

Inspection of St Nicholas of Tolentine Catholic Primary School

Pennywell Road, Bristol BS5 0TJ

Inspection dates: 15 and 16 June 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Early years provision

Inadequate

Previous inspection grade

Inadequate

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils do not get the education they deserve. They do not learn enough in many subjects. Pupils have significant gaps in their learning. Leaders' expectations of what pupils can achieve have been far too low. Consequently, pupils do not have a good grounding for the next stages of their education.

Despite these shortcomings, pupils enjoy coming to school and feel safe. They are welcoming and friendly. Older pupils are proud to take on roles of responsibility, such as being chaplaincy leaders. Pupils like the rewards they receive in the weekly assembly for demonstrating the school's values. This is beginning to develop a sense of community and pride.

Pupils say that behaviour is getting better. Pupils' conduct in the classrooms and the corridor is mostly calm and orderly. Still, when work is not engaging, a minority of pupils lose focus and become distracted. This limits their learning. When bullying happens, pupils say that adults sort it out.

Leaders celebrate the diversity of the community. Through books, visits and fundraising activities, pupils learn the importance of respecting different faiths and cultures.

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

There have been many changes in leadership. Governors' efforts to improve the school have not been effective enough. Leaders and governors have been too slow to address the widespread weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. The quality of education pupils receive is poor.

The recently appointed headteacher is providing clarity and direction. She has quickly identified the widespread weaknesses. She has gained the trust and respect of staff and pupils and is working with determination to bring about positive change. However, it is too soon to see an impact.

The curriculum does not enable pupils to communicate, read, write or apply mathematics sufficiently well for their age. COVID-19 is a factor, but it is not the root cause.

The curriculum is poorly planned. Leaders have not ensured that the curriculum sets out the key knowledge that pupils need to know and understand. Staff training has been too limited over time. Teachers do not use assessment well enough. For example, in mathematics, they do not systematically check what pupils know and remember. When learning does not match pupils' needs well enough, they switch off, and this slows learning down.

The curriculum is too narrow. Curriculum coverage in some subjects is too limited. Some pupils do not complete programmes of study in design and technology and

modern foreign languages. In other subjects, curriculum content is not as ambitious as it should be. For example, pupils do not learn enough about different historical periods.

Over time, the teaching of phonics has not been effective, including in the early years. Lots of pupils, including those in Years 2 and 3, need to catch up. Staff do not match pupils' books well enough to the sounds they know. This prevents them from reading accurately and fluently. Recent work to improve the reading environment and culture of reading is starting to pay off. Staff have been trained in a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics. Classrooms and the library are now full of interesting books for pupils to enjoy.

Leaders are starting to take the right actions to identify the individual needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). As a result, adults are building positive relationships with these pupils, especially those with social and emotional needs. Nonetheless, staff do not adapt the curriculum for pupils with SEND well. Pupils' targets are too broad. Staff do not develop children's communication and language skills in the early years and key stage 1 well enough. Consequently, pupils with SEND do not experience academic success.

Some pupils do not attend regularly enough. A minority of pupils do not arrive at school on time. Leaders are working determinedly with families to ensure that pupils' attendance and punctuality improve. For example, staff arrange a daily 'walking bus' and free breakfast to encourage punctuality.

The curriculum to support pupils' personal development and character is still evolving. Recently, leaders have used assemblies and the personal, social, health and economic curriculum to reinforce the school's values. Staff find many ways to bring these to life. Pupils learn about 'community' by writing prayers. They understand 'compassion' by sending messages of kindness through the school postal service. Pupils know right from wrong. However, staff do not pick up quickly enough when pupils squabble or are unkind to each other, especially on the playground.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have effective systems in place to ensure that pupils are safe. All staff receive regular training. They are quick to spot signs of worry or anxiety in pupils. Leaders make timely and well-informed decisions to support the most disadvantaged pupils and families. Procedures for the safe recruitment of staff are thorough.

Pupils understand ways to stay safe online and in the local community. They know the importance of reporting any concerns they have to an adult.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum is narrow and is not ambitious. Consequently, pupils are not well prepared for the next stage of their education. Leaders must ensure that pupils receive an ambitious curriculum that teaches them the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in all subjects.
- Over time, governors have not held leaders accountable for the quality of education. Pupils across the school do not achieve as well as they should. Governors must ensure that there are effective systems in place to increase their level of challenge to school leaders about the quality of education pupils receive.
- The curriculum is poorly planned. Pupils do not gain the knowledge and skills they need to achieve well across the curriculum. Leaders must ensure that all subjects identify the key knowledge and skills pupils need to learn, and that assessment processes check how well pupils know and remember the curriculum.
- Leaders have not ensured that the books pupils read include the sounds that they know. Pupils' reading books are often too hard. Many pupils at the early stage of reading, including in the early years, cannot use and apply phonics to read accurately. Leaders and teachers should ensure that the books pupils read match the sounds they know so that they develop accuracy and reading fluency.
- Pupils with SEND, including those with communication and language difficulties, do not receive effective support. The curriculum is not adapted well enough to meet pupils' needs. Leaders should ensure that staff provide effective support and leaders should monitor how well the curriculum is adapted for pupils with SEND.
- A minority of pupils do not consistently show positive learning behaviours. This hampers the amount of progress these pupils make. Leaders and staff must ensure that all pupils make positive choices and behave consistently well throughout the school day.
- Having considered the evidence, the inspectors strongly recommend that leaders and those responsible for governance do not seek to appoint early career teachers.

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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	139032
Local authority	Bristol City of
Inspection number	10227501
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	129
Appropriate authority	The board of trustees
Chair of trust	Frank Toner
Headteacher	Rachael James
Website	www.stnicholas.bristol.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	17 and 18 October 2018

Information about this school

- There have been significant changes in leadership since the previous inspection. The current headteacher took up post in May 2022.
- The school currently uses one registered alternative provider.
- St Nicholas of Tolentine is a Catholic school. The most recent section 48 inspection took place in December 2016.

Information about this inspection

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

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, other school staff and two members of the governing body. The lead inspector spoke with a representative from the Clifton Diocese.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, geography and physical education. For each deep dive, the inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, 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 pupils in Years 1, 2 and 3 read to an adult.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's safeguarding documentation, including the safeguarding checks carried out on staff working at the school. They considered how well the designated safeguarding leader acts on concerns about pupils' welfare and safety. Inspectors talked to pupils, staff and governors about how the school keeps everyone safe.
- The lead inspector considered key documentation, including school improvement plans and minutes of governors' meetings.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site. An inspector met with the headteacher and behaviour and attendance leader to discuss and scrutinise how they respond to behaviour incidents and pupils' attendance.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text replies, and responses to the staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Dale Burr, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Martin Greenwood

Ofsted Inspector

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