

Inspection of St Nicolas CofE Aided Infant School

Portsmouth Road, Guildford, Surrey GU2 4YD

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 April 2025

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils learn and play together happily. Staff ensure that pupils, and their families, feel welcome and fully included in school life. Pupils enjoy playtimes. Playground activities are carefully designed so that pupils can follow and explore their interests. For example, while some pupils enjoy ball sports, others select quieter activities including flower arranging and making friendship bracelets. Pupils play kindly and cooperatively together.

Expectations of what pupils can do and achieve have been raised this year. The introduction of a new approach to teaching reading has had a positive impact on pupils' achievement. The school has also strengthened expectations for pupils' learning behaviours and is continuing to work on these.

Pupils are encouraged to take an active role in school life. The school offers a range of clubs and after-school activities for pupils, including a choir that performs in the local community. Pupils are supported to become active and responsible citizens from a young age. They learn about and contribute to the work of local and global charities. For example, pupils have, over time, worked with and supported a charity that builds schools in Uganda. This enables pupils to understand more fully the impact of their contributions, as well as the work of the charity.

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

The school has experienced several changes in leadership since the last inspection. This year, greater stability has enabled the school to renew its focus on the quality of education that pupils receive. The school ensures that all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), follow a broad and ambitious curriculum.

The curriculum has been strengthened through the introduction of clearer sequences of learning across subjects. However, the school has not clearly defined the most important knowledge that pupils should learn in all subjects. This sometimes makes it harder for teachers to identify what pupils need to learn and be able to do to make progress through the school's curriculum.

A new phonics programme supports pupils to learn to read fluently and confidently. Staff are well trained in the school's new approach. Any pupil at risk of falling behind is quickly identified and supported to catch up. The school has a strong focus on reading enjoyment. It ensures that from the start of Reception, staff read to children regularly.

The school has introduced a new focus on key foundational aspects of writing, including handwriting and sentence formation. This work has had a positive impact on pupils' learning across the curriculum. The school recognises that pupils currently in Year 1 and Year 2 did not receive such systematic teaching when they were in Reception. Consequently, some pupils have gaps in their foundational knowledge and skills in writing.

The school is committed to working inclusively. Staff ensure that pupils with SEND are fully included in all aspects of school life. Staff have benefited from ongoing training to ensure that classrooms are inclusive, and resources such as ear defenders and weighted blankets are available to pupils. Work to ensure that staff know how to adapt learning to support pupils with SEND is at an earlier stage. Consequently, some pupils with SEND do not learn as well as they could.

Pupils treat each other with kindness and respect. They learn how to resolve disagreements with their friends, and how to seek adult support if they need it. This year, the school has introduced clearer expectations for pupils in classrooms. Pupils are still adjusting to this. Some pupils, for example, struggle to listen to the teacher or focus on their learning task without repeated reminders. This is because pupils have not had sufficient opportunities to practice these routines and behaviours. This sometimes slows the pace of learning in whole class and group teaching sessions.

Pupils develop a strong understanding of the school's values. They learn to have a strong sense of respect for themselves and for others. The pupil council works with the headteacher to further develop the ways in which pupils demonstrating the school values are recognised and rewarded. The school's curriculum ensures that pupils' understanding of equality, diversity and inclusion is built upon over time.

Since the last inspection, the school's governance arrangements have been strengthened. The school now has stable and secure leadership. Together, leaders and governors have a clear vision for the school. Governors have a clear understanding of their role and work effectively to hold leaders to account.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's curriculum does not consistently identify the important knowledge pupils should learn in each subject. This makes it harder for teachers to focus their teaching and assessment on this core knowledge. The school should ensure that the important knowledge for pupils to learn is clear and logically sequenced across the curriculum.
- Teachers sometimes do not adapt their delivery of the curriculum to meet the needs of pupils with SEND effectively. As a result, some pupils with SEND do not learn as much as they could. The school should ensure that all teachers are confident in adapting learning to meet the needs of pupils with SEND, so as to enable them to achieve highly.
- The school has not fully embedded its classroom expectations. Sometimes, low-level disruption interrupts teaching. The school should ensure that pupils have ongoing opportunities to practice and secure positive routines and behaviours.

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	125189
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10341583
Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	5 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	89
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Elaine Joyce
Headteacher	Stina Witkowski
Website	www.st-nicolas-guildford.com
Date of previous inspection	12 June 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher was appointed in September 2024. They are the headteacher of this school and one other school.
- The chair of governors was appointed in September 2023.
- The school is a Church of England school in the Diocese of Guildford. The school's most recent section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, was carried out in July 2024.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

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.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. The lead inspector met with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. The lead inspector discussed the school with a representative of the local authority and a representative of the diocese.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, art and design and history. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector listened to some pupils reading. Inspectors discussed the curriculum in the early years with leaders. They also reviewed the curriculum in some other subjects and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors considered pupils' behaviour and attitudes throughout the inspection. They discussed the school's analysis of records relating to behaviour and attendance with leaders.
- Inspectors considered pupils' personal development throughout the inspection. They met with leaders to discuss the school's personal development programme. Inspectors talked to pupils about the school's personal development programme.
- Inspectors spoke with some parents and carers in person and also considered the views of parents who responded to Ofsted Parent View, including any free-text comments.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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.

Inspection team

Alice Roberts, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Caroline Clarke

Ofsted Inspector

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