



SELF EVALUATION SUMMARY: REVISED March 2024



QUALITY OF EDUCATION

Intent

- St Nicholas School motto is ‘Learning Together’, which encompasses the collaborative approach to helping our special pupils achieve their full potential, regardless of their ability
- The curriculum offered to pupils is broad and balanced.
- Lessons are planned well to take account of pupil’s differing abilities. Planning also ensures lessons include robust support for the development of pupil’s reading, writing, communication, mathematics skills and social skills.
- Planning is tailored to support specific needs, ensuring pupils with the greatest needs are making progress.
- Schemes of work are coherently planned and sequenced towards cumulatively sufficient knowledge and skills for future learning. Curriculum co-coordinators have written their schemes of work ensuring that content is consistent with requirements of the new national Curriculum, including their EYFS curriculum.
- Staff have high but realistic expectation of the children, encouraging them to reach their potential.
- The curriculum allows our children to have daily learning experiences that enables them to be equipped with the skills, resilience and life experiences to become healthy, active and respectful learners.
- Teachers have a firm understanding of the school’s curriculum intent.
- A pathway model for SLD, ASD + complex learners provide a structured and predictable environment for children to access learning.

Implementation

- Teachers work well as a year group to plan their medium-term planning. Teachers also complete weekly plans adapting activities appropriate to their class, drawing on a wide range of expertise and ideas.
- Teaching Assistants contribute well to learning. Teachers provide a clear picture of what their role is and what they want them to do. Ongoing training and strong partnerships with teachers have enabled some more experienced teaching assistants to lead learning activities. TAs use their initiative and use questions really well to check how much the pupils have learnt.
- Methods of teaching are creative, adaptable and flexible. Contexts for learning are well considered so that they are meaningful to pupils and are linked to pupil interests.
- Alternative teaching approaches such as TEACCH, Sensory Learning or Attention Autism have proved successful in allowing some of our sensory and non-verbal learners to access the curriculum. Individual strategies have been further developed for the most challenging pupils e.g. Zones of Regulation or sensory integration strategies to reduce level of stimulation.
- The pathway classes have an adapted curriculum that caters for SLD, ASD and more complex learners. A focus on independent living skills, communication skills and social skills is a key part of the curriculum. There are also regular movement breaks through the day to encourage self-regulation.
- Pathway classes have a higher level of support so that teachers can also plan individual tasks that work on individual needs.
- The school has adopted a new phonics scheme, Little Wandle, which is aimed specifically at children with SEND and will support staff with early reading skills.
- Teachers support Reading through identifying early reading behaviours and then progress on to reading through phonics and sight word reading schemes and then progression onto the Accelerated Reading Scheme.
- Communication strategies such as signing, PECS, Colourful Semantics and visual or session timetables are used to support the teaching in lessons throughout the school allowing for commonality. Classes also use PowerPoints with links to transition songs so that any staff member in class can use with the children. The teaching of Mathematics is supported with the use of Numicon and tactile objects. PECS is more widely used across curriculum subjects.
- Specialist communication work is provided to targeted groups of children, delivered by teachers and TAs trained in a range of specialist approaches with the support of trained in-house therapists to enhance social skills, as well as functional skills such as sharing and turn taking.
- Teachers have developed creative ways to help pupils understand their Pupil Passport targets in class, and take responsibility for their own learning.
- Placement of increasingly complex children has required development of more sensory approaches in some classes, and development of a more systematic approach to behaviour plans including risk assessments.
- The school also adopts a Rights Respecting ethos, having achieved its Gold status, where every child is valued and their views are heard.

Impact

- Teachers create an environment where, not only the pupils learn, but are also allowed to challenge and explore their learning in a safe and supportive environment. Pupils demonstrate their resilience and often strive to improve on what they can and cannot do.
- The school holds a number of curriculum weeks throughout the year which enhances the educational experiences and enjoyment of the curriculum for staff and pupils.
- Pupils enjoy lessons and are keen to share their work with their peers, staff and visitors. It is obvious during monitoring that children are engaged in their learning.
- Parents inform us that their children are happy and the vast majority are pleased with their progress, according to our latest parent survey.
- Pupils are positive about their achievements and those of their peers. This is evident at our weekly ‘Star of the week’ assemblies, House Point Assemblies and from our Wow Boards.
- Evidence from teacher assessment shows that each child makes good progress from their relatively low baselines.
- Progress in core subjects varies across Key Stages – this is related to the development profile of pupils particularly communication and social needs.
- Pupil progress is closely tracked – small steps in learning are recorded and used towards termly tracking of pupils against ELGs in Reception, and a tailored tracking system from Year 1 using Evidence for Learning. This is backed up by moderation in school and with other schools in core subjects. The school has also developed its own Assessment system for Personal, Social and Emotional Development, which is where some of our learners make the best progress.
- Pupils make good progress towards or achieve personalised targets agreed with parents termly and at the Annual Review of the EHCP. These are often linked to core subjects, communication and independent skills to support readiness for the next phase of education.

