

Inspection of St Nicholas CofE Primary

St Faith's Road, Alcester, Warwickshire B49 6AG

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 May 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The head of school is Laura Newell. This school is part Arden Forest C of E Multi-Academy Trust which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The executive headteacher of this school is Adam Walsh. He is also the chief executive officer for the trust. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Nick Moon.

This school was last inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 12 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between graded inspections under section 5 of the Act. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school's vision of 'dream big, shine bright' permeates through all that the school does. The school welcomes pupils with a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and effortlessly meet their needs. Pupils form harmonious relationships with their peers and staff. Pupils are happy and proud to be a part of this nurturing and caring school. The school dog, Bug, contributes to supporting pupils' wellbeing by providing them with emotional support when they need it.

Pupils' behaviour during lessons and at social times is calm and orderly. Pupils of all ages play well together. Right from the start, pupils in Reception learn how to share and are comfortable playing independently or in small groups. The school's outdoor play area is resourced well and encourages pupils to be active.

Pupils cherish the opportunities to take up leadership roles. The 'wellbeing warriors' promote positive mental health through hosting a range of calm activities from painting to crafts for their peers to get involved in at lunchtime. Members of 'the Amazon protection society' are working hard to stop deforestation. Pupils also take the lead to organise fundraisers with a whole school 'water walk' and a bake sale. This helps pupils to play an active role in the community and beyond.

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

Leaders have high expectations of all pupils. There is a focus on supporting staff wellbeing and workload, and staff appreciate this. The school knows what its strengths are, and they have worked well with engaging the community. As a result, parents also recognise what the school does well and are positive about the guidance their child receives.

The school has high expectations of what it wants its pupils to achieve. The curriculum is well sequenced and identifies what pupils will learn and when they will learn it. Staff use a range of activities to engage pupils and grasp their attention. Teachers use assessment well to check pupils' understanding. In Reception, pupils excel and can articulate clearly what they are learning about and why. However, this is not always the case in key stage 1 and 2 classes. Some staff do not systematically check that pupils have a secure understanding of the key concepts required for current learning. As a result, some pupils struggle to build on knowledge over time and do not develop fluency well enough.

The school ensures that all pupils receive the help they need to thrive. Pupils with SEND are assessed and accurately identified. Information is gathered from parents, multi-agencies, staff and pupils to outline strategies that will help them to access the curriculum. Teachers know their pupils well and use these strategies to make adaptations to lessons or to provide extra support outside of the class. This helps pupils develop a secure understanding of the learning. As a result, pupils with SEND progress well.

Reading is a strength of the school. As soon as children start in Reception they learn to read. Pupils read books that are matched to their reading ability and any interests they have. Pupils who struggle to read are identified quickly. They are given a range of support, including 'Year 6 reading mentors' who listen to their younger peers reading and small group sessions revisiting sounds they find challenging. As a result, pupils are catching up.

Story time is a highlight of the school day for many pupils. It is engaging with a focus on developing pupils' vocabulary. The school library is home to carefully selected books which cover a range of topics from different cultures to different types of families. Pupils take books home that excite them. Workshops provide information to parents of how to support their child to read at home. This helps pupils to develop a love of reading.

As soon as pupils start in Reception, they are taught personal, social and health education. There is a focus on teaching pupils personal hygiene and the importance of being kind. As pupils grow older, they are taught a range of topics including how to stay safe, eating well and healthy relationships. The school council promotes the key topics through their work. As part of the 'staying safe' topic they introduced the 'chatterbox' which are boxes located around school where pupils can write down any worries to be supported by staff in the school.

Pupils go on residential to develop skills and explore nature. The virtual school trip to Mount Everest base camp makes links to topics they are learning in class. Pupils can also take part in an immersive experience where they can travel to different parts of the world and learn about the different cultures. There are clubs on offer for pupils to attend. However, a low number of pupils attend these. Leaders recognise that the extra-curricular take-up is not where they want it to be.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some staff do not systematically check that pupils have a secure understanding of the key concepts required for current learning. As a result, some pupils struggle to build on knowledge over time and do not develop fluency well enough. The school should ensure that staff are equipped to identify the key concepts pupils need to securely understand so they can make links to current learning, and to re-teach these concepts when needed.
- The provision to develop pupils' talents and interests beyond the curriculum is not yet as well developed as it could be. This means that pupils taking up extra-

curricular activities is low. The school should ensure that the offer to develop personal interests and hobbies is increased.

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	139518
Local authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	10290601
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	430
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Nick Moon
Headteacher	Laura Newell
Website	www.alcesterstnicholas.co.uk/
Date of previous inspection	12 and 13 March 2012

Information about this school

- The school is part of Arden Forest C of E Multi Academy Trust.
- The school uses no alternative providers.
- The school is a Church of England school. The last section 48 inspection took place in May 2017. It is due its next inspection within 12 months.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement 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 held discussions with the head of school, other senior leaders, the chief executive officer, the chair of the local governing body and other governors and the director of education from the diocese.
- Inspectors met with the school's special educational needs and disabilities co-ordinator (SENCO), reviewed a sample of education, health and care (EHC) plans and completed a learning walk focusing on pupils with EHC plans.
- Inspectors met with the school's attendance and behaviour leaders and reviewed records and analysis of exclusions, behaviour incidents, use of restrictive physical intervention and attendance data.
- Inspectors observed pupils' arrival to and from school and spoke to some parents at the gate.
- Inspectors met with the early years leaders and visited early years.
- Inspectors met with pupils formally and informally and spoke to 'pupil leaders'. They met with a group of pupils who had records of behaviour incidences.
- Inspectors held meetings with the pupil premium and sports premium leaders.
- Inspectors discussed pupils' personal development with leaders.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, English, history, mathematics and science. 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.
- 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

Sultanat Yunus, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Roulla Gabriel	Ofsted Inspector
Stuart Evans	Ofsted Inspector

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