

Inspection of St Nicholas CofE (VA) Primary School and Nursery

Six Hills Way, Stevenage, Hertfordshire SG2 0PZ

Inspection dates:	10 and 11 June 2025
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils feel safe and are well cared for at this school. Differences are meaningfully celebrated throughout the school. This is recognised by pupils, who state that everyone is welcome here and is given the help they need.

Pupils make a strong start to their learning journey at this school. They achieve well in early years and develop strong foundations of learning. Pupils access a broad, planned curriculum as they move through the school. However, too many pupils do not achieve as well as they could by the time they move onto secondary school.

Classrooms are typically calm and orderly. Pupils learn with little disruption. Pupils love social times with their peers. The playground is a hive of activity, with games such as dodgeball, football and rounders proceeding enthusiastically. Pupils generally get along well. Trained pupil 'peer mediators' are on hand to sort out any minor fallouts, which makes playtime a happy and positive time.

Pupils have many opportunities to develop their wider talents and interests on the sporting field. The school's football and netball teams are very successful. The school choir is active and enjoys performing. Residential trips, visits and outdoor learning further enhance pupils' learning experiences.

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

School leaders are ambitious for what pupils can achieve at this school. They are making the necessary changes to improve the quality of education. Despite significant progress, for example extensive curriculum development, too many pupils are not academically ready for their next stage when they leave school.

The early years classes are calm and purposeful. Staff skilfully develop children's early language skills in a well-resourced environment. For example, children order events and orally retell stories to develop their spoken language and love of books. Staff know the children very well and design the curriculum in a way which meets children's specific needs. Children make a strong start to their schooling in early years.

The school's early reading curriculum is a strength. Well-trained staff deliver the school's phonics programme precisely. Pupils learn their letter sounds quickly and read books to practise the sounds they have learned. Any pupil who falls behind is supported to catch up with their peers. As pupils move through the school they access a range of different texts. Pupils develop a love of reading and improve their reading skills.

The curriculum is designed and sequenced from early years onwards. The intended knowledge that pupils should learn is identified and is built upon as pupils progress through the school.

The way lessons are delivered is not consistently effective. On some occasions, teachers clearly explain and model learning and question pupils to check how well they are

achieving. Pupils complete activities which allow them to practise, learn and remember new knowledge. On other occasions, learning is not clearly presented. Pupils complete activities which do not fully align with the intended learning. This means that pupils' learning across the curriculum is not consistent. Some of their knowledge is not as secure as it should be.

Pupil support plans identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teachers generally implement these plans successfully to break down barriers to learning. This enables pupils with SEND to learn alongside their peers. However, sometimes the curriculum is not appropriately adapted to meet the needs of different pupils. Some pupils struggle to access learning independently in class. Other pupils would benefit from being moved on in their learning. Pupils do not always achieve to their full potential.

Staff model the school's high behaviour expectations. Clear school rules help pupils to make the right choices. Staff manage less positive behaviour effectively, minimising the impact on other pupils' learning. Strong systems to monitor and improve attendance are now in place. These are working well. The school offers support and challenge to families to ensure pupils attend whenever they can. Having attended less strongly in the past, pupils now attend well.

The school's well-thought-through personal, social, health and economic programme carefully considers its pupils. Pupils are highly respectful of different cultures and beliefs. Pupils typically feel safe in school and have a strong understanding of how to stay safe online. They know how to keep their bodies and minds healthy. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Governors are effective in their roles. They monitor regularly and challenge school leaders to further improve the school. Staff are well supported in their roles. They know their well-being is considered fully when changes are made.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Beyond early years, teaching is not routinely adapted to meet the needs of pupils. Sometimes pupils struggle to understand learning, while others are not moved on quickly enough. Some pupils do not learn as well as they should. The school should ensure that teaching is better adapted to meet the needs of different pupils.
- On occasions, the activities that pupils complete are not aligned to the core knowledge that pupils need to learn. This means that some pupils do not develop the secure

knowledge that they should. The school should ensure that lesson activities help pupils to learn and remember intended knowledge in all lessons.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	117456
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10378473
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	214
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Co-chairs of governing body	Karen Mitchell and Judy Crook
Headteacher	Lorraine Collins
Website	www.stnicholas120.herts.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	22 and 23 February 2023, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school uses one registered provider of alternative provision.
- This is a Church of England school within the Diocese of St Albans. The last section 48 inspection of the school's religious character took place in March 2017. The next inspection is due to take place this academic year.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, inclusion lead, subject leaders, staff, members of the governing body, and a representative from the diocese and local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, science and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector also listened to pupils read with a familiar member of staff.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including behaviour logs, attendance records, pupil records, records of governing body meetings, school development plans and external quality assurance.
- The inspection team considered the views of parents through responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and parents spoken to during the inspection.
- Inspectors gathered the views of pupils and staff through Ofsted's pupil and staff surveys, as well as discussions conducted throughout the inspection.

Inspection team

Jonny Wallace, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Lucy Roberts

Ofsted Inspector

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