- Total Pupils on roll October 2023 - 268
- Free school Meals = 41%
- Attendance 89.1%
- 3 pupils in care (↑), 5 post LAC children and Special Guardianship
- Needs profile (approx.) SCLN (81), ASD (64), SEMH (1), MLD (97), SLD (14) Complex (9), Physical (2)
- We are part of an SLP which has over 30 schools working together to deliver training, support and professional development.
- The school was awarded UNICEF Rights Respecting Gold Award in May 2022
- Behaviour of children remains a strength of the school

EFFECTIVENESS OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- The Head Teacher is supported by an enthusiastic and knowledgeable SLT team and Governing Body.
- Following a rigorous recruitment process, a new Deputy Head was appointed and joined the school in April 2023 bringing a vast knowledge of a pathway curriculum and whole school well-being.
- The Head Teacher had her Performance Management in December 2023. New objectives have been set. A half yearly review will take place in the Summer Term 2024 and will be reviewed in November 2024.
- Performance Management processes for teachers and non-teaching staff remains in place and is a robust process. Objectives for staff link directly to school improvement actions whilst also developing their own CPD. This ensures that the quality of teaching across the school is at least good and any areas for development are address promptly through whole school training or targeted support plans. Appraisal targets for support staff also focus on whole school initiatives.
- All senior leaders are involved in the Performance Management of teachers and trained to observe lessons. Lesson observations are generally carried out jointly with another member of SLT.
- CPD is strong throughout the school and ensures that staff are well equipped to contribute to school improvement.
- Model of distributed leadership continues to be in place with all experienced teachers undertaking leadership responsibility for a curriculum area and the performance of management of support staff. The development of our Middle Managers is a key focus: we have an Assessment Lead, 5 mentors and 2 behaviour Leads.
- Curriculum co-ordinators have developed schemes of work to support planning. Action plans are updated yearly and they are increasingly involved in overseeing their curriculum areas.
- A regular programme of monitoring including focussed learning walks and monitoring of pupil progress ensures that any areas of underperformances are identified quickly with targeted support and greater frequency of monitoring in place to address any emerging issues.
- The Assessment lead has re-developed our Assessment framework so that it encompasses our ever-changing cohort of more complex learners.
- The Governing Board have new member (a co-opted Governor) and is actively seeking new Governors. They will be supported by Governor services with induction and training.
- The school leaders and Governing Body share and demonstrate a clear school ethos and vision, created and adopted by all.
- Governors have recently undertaken a Governance Review and are keen to strengthen the working relationship between the Board and SLT; re-structure some of the committees and improve visibility amongst key stakeholders.
- Committed and passionate leadership results in a powerful ethos that places ‘Learning Together’ at the heart of what the school does. Rigorous systems ensure all pupils make the best possible progress. Pupils are prepared well to move onto Secondary School.
- Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school’s strengths and areas for development and these are shared through the development plan. Leaders ensure that staff received focused and highly effective professional development.
- Governors attend training set aside for their own development and skills base. Have opportunities to update their knowledge, skills and understanding in agreed areas relating to the school’s work. Governors attended training on OFSTED in March and on Safeguarding in December. Governors have continued their monitoring visits.
- Demand for places is very high: school leaders spend a significant amount of time visiting pupils in settings to determine suitability and prioritise pupils for a limited number of places.
- The school works closely with the LA to support schools with their SEN learners with OUTREACH to individual schools or to the locality model.

What does the school need to do to improve further:

- To re-establish the role and responsibilities of the SLT following the appointment of a new Deputy Head Teacher
- To embed the skills and the impact of the Middle Management Team
- To ensure consistently good or outstanding Teaching and Learning
- To embed an Assessment, feedback and observation system that reflects the changing needs of our cohort
- To increase Governor engagement with the school and implement recommendations from the Governor Review

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- To establish and embed a Pathway model across the school.
- To ensure accessibility and adaptability of the curriculum in all areas
- To promote the use of TEACCH within the classroom
- To review and implement the progression of independence and life skills
- To promote Communication friendly classrooms

