

Inspection of St Nicholas CEVC Primary School

London Road, Strood, Rochester, Kent ME2 3HU

Inspection dates:	17 and 18 June 2025
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged as outstanding for overall effectiveness at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected under section 5 of the Act since January 2013.

What is it like to attend this school?

The smiling faces of pupils show how much they look forward to coming to school. They are happy in their learning and at breaktimes. Staff provide engaging equipment during playtimes that allow pupils to play happily with their friends. Pupils keep physically active as they excitedly climb across the trim trail or play ball games.

The expectations of what children can achieve in the early years are high. However, the expectations for pupils in key stage 1 and 2 are not as high as they should be. Here, pupils are not routinely provided with work that challenges them, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This means they are not fully prepared for the next stage in their education.

Pupils feel safe at school. They know that if they have worries, caring staff will provide effective support. The school is calm and orderly because it has high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Pupils have positive attitudes to their learning, and there is rarely disruption during lessons.

The school is determined to develop well-rounded individuals. They celebrate pupils who demonstrate the school's values by showing kindness and respect to others. There is a broad range of clubs where pupils can develop their talents and interests.

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

School leaders, including the acting headteacher, have taken steps to make necessary changes in the school. Governors and leaders now know that the quality of education in the school needs to be strengthened. The governing body is starting to have greater oversight of the school's work and is taking more effective action to hold the school to account. However, this work is in its infancy, and there are not yet clear plans in place to strengthen the school's provision. As a result, the school does not have full oversight of where further improvements are needed.

The early years' curriculum is well-planned and ambitious. Staff select activities that match children's interests. Children are exposed to a wide vocabulary that enables them to communicate clearly and confidently. They have access to well-considered resources that build their understanding of important mathematical concepts. However, the curriculum in the rest of the school is not as ambitious. The school has not carefully identified pupils' starting points. This means that they are not clear on what pupils can and cannot do. As a result, learning activities are not adapted to meet the needs of pupils. Some pupils complete work that is too easy for them. This means they do not achieve as well as they should.

Teachers use their secure subject knowledge. Misconceptions are mostly addressed well in the classroom. However, this is less effective in pupils' written work. At times, errors in spelling, punctuation and handwriting are not corrected. Pupils are then not given opportunities to practise writing accurately. This means they make similar mistakes over time.

Reading has a high priority. Phonics is taught from the moment children join in Reception. Knowledgeable staff deliver the well-planned phonics curriculum effectively. Regular checks on how well pupils can read quickly identify which pupils need more support. Planned interventions ensure that pupils keep up with their peers. Pupils develop a love of reading through the regular opportunities they have to read a range of texts.

There are effective processes in place to identify pupils with SEND. The school works closely with external agencies to access additional support. Clear targets are set that are designed to help pupils achieve. However, the use of these targets to help pupils learn is not as effective as it should be. This means some pupils with SEND do not always have the support they need to achieve as well as they should.

The school's values underpin the expectations for pupils' behaviour. These are well-understood by staff and pupils. As a result, pupils behave well in lessons. In the early years, children concentrate well on tasks. They take pride in their learning. During social times, pupils interact with each other respectfully. Pupils are polite and regularly hold doors open for their peers and adults. Pupils also attend well. Their positive attendance is supported by the school's effective systems to monitor any absence.

The school cares deeply about its pupils. This is reflected in the strong pastoral support provided. Pupils have a secure understanding of how to keep themselves safe and develop an age-appropriate understanding of healthy relationships. Pupils demonstrate mature attitudes to difference. They know that 'we are all equal and should respect others from different backgrounds'.

Staff are grateful for the recent changes that have been made to the school's culture since the acting headteacher took up post. They appreciate the improved communication and greater focus on their well-being as the necessary improvements are implemented across the school.

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 is not as ambitious as it should be. This means that the work some pupils complete is too easy for them, and they do not achieve as well as they should. The school needs to ensure that teachers design learning activities that help pupils deepen their understanding and use of the important knowledge and skills they need to be ready for the next stage of their education.
- Assessment strategies are not used effectively to check how well pupils are learning the content of the curriculum. Misconceptions are not routinely identified and addressed, and some pupils repeat the same mistakes over time. The school should

ensure that procedures are in place to consistently identify and address any misconceptions and gaps in pupils' learning.

- At times, the school does not use appropriate information about the needs of pupils with SEND to adapt the delivery of the curriculum effectively. This hinders how well some pupils with SEND learn. The school should ensure that staff use the information available to them to meet the needs of pupils with SEND.
- The school does not have sufficient oversight of the weaker aspects of its provision. Leaders do not have an accurate understanding of the effectiveness of curriculum implementation or pupil achievement. As a result, pupils do not achieve as well as they should across the curriculum. The school should further develop the systems and processes used to evaluate how well pupils are learning.

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	118643
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	10379803
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	149
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Simon Wilson
Headteacher	Ruth Gooch (Headteacher) Rebekah Edwards (Acting Headteacher)
Website	www.st-nicholas.medway.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	22 and 23 January 2013, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school expanded in September 2023 to include key stage 2. The school currently has pupils up to Year 4.
- The substantive headteacher was not on site during the inspection.
- The deputy headteacher has been the acting headteacher since March 2025.
- The school is a voluntary controlled school in the Diocese of Rochester.
- The most recent section 48 inspection, which is an inspection of the school's religious character, took place in March 2018.
- The school offers a before- and after-school club, overseen by school leaders.
- The school uses one registered 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 acting headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team. The lead inspector met with the chair of the local governing body and other members of the governing body, a representative from the local authority and a representative from the diocese.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and science. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also viewed a range of pupils' work from other subjects in the wider curriculum.
- Inspectors reviewed and scrutinised a range of the school's documentation, including leaders' plans for improving the school, minutes of the local governing body meetings and records of attendance and behaviour incidents.
- 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.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also took account of the responses to Ofsted's surveys for staff and pupils. Inspectors gathered the views of both staff and pupils throughout the inspection.

Inspection team

Stephen Cattell, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Rob Veale

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2025