

# Inspection of St Nicholas School

Reedham Drive, Purley, Surrey, CR8 4DS

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Inspection dates: 8 and 9 May 2024

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Requires improvement**

Personal development

**Requires improvement**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Early years provision

**Requires improvement**

Previous inspection grade

Good

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Leaders, including governors and the staff team are taking action to adapt curriculum thinking and approaches to meet the needs of all pupils. These actions are ambitious. The quality of education is variable for all pupils because priorities for improvement are at varying stages of being introduced and have not shown their full impact on securing improvements.

This is a nurturing place to be. Adults build respectful and trusting professional relationships with pupils. They get to know pupils well and typically understand what may cause pupils to become upset or emotional. In most cases, staff are quick to help pupils to calm themselves and use effective strategies to help pupils to manage their emotions and express themselves calmly.

Sometimes, pupils' personal development, independence and preparation for the next stage of learning is hindered when pupils' communication needs are not as effectively supported by all staff.

Pupils have opportunities to develop their confidence through participating in musical performances and competitions. Pupils take part in the local music festival, enthusiastically contribute to singing assemblies and learn dance routines with a dance company. Selected pupils have entered and won local pentathlon competitions.

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

The school's curriculum is under development. Some of the school's curriculum thinking is more developed than in other parts. Generally, the essential knowledge that pupils need to know and remember is not clearly and consistently defined in curriculum thinking. This means that sometimes learning and teaching do not build pupils knowledge and skills cumulatively and securely.

The school is also developing systems to measure and check pupils' knowledge and understanding more precisely. In some subjects, such as English and mathematics, this helps staff to identify and address misunderstandings or gaps in pupils' knowledge. However, in other areas of the curriculum, gaps in what pupils know, remember and can do are not routinely noticed or dealt with. Gaps in pupils' recall and understanding widen when future learning and next steps are not adapted to correct these.

The school has taken swift action to improve the teaching of phonics. Leaders have recently introduced a new phonics curriculum and all staff have been trained to teach it. Staff have secure knowledge of the sounds letters make. Those pupils who read books, read books that are matched to the phonic sounds they know. In some year groups, phonics teaching is adapted to help pupils to learn phonic sounds

securely. However, where adaptations are not made, some pupils do not build up their phonics knowledge as securely.

Training from therapists on how staff can support the different communication needs of pupils is not routinely applied. Generally, communication resources and aids support pupils effectively in and outside of classrooms. On occasions, when staff do not model or use communication resources as effectively, pupils' independence is reduced when they are not as well supported to make themselves understood, or do not understand as readily what staff are saying. Consequently, pupils sometimes withdraw from their learning and struggle to conduct themselves calmly. The school is working to reduce the impact of workload on the well-being of some staff.

Pupils are encouraged to take care of themselves and be respectful of each other. Pupils are taught about the faiths, beliefs and cultures of other people. Through raising hatched chicks from eggs and observing caterpillars turning into butterflies and setting them free, pupils are taught to care for and respect the natural environment and the world in which they live.

The school works with parents and carers to ensure that pupils attend school regularly. If attendance rates fall, the school seeks to understand the reasons why. Leaders work with parents to find solutions to improve attendance. This includes hosting coffee mornings and workshops on topics such as sleep and behaviour.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- On occasion, pupils are not given the support and guidance they need to communicate their wants and needs, and to engage with their learning. This means that sometimes pupils' behaviour declines, pupils become disengaged from learning and the development of pupils' independence is hindered. The school should ensure that all staff have the resources and expertise needed to strengthen communication, support behaviour effectively and help pupils' engagement in learning.
- The school has not made sure that the essential knowledge that pupils need to know is clearly and consistently defined in curriculum thinking in all subjects and phases. This means that sometimes learning and teaching do not build pupils' knowledge and skills cumulatively and securely. The school should ensure that the breadth of curriculum thinking specifically sets out what they want all pupils to know and be able to do.

- The measuring and checking of what pupils know and can do is variable across the curriculum. This means that sometimes gaps in pupils knowledge are not identified and addressed and next steps for pupils are sometimes lack precision. The school should ensure that gaps in pupils' component knowledge and skills are robustly identified and addressed.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	101854
<b>Local authority</b>	Croydon
<b>Inspection number</b>	10296595
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	268
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Bernie Tetchner
<b>Headteacher</b>	Katie Goodwin
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.st-nicholas.croydon.sch.uk">www.st-nicholas.croydon.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	8 and 9 February 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils with moderate or severe learning difficulties. Many pupils have communication difficulties or a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder.
- The school has undergone a number of changes in recent years. This includes to the complexity of needs of the pupils, moving to a new building and an increasing number of pupils on roll.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

The inspector(s) 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 second routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, PSHE and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders to discuss the curriculum, had discussions with staff and pupils, visited lessons and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also considered the curriculum in other subjects as part of this inspection.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school and priorities for improvement.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record of pre-employment checks; 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 met with senior leaders, teachers and the wider school team.
- Inspectors met with the chair of the governing body and other members of the governing body.
- They also considered responses to Ofsted's online surveys for parents, staff and pupils.

### **Inspection team**

Kieran Bird, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Shaun Dodds

Ofsted Inspector

Georgina Herry

Ofsted Inspector

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