SAFEGUARDING AND ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

- A strong culture of safeguarding is established in the school with a clear system of reporting and recording using MyConcern ensuring the safety of all students and members of the school community. The school has purchased CONFIDE to log and monitor Low Level Concerns.
- Croydon LA also have completed their own Safeguarding audit which demonstrated that Safeguarding was effective.
- The lead DSL attended a safeguarding conference in October. Staff have also had an update on KCSIE 2023 and receive ongoing training.
- Safeguarding measures including staff training are taken very seriously and developmentally appropriate curriculum activities ensure pupils understand risks.
- Procedures ensuring the welfare, care, health and safety of the pupils, including Child Protection are very good. Governors audit safeguarding and review the Child Protection Policy Annually. Regular updates of the Single Central Register are completed by the SBM and monitored by the Safeguarding Governor and Head Teacher.
- Therapists at the school meet with the Head Teacher and Assistant Head Teacher at termly multidisciplinary meetings to agree support strategies for pupils causing concern.
- The school has invested in further support for pupils by providing an in-house Speech and Language Therapist, 2 play therapists, music therapy, drama therapy, an in-house Occupational therapy and Family Liaison Officer. The school has a good relationship with CAMHS and Social Care. However, provision is tight with CAHMs support and ECOP is the first offer of intervention.
- The school recruited an experienced SaLT lead who started in January 2023 to add to our own SaLT team. The school will still receive 1 ½ days from the NHS. Our own SaLT leads will work with children in Reception to year 3, and the NHS will work with children on caseload in Years 4-6. The school has also employed a SaLTA.
- Additional support and training is provided by NHS speech and Language Therapists, Occupational therapists and EP which has a positive impact on the quality of provision.
- The community Paediatrician is available regularly for medicals and to consult with and support parents. A school nurse is available for consultation with staff and to support parents.
- A number of staff have been trained in PECS level 1 which will enable the school to focus on using PECS within the classroom and curriculum more effectively. One of the SLT members is an accredited Makaton tutor and staff and parent courses are held throughout the year. The SaLT lead is also trained to deliver Makaton.
- Some staff and parents have also received training on GRID – an AAC system, to use with children at school and at home.
- The Communication Policy has been up-dated and shared with parents and staff.
- Consistent approaches and systems are used in classes and across the school with communication such as visual/session timetables, NOW and NEXT boards, PECS across the curriculum and consistent symbol use.
- The school has re-written its OUTREACH offer but has continued to support schools and localities in the last term – which have been well received.

What does the school need to do to improve further:

- To continue to refine and develop our procedures in recording, tracking, reporting and responding to Safeguarding trends and to ensure data is analysed by DSLs and Governors
- To promote Safeguarding and welfare to our pupils and their families
- To ensure all staff and Governors are up to are with current safeguarding legislation and guidance
- To further develop the Outreach service

BEHAVIOUR AND ATTITUDES

- Pupils are enthusiastic, engaged in lessons and display attitudes to learning because of high expectations, a clear approach to behaviour management, a very well-matched curriculum and a caring ethos.
- Staff know the pupils’ individual needs and abilities very well and use this knowledge to adopt and refine daily teaching to support good progress.
- Parents and other visitors to the school comment on the calm, happy environment.
- The school runs successful Parent Coffee Mornings which includes workshops and outside speakers. These groups are generally well attended and provide additional support mechanisms between parents. Coffee mornings on Behaviour, How we Learn, Reading and a chill and chat session are some of the coffee mornings.
- Two members of staff have been trained in delivering training in the PROCAT SCIPr approach and have delivered training to new staff and refresher training to current staff over the coming year. This approach aims to focus on analysing behaviour through functional assessments to understand the purpose of the behaviour and them implement proactive approaches to avoid Behaviours of Concern and improve quality of life. The new approach and feedback from training of staff have been supportive. Behaviour plans following the new approach are now being written by teachers and the Behaviour Policy has been finalised to reflect this approach.
- Some members of staff are also trained Mental First Aiders. More staff have been selected to be trained in Mental First Aid. Mental First Aiders hold weekly clinics for staff.
- The DHT is keen to improve whole school well-being and has completed a well-being survey with staff. Outcomes of this will inform actions and next steps to improve whole school well-being. A recent twilight focused on well-being where staff looked at the policy for Mental Health and Well-Being as well as signing up for team building and well-being initiatives.
- Attendance of pupils is monitored and discussed with parents and the Family Liaison Officer will make home visits if necessary.
- From a recent parent survey, parents reported that pupils are keen to come to school. Overall, the responses from parents in the survey was positive with most answers having over 90% agree/strongly agree.
- St Nicholas works closely in partnership with other schools and organisations to enhance and enrich learning opportunities. This includes Croydon Drop in, CAHMs, Nordoff Robins and music and theatre groups.
- The school works closely with local services to identify and meet wider needs of pupils and their families.
- Speech and Language and Occupational Therapists are effectively integrated into the provision at the school and have also provided training for staff in specific areas e.g. sensory processing, emotional regulation, communication strategies as well as individual support. However, provision has been reduced as the school has expanded and a departing therapist was not replaced recently.
- The Zones of Regulation were introduced into each class last year and these have been successful in allowing children and staff to discuss their emotions and ways to regulate them. The AHT + the SaLT lead for therapy provision will also attend further training.
- Weekly Star of the week assemblies and House Point Assemblies focus on achievement and behaviour provide feedback to pupils and reinforce expectations of outstanding behaviour.

What does the school need to do to improve further:

- To prioritise the Well-being and Mental health of the whole school community
- To enhance and further develop the Communication offer at St Nicholas School
- To embed PRO-ACT SCIPr approach to Positive Behaviour Support and to introduce Behaviour Watch to record and analyse Behaviour
- To extend therapy provision in school
- To improve student attendance and punctuality
- To further develop the communication and engagement between home and school