

North Denes Junior School

Jellicoe Road, Great Yarmouth, NR30 4HF

Inspection dates 15–16 January 2013

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

- Standards are below average. Recent improvements to progress are yet to be fully reflected in the levels pupils are reaching.
- Pupils' speaking, listening and writing skills remain too low. They do not have a wide enough vocabulary and their basic writing skills are poor.
- Teaching requires improvement. Although there is good and outstanding teaching, the quality remains inconsistent and this means pupils' learning is too variable.
- Pupils do not get enough chance to practise and develop their communication skills when working in different subjects, and are not encouraged enough to develop the ability to work on their own.
- Leadership and management require improvement. In particular, weaknesses in the way subjects are planned are holding back pupils' key skills
- The governing body relies too much on the information provided by leaders to assess how well the school is performing.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher's excellent leadership is giving the school a strong sense of purpose.
- Better teaching in reading and mathematics has already led to pupils making better progress in these subject areas.
- Staff and the governors are working strongly together as a team and are responding well to the need for rapid improvement.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and this has a positive impact on their learning. They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 16 lessons or parts of lessons, some jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings took place with the headteacher, staff, a sample of pupils, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors talked to a number of pupils, and looked closely at a wide sample of their work.
- Inspectors analysed and took account of the responses of 13 parents and carers to the online survey (Parent View), as well as one letter from a parent and 17 staff questionnaires.
- Inspectors looked at key documents, including the school's self-evaluation, policies, performance data, procedures for safeguarding, and the school improvement and development plan.

Inspection team

Geof Timms, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Ken Parry

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- North Denes is a broadly average-sized junior school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is well below average.
- The proportion supported through school action plus or a statement of special educational needs is well above average.
- A very small number of pupils are from a minority ethnic background.
- No pupils are currently taught through alternative provision in other locations.
- A well-above-average proportion of the pupils qualify for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, or those who have a parent in the armed forces serving overseas.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- At the time of the inspection the headteacher had been in post for one term. She is also headteacher of another local junior school with which North Denes is now in a partnership.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make teaching throughout the school consistently good or better by:
 - spreading the existing good and outstanding practice
 - ensuring teachers make consistently good use of other adults to support pupils' learning
 - providing more tasks that require pupils to work independently and solve practical problems
 - accepting only neatly presented work from pupils
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to use computers.
- Speed up pupils' progress in speaking, listening and writing by:
 - enhancing their vocabulary and speaking skills through more opportunities for discussion, drama and role play
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to write at length in different subjects
 - improving pupils' handwriting, spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Make leadership and management more effective by :
 - improving the way the school plans what is to be taught in different subjects, especially in terms of developing pupils' basic skills
 - ensuring that governors play a greater role in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement requires improvement because standards in reading, writing and mathematics have been well below average for a number of years. Standards are rising but pupils' progress in speaking, listening and writing has not yet improved as much as in reading and mathematics.
- Speaking and listening skills remain too low. Pupils do not have a sufficiently wide vocabulary and this holds back their writing skills. Handwriting, spelling, punctuation and grammar skills are too low. Pupils are improving their skills and in Year 6, for example, are able to write some imaginative vocabulary as an opening to an autobiography. However, they do not have enough opportunities to practise these skills by writing at length in different subjects.
- Over the past three years standards have been slowly rising. The current pupils in Year 6 are on track to meet the challenging targets set for them in reading and mathematics, and to improve further on previous years. Their writing is also improving.
- Progress is now accelerating under much improved and more consistent leadership and more effective teaching. A lot of improvements have been made to reading and mathematics. Boys now have much more positive attitudes to reading, and girls have more confidence in mathematics. This was observed in a Year 3 lesson where two girls began with a lack of understanding of how to complete a calculation. This was overcome and they gained real pleasure in learning how to approach the problem.
- The school is improving the currently limited resources for information and communication technology so that pupils have sufficient access to computers to support their learning and skills in different subjects.
- A small number of pupils join the school at an early stage of speaking English. Good support ensures that they make progress at least in line with their classmates. During the inspection a new pupil who spoke little English was supported well by a teaching assistant, and this enabled him to understand the point of lessons that he might otherwise have not followed.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs have made slow progress in the past but currently their progress is improving in line with their classmates. This is the result of changes to the way they are grouped and taught so that teachers now spend more time working with these pupils.
- The 2012 national test results show that pupils known to be eligible for free school meals performed at least as well as other groups. In writing and mathematics, their attainment was higher than that of pupils who were not eligible. Improvements to the way reading is taught are already raising their standards in English. Such help and guidance reflects the school's aim to ensure that all pupils have an equal chance to succeed.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The headteacher has made good use of training and performance targets to focus all staff on improving pupils' progress. This has had a positive impact already, but despite many strengths and an improving picture, teaching still requires improvement because inconsistencies remain and the school is not yet sharing the existing best practice widely enough.

