

Mulbarton Junior School

The Common, Mulbarton, Norwich, NR14 8JG

Inspection dates 15–16 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- There is not enough good teaching. Work is not always precisely matched to pupils' abilities and it is sometimes too easy or too hard.
- Teachers do not always plan clearly exactly what they want pupils to learn and the steps they should take to achieve it.
- In some classes teachers talk too much at the start of lessons and do not give pupils enough time to complete their independent work.
- Pupils do not always have enough time to plan their writing in sufficient depth or focus on using interesting words.
- Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to use and apply their numeracy skills in solving problems across different subjects.
- Phase leaders do not do enough direct checking of the quality of teaching and learning in classrooms.
- Pupils in Years 3 and 4 are working in very cramped conditions, even though there are other available spaces they could use.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher has quickly identified what the school needs to do to improve and is giving clear leadership to staff.
- The school is improving because of the positive impact of steps already taken by the headteacher and the governing body on teaching and pupils' achievement.
- French, Spanish and music are taught well. Outdoor learning inspires pupils.
- Attainment in reading is above average because pupils make good progress in developing their skills.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress in English because of the success of the specific support they receive.
- Pupils behave well. Their enjoyment of school is reflected in their very good attendance.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 16 lessons or parts of lessons, some of which were observed jointly with the headteacher. All teachers and support staff were seen working with pupils.
- Inspectors heard pupils read, attended assemblies and undertook a scrutiny of pupils' work with the headteacher and a phase leader.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of school documents, including development plans, self-evaluation reports, monitoring files, safeguarding and curriculum materials, local authority reports on the school, evidence of the school's partnership work and information for families.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils chosen at random. Discussions were held with the headteacher and senior leaders, class teachers, the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors, and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 23 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), and spoke individually with several parents during the course of the inspection.

Inspection team

Nick Butt, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Lynn Lowery

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- A below-average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care, those known to be eligible for free school meals and those from service families.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is a little below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The school meets current government floor standards, which set minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment in English and mathematics.
- The headteacher joined the school in September 2011.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure teaching is consistently good by ensuring staff:
 - plan clearly exactly what pupils will learn and how they will best achieve it
 - plan work that precisely matches pupils' needs and is sufficiently demanding
 - introduce lessons with less input from the teacher so that pupils have enough time to complete their independent work.
- Increase the rate of pupils' progress in writing and mathematics so that attainment at least matches national expectations in each year group by:
 - making sure all teachers have the same high expectations of the quantity and quality of writing that pupils should produce
 - giving pupils more time to plan what they are going to write and focusing on expanding their vocabulary
 - giving more opportunities for pupils to use and apply their numeracy skills to solve problems in a range of different subjects.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - making more opportunities for phase leaders to check on the quality of teaching and learning in their phases
 - reviewing how all the teaching spaces are used to provide more suitable accommodation for pupils in Years 3 and 4.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils do not make consistently good progress in writing and mathematics. In 2012 national tests, attainment in mathematics fell behind that in reading and writing. The school has identified that inconsistent calculation methods were being used in different classes and has taken steps to remedy this.
- The amount of writing pupils are expected to produce varies between classes. In some groups they do not have sufficient time to plan their writing in depth and are not encouraged to use a wide range of vocabulary to bring it to life. As a result, attainment in writing is currently below the national average.
- In 2012 national tests, Year 6 pupils did very well in writing because of the support they were given that year and attainment was significantly above average. This improvement did not extend to other year groups, however.
- Pupils join the school with attainment that varies from year to year. In 2012 it was below average in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' progress shows an improving trend but is not yet good throughout the school. The best progress is in reading, which is consistently good. This is because pupils are encouraged to read widely and the centrally located library is an excellent resource. Pupils benefit from lessons in developing their library skills.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs achieve well in reading and writing because they are given specific programmes that are tailored to their needs. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to providing this support. The school has not given the same level of focus to supporting mathematics, and so these pupils have not made such good progress in developing their numeracy skills.
- Pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium are making faster progress than their peers nationally because the additional funding is spent well on extra teaching time. Teachers discuss individually with these pupils how well they are doing and how they can meet their targets for improving their work, and this is closing the gap between their attainment and that of other pupils.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching is not consistently good because pupils are often given work to do that is too easy or too difficult. The pace of lessons slows when teachers spend too long talking, especially when introducing learning. Pupils are not given enough time to practise their skills independently.
- Occasionally teachers plan work that does not make it sufficiently clear to pupils exactly what they are going to learn. This means pupils are not sure how they will be successful during the lesson and have to seek help rather than getting on with their work. At times teachers do not pick up straight away where pupils are struggling so that they can give them the help they need to make good progress in the lesson.
- Most lessons are calm and purposeful and teachers manage pupils' behaviour well. Relationships in classrooms are positive. Pupils are keen to learn and work hard.

