benefit fully.
- Reading and writing are taught well because adults are knowledgeable about phonics and they model sounds accurately. They are skilled at supporting pupils who are at an early stage of reading to use their knowledge of phonics to read new words. Adults also provide well-judged prompts to more independent readers.
- The best teaching develops pupils' reading and writing skills through different subjects. However, occasionally, opportunities for pupils to practise these key skills in different contexts are missed.
- Teaching assistants make an important contribution to the overall quality of teaching. They are well briefed and they have the skills to work effectively with individuals and small groups.
- Staff typically use their observations and questions well to monitor pupils' learning and to amend work accordingly. Staff assess pupils' progress formally on a regular basis. However, in the past not all of these assessments were accurate. Work to check the accuracy of teachers' judgements with staff from partner schools is at an early stage.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are outstanding

- Pupils enjoy school very much and so they engage enthusiastically with everything that it has to offer. Their attitudes are outstanding and invariably positive. Consequently, they attend regularly and arrive punctually for lessons.
- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding, both in lessons and around the school. Pupils move around the building very sensibly and in an orderly way. Posters on display around the school remind pupils of the school rules and the high standards of behaviour that are expected. Pupils are very keen to meet the high expectations that the staff have of them.
- Pupils interact very well with each other and with adults. They follow instructions closely, listen to what classmates have to say and wait their turn. Being a playground buddy or on the school council successfully promotes pupils' self-assurance and helps them to develop a strong sense of responsibility.
- Pupils make exceptionally good progress in other aspects of their personal development too. Many show impressive gains in confidence, as well as the ability to cope with change and to make informed choices.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make very good progress in understanding what is expected of them, and follow classroom routines carefully. Their social skills develop very well and so they quickly learn how to interact with classmates, enabling them to play together amicably.
- Pupils care about their appearance so that they look smart in their school uniform. The site is free of any litter or graffiti because they respect the building and grounds.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Comprehensive policies and procedures are in place. Pupils have a very clear understanding of how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations including when using computers.
- Staff make sure that pupils understand what constitutes bullying and what does not. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers who responded to the on-line survey agree that the school deals effectively with bullying. Incidents of any bullying are very rare, as the school's records show. In the survey, all those who responded judged that their child is happy and safe at the school.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- The staff confirm unanimously that they know what the school is trying to achieve. They are in a

position to do this because senior leaders have successfully established a single, shared vision.

- By building on the good support from the local authority, leaders' evaluation of the school has accurately identified key areas that they now need to address. These form the basis of the school improvement plan, which is an effective guide for future development. The influence of staff with subject responsibilities is developing well, although many are relatively new to the role. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed.
- Leaders have done a good job in supporting staff to deliver high quality teaching. They have been particularly effective in supporting staff who are new to the school and relatively inexperienced at working with pupils who have autism and associated learning difficulties.
- Leaders are successfully raising the quality of teaching. Checks on teaching quality help leaders identify where improvement is needed. Additional training for all staff and well-selected training for individual teachers is securing lasting improvements. The impact of targeted funding is monitored closely. Pupil premium has contributed not only to raising pupils' achievement, but also to supporting their personal development. For instance, additional input from child and adolescent mental health services and parent support groups has been particularly effective. Primary school physical education and sport funding is used to provide additional coaching, leading to pupils' increased participation.
- Pupils study a good range of subjects that is suitable for their age and interests. Classroom-based activities are enlivened by involvement in the community through a good variety of educational visits. Also, all Year 6 pupils are able to participate in a residential visit that contributes much to their personal development as they engage in outdoor pursuits and team exercises.
- Transport difficulties make it very difficult to run after-school activities that allow pupils to pursue their interests or to develop new ones. The school compensates for this by running a good range of lunchtime clubs in addition to one after-school football club.
- Leaders have forged strong links with partner schools. The link with the local primary school encourages planned opportunities for pupils to interact with their mainstream peers. For example, it enables all older pupils to use its very well-equipped computer suite.
- The school contributes to the wider school community through its outreach service, which supports schools in their work with pupils with special educational needs. However, it is limited in scope because it is not staffed by a discrete workforce; the deputy headteacher and some class teachers provide support when resources permit.
- Leaders collect and analyse much information about pupils' performance, and now recognise that they have to develop current practice further to ensure that all assessment is entirely accurate. However, leaders' interpretation and presentation of the information to staff and governors is not outstanding. This is because they do not explore how pupils' achievement compares with those of the same age and ability in schools elsewhere. Nor does the presentation indicate the proportions of pupils who are on track to meet or exceed challenging end of key stage targets.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body maintains close oversight of safeguarding procedures. As a result, all measures are in place and their effectiveness is monitored routinely.
  - Governors recognise the importance of challenge and holding school leaders to account. Regular, planned visits into school give them the first-hand evidence that enables them to do this.
  - The governing body knows how additional funding is spent and the effect that it has on raising standards. However, the general shortcoming in leaders' presentation of data restricts governors' ability to compare pupils' achievement with others nationally.
  - Governors monitor all aspects of pupils' behaviour through very regular headteacher reports.
  - Governors receive good information about how well different teachers perform. They have a good understanding of the outcomes of teachers' appraisal and of how teachers' pay is linked to their performance.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	101854
<b>Local authority</b>	London Borough of Croydon
<b>Inspection number</b>	431283

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	130
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Amanda Trevitt
<b>Headteacher</b>	Nick Dry
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	22–23 January 2009
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8660 4861
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