

Inspection of St Nicholas' CofE Middle School

Main Street, Pinvin, Pershore, Worcestershire WR10 2ER

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 September 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

The acting headteacher of this school is James Hawthorn. This school is part of the Diocese of Worcester Multi-Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Claire Davies, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Hugh Richards.

What is it like to attend this school?

'Be happy, grow and flourish' is at the heart of St Nicholas' CofE Middle School. Pupils and staff show this as soon as you enter the building. Pupils speak positively about the support they receive from staff. Pupils come to school because they enjoy learning, feel safe and are happy in school. A typical parent comment was that this is a 'lovely school, with staff who really care and do everything they can to help children and parents'. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are respectful and positive.

Leaders have developed a broad and ambitious curriculum. Pupils study a range of subjects. Despite this ambitious curriculum, some pupils do not achieve as well as they should. This is because some subjects are not as fully developed as others. However, current learning is improving.

The school places a strong emphasis on pupils' personal development. Pupils learn about their health and well-being. Pupils also develop their leadership roles. Head pupils, and others in Year 7, support the younger pupils during playtimes and reading activities. Many pupils take part in a range of enrichment opportunities such as Japanese and karate clubs.

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

There has been significant change within the school since the last inspection. Many staff have recently joined the school or changed their leadership roles. Some subjects have seen a significant improvement in how well pupils are achieving. However, these improvements are not evident in all subjects because the weaknesses in the subject curriculum and delivery have not been identified and addressed quickly enough.

Leaders have thought carefully about what they want pupils to learn. Precise curriculum sequencing helps pupils to build on what they have learned before. For example, in English, Year 7 pupils used their inferencing knowledge to discuss and evaluate an unseen poem based on the theme of 'flood'. However, teachers do not always check what pupils understand in lessons, nor whether they have gaps in what they have learned before. This means that teachers do not consistently adapt the learning to address any wrong ideas or missing knowledge.

Leaders quickly identify pupils who need additional support, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). All pupils follow the same curriculum. A small number of pupils with specific SEND needs receive effective support in a separate classroom. Teachers use information about pupils' additional needs to adapt their teaching. This means pupils with SEND can successfully access learning in line with their peers.

The school is passionate about ensuring that pupils learn to read. Teachers read to pupils every day. The phonics programme supports pupils who need further help

with their reading. Staff now check pupils' reading abilities more precisely to quickly identify those who are falling behind. Pupils who need extra support have additional learning to help catch up. However, teachers do not ensure that all pupils choose books that are appropriate to their reading ability. Some pupils read books that do not challenge or extend their understanding. Some other pupils read using books with sounds they do not know well. This means that some pupils do not develop into fluent readers as quickly as they could.

The school's work to promote pupils' personal development is highly effective. Pupils understand about equality and diversity. Pupils respect other people's opinions. Pupils voice their opinions about the school. This encourages them to have a strong sense of belonging. Pupils appreciate the increased number of trips and visits. These include local mosques and overnight residentials.

All leaders, including those responsible for governance, know this school well. They understand how the local context impacts pupils' learning and attendance. Leaders review and develop all aspects of the school effectively. This includes their robust and rigorous focus on safeguarding. Governors both support and hold leaders to account for the decisions taken. Leaders have implemented a well-thought-out professional development programme for staff. Staff feel very well supported and consulted about policy changes. Leaders carefully consider staff workload, which staff are appreciative of.

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 has not identified some of the weaknesses in a small number of subjects quickly enough. As a result, pupils are not achieving as well as they might in some subjects. The school should ensure that all curriculum weaknesses are identified and addressed consistently in all subjects so that pupils make strong progress across the whole curriculum.
- Teachers do not use reading assessments well enough to ensure that pupils receive phonics teaching and read books that are matched well enough to their needs. As a result, pupils do not become fluent readers quickly enough. Leaders should ensure that pupils are provided with appropriate support and reading material to enable them to learn to read fluently.
- In some subjects, teachers do not use assessments well enough to check pupils' understanding or identify gaps in their learning. Therefore, pupils' gaps in learning are not addressed and they struggle to build on what they know. Leaders should ensure that all teachers use assessment consistently to identify and address any gaps in pupils' learning so that pupils can progress well across the curriculum.

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	144257
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	10290634
Type of school	Middle deemed primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	9 to 12
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	181
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of the trust	Hugh Richards
CEO of the trust	Claire Davies
Acting Headteacher	James Hawthorn
Website	www.pinvinschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	8 and 9 June 2021, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Diocese of Worcester Multi-Academy Trust (DOWMAT), which contains 16 schools.
- The current acting headteacher took up post in January 2023.
- The current acting deputy headteacher took up post in January 2023.
- An additional deputy headteacher, from DOWMAT, joined the school in September 2023.
- Leaders make use of one registered alternative provision for one pupil.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- St Nicholas' CofE Middle School is part of the Diocese of Worcester. The school received its last section 48 inspection of church schools in June 2016. Section 48 inspections were suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They restarted in

September 2021. The next inspection will be within eight years of the last section 48 inspection.

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.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors focused on the following deep dives: early reading, mathematics, history and science. Inspectors looked at leaders' curriculum planning, visited lessons, heard pupils read to a familiar adult, looked at pupils' work and talked with pupils about their learning. Inspectors also looked at the curriculum in other subjects.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documents. These included information about pupils' behaviour, attendance, the school's curriculum and improvement planning. The school's website was also checked.
- 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 observed informal times of the day to evaluate safeguarding and pupils' behaviour.
- Inspectors held meetings with a representative of the local diocese, trustees, governors, headteacher, teachers, teaching assistants and pupils. Inspectors also talked informally to pupils, staff and parents to gather information about school life.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, and the free-text comments. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's staff survey and pupil questionnaires.

Inspection team

Stuart Clarkson, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Paul Whitcombe

Ofsted Inspector

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