- Spanish is taught well to pupils in Years 3 and 4, and French to pupils in Years 5 and 6. Pupils gain a good understanding of the culture of these countries as well as grasping the basics of the language. Older pupils enjoyed comparing a typical school day for pupils in France with their own experiences. This contributed well to their cultural development.
- Reading is taught well throughout the school. Pupils consolidate their knowledge of the sounds that letters make in Year 3 and begin to develop more complex reading skills. Pupils in Year 6 talk confidently about the authors they enjoy and can bring out the meaning from a range of texts.
- Pupils benefit from good specialist teaching of music, and from 'Forest School' experiences outdoors. Younger pupils enjoyed using tools safely to tidy up the school's butterfly garden in the shadow of the 'Mulbarton Oak', an ancient tree that graces the school grounds.
- While there are some strengths in the teaching of writing and mathematics, it requires improvement because it is inconsistent and pupils are not making fast enough progress. Until recently there has not been an agreed approach to the way pupils solve mathematical problems at particular stages in their development. Teachers' expectations of pupils' writing are not always high enough and they are not encouraged to think of really exciting words to make their work gripping for the reader.
- Teaching enables all groups of pupils to make similar progress. Where specific support is given that is matched precisely to pupils' needs the rate of progress speeds up. This is why pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, and disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, are doing well, particularly in literacy.
- Books are marked regularly and pupils are given generally helpful advice about how to improve their work, which they mainly act upon. Teachers expect pupils to present their work neatly in most cases. Their books show that the work is not always demanding enough for more-able pupils and is too difficult for less-able pupils.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- A new approach to behaviour management introduced by the headteacher has led to improvements in pupils' behaviour. They like the rewards system and understand the consequences of their actions. Their behaviour is now consistently good.
- Pupils show respect to one another and to adults. They are friendly and courteous. This was evident when they ran their own cake stalls for 'Children in Need' at break times. The pupils organised themselves very well, and waited politely for their turn to buy a cake.
- Pupils have mostly positive attitudes to learning. They are keen to take an active part in lessons and apply themselves well to their work. They work sensibly with partners or in groups. Just occasionally, when the teacher talks for too long, they can become quite passive, listening politely but not actively engaged in their learning.
- Pupils say there is no bullying in the school and that behaviour is good. The vast majority of parents and carers support this view. Pupils understand about different kinds of bullying, even though they do not experience any themselves. They know about cyber bullying and name calling, for example.

- Pupils willingly take on responsibilities, for example when pupils in Year 6 become reading buddies for pupils in Year 3. They also help to sort out any disagreements on the playground as playground buddies.
- Pupils have a good understanding about keeping safe. This was enhanced when the school council ran a quiz on how to be safe in school. Pupils know how to stay safe on the internet, and how to avoid dangerous situations in daily life.
- Pupils' great enjoyment of school is reflected in their above average attendance and their punctuality. They move around the school with a purposeful air, and make sure they are ready for learning, coming to lessons with the right equipment.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The new headteacher has not yet had time to bring about sustained improvement or to iron out all the inconsistencies that exist in the school. Phase leaders do not check the teaching and learning that goes on in classrooms often enough, although they look at teachers' planning and pupils' books.
- While leadership and management are not yet good, the headteacher has done much to set the school on a course of continuous improvement. He has won the respect and support of pupils, staff and parents alike and given strong direction to the school, having a very clear vision for its future development.
- Teachers have agreed new approaches to classroom practice that are helping to improve teaching so that more of it is good. The headteacher's daily visits to all classes mean that he has a very good understanding of what goes on in classrooms, and is able to support teachers in making improvements. There is a strong sense of common purpose among staff and they are eager to move up to a higher level of performance.
- All staff are seen as leaders who are accountable for their areas of responsibility. The roles of phase leaders are clearly defined and they play an active role in supporting their colleagues and holding them to account for pupils' achievement. Teachers are expected to use assessment data extensively when planning tasks for pupils and to track their progress. This level of involvement with data is new for some members of staff, but assessments are becoming increasingly reliable.
- The school has tackled the issue from its last inspection so that Year 3 pupils settle quickly, and there are more opportunities for them to get to know the junior school before they start. This has enabled learning to proceed more smoothly as soon as pupils join the school.
- Robust performance management arrangements are linked to the 'Teachers' Standards' and make clear that only good or better teaching is acceptable at Mulbarton. Teachers are given demanding targets relating to pupils' progress and the school's priorities so that they understand the part they must play in contributing to the school's success.
- The school offers a wide range of subjects, including French and Spanish, outdoor learning and library skills. These all help to make learning interesting and enjoyable for pupils. There is a good variety of visits, including residential journeys.
- Pupils study topics in depth and produce some good quality work. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 examined coastal erosion and pupils in Years 3 and 4 investigated the Ancient Egyptians.

They displayed exhibitions of their work for parents to admire. While pupils often use and apply their literacy skills in other subjects, they do not practise their numeracy skills so often in solving problems.

- The school makes sure that all pupils are treated equally in most respects and are fully included in all activities. However, pupils in two classes in Years 3 and 4 work in very cramped accommodation at the far end of the school. As a former middle school, the building contains some large spacious centrally located rooms, such as a science laboratory and a computer room which could be put to better use. The school fosters good relations with parents and outside agencies.
- There are close links with the parish church and pupils write to pupils in a French school. There is an emphasis on having positive values that contribute to a harmonious community. This helps to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.
- The local authority has provided considerable support in the past year. This has had a positive impact, especially in introducing different approaches to raising standards in writing and mathematics.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have a good understanding of what is happening in the school and know that it requires improvement. They are fully informed about the quality of teaching, the use of performance management, and what is being done to recognise and share good practice and to tackle any underperformance. They hold the headteacher and other leaders to account and ask searching questions. They know what is being done about salary increases and promotion issues. The new headteacher has helped governors to improve their understanding of assessment data and to see how well the school is doing compared with other similar schools. Governors keep a close eye on the budget, particularly the use of the pupil premium, and make sure that it is having a positive impact on the progress of eligible pupils. The Chair of the Governing Body has undertaken a large amount of training and makes sure that all governors receive the training they need to discharge their functions as well as they can. Governors see that all safeguarding requirements are met.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	120991
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	405983

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	168
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sam Bartram
Headteacher	David Oldham
Date of previous school inspection	20 October 2010
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