- The teaching of reading and mathematics has improved. Teachers' subject knowledge has improved following extensive training, especially regarding reading skills and linking sounds and letters, and in mathematics. Teachers now ensure their teaching is better at meeting the needs of all pupils whatever their abilities, including those who find learning more difficult and those who are gifted and talented.
- The best teaching is extremely well planned and supported by good resources. Lessons are lively and interactive and the pupils are fully involved in their learning. Teachers have firm but friendly relationships with pupils and this encourages their participation in activities. It is rare to see any pupil not fully engaged. In some very effective teaching in Year 5, for example, pupils developed their mental skills in calculating with decimals through a very pacy and fun oral activity. In Year 6 they extended these skills well by investigating a method for multiplying decimals.
- Where the teaching is less successful, tasks do not promote pupils' independence enough or include enough opportunities to solve practical problems. This was done well in Year 5 when pupils had to work out how to spend an amount of money on an imaginary visit to an adventure park. The most able pupils had an extremely challenging version of this work in which they had to plan for a whole class visit. However, tasks like this are not provided consistently or regularly enough.
- Teachers do not have sufficiently high expectations for how pupils should present their work. Not enough thought is currently given to developing pupils' vocabulary and communication skills through role play, drama and a range of discussion activities.
- Other adults such as teaching assistants often provide very effective support for specific pupils, sometimes working with the less able and sometimes the more able. They are an important part of the staff team, but in a small number of lessons they are not always used well enough to boost pupils' learning. At times their work with specific pupils causes a distraction from the teachers' work with the whole class.
- Good recent improvements have been made to the marking of pupils' work and the feedback provided for them. Comments from teachers praise good work and suggest improvements and next steps. Pupils respond to these well, often making comments to show they have read and understood what is required. In addition, recent improvements to the way targets are set and shared with pupils on an individual basis have had a very positive impact on helping them to understand what they need to do to improve.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The new reward and house system has proved successful, and behaviour around the school and in lessons is good. This is clearly having a positive impact on pupils' learning and their engagement in the tasks provided for them. Pupils say that behaviour is good and that they feel safe in school, as one said, 'all the time.'
 - Attitudes to learning are positive. Pupils say that they enjoy coming to school and that they enjoy their learning. This is demonstrated in their currently above-average and much improved attendance and good punctuality. They are not encouraged enough to show their ability to work without direct adult supervision.
 - Pupils show respect for the school's premises and for each other. They enjoy taking on
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responsibilities, which they carry out conscientiously. Pupils are welcoming, friendly, courteous and well mannered.

- Pupils say bullying is very rare and usually well dealt with by adults if issues arise. They have a good awareness of the different types of bullying. For example, they are able to explain how to keep safe when using computers, thus avoiding cyber-bullying.
- Pupils move around the school in an orderly fashion. Playtime and lunchtime are pleasant social occasions. Pupils are well supervised and relationships between adults and pupils are very positive. They have good opportunities to engage in quieter activities such as reading in the library.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Despite numerous improvements, leadership and management are not yet good because remaining weaknesses in the way the school plans how key skills are taught are holding back pupils' achievement, and governance is not fully effective.
- The headteacher has worked closely with the local authority to provide consistent and strong leadership. The local authority has provided effective support and challenge and, through the interim leadership period, a boost to help the school improve provision and raise standards.
- The headteacher has provided staff with the direction they needed to build on the strong foundations laid by the interim headteacher. Time has been provided for teachers in the same year group to plan together so they are not working in isolation. Training for teachers and other staff has had a growing impact on rising standards, especially in reading and mathematics. In particular the headteacher has altered the focus of much of the school's work so that teachers are more aware of how to improve individual pupils' progress.
- The close monitoring of teachers' work by the headteacher and subject leaders has quickly helped raise standards and improve progress. Regular pupil progress meetings are based on an improved use and understanding of available data to show pupils' learning. These are enabling staff to quickly recognise and support any pupils at risk of underachieving.
- The money available through the pupil premium is used effectively to help pupils entitled to free school meals to take a full part in school life, including clubs and visits. In addition, specific resources and adult time are provided. The progress made by these pupils is closely monitored and the data clearly indicate that gaps in achievement are narrowing.
- The school's leaders have an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses. This is helping staff to make the improvements needed. In addition, they seek outside support and expertise as required. For example, the partnership with the other school led by the headteacher enables staff to work closely in joint training events. Staff have been able to take part in a range of training opportunities, including visits to other schools to observe good practice. They do not yet have enough opportunity to observe each other's work.
- The school is at an early stage of improving the way subjects are planned and taught. Changes to reading, mathematics and music have already been especially effective. Gaps have been identified, especially in the opportunities provided to write at length and in different subjects. Planning is beginning to make good links between subjects so that pupils can use the skills

learned in different ways. However, this work is at an early stage.

- The school is aware that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development also requires improvement. It has already made appropriate plans to improve pupils' cultural education, especially through music, and other aspects of personal education through changes to the curriculum and better teaching. Assemblies provide good opportunities for pupils' spiritual development through time for reflection.
- The education of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs has also been improved and this is reflected in their progress. The teaching provided for them has been better organised and focused, and their progress is being more closely tracked.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The recently reorganised governing body is led well by an effective Chair who has helped the school and guided them through a difficult and unsettled period. The governors are having extensive training to ensure that they can challenge leaders more successfully. Governors match available expertise to specific tasks. For example, a well-qualified and experienced governor takes responsibility for the good safeguarding and child protection arrangements. They have an appropriate understanding of the school's performance management and appraisal systems, and how these have been used in the past. Sensible changes have been made to the way teachers' pay is linked to pupils' performance, so the system now meets requirements. Governors track finances well, including the use of the pupil premium money, for which they hold the school to account. They support the school in deciding how this money is to be used. Their improved understanding of data gives them an appropriate awareness of how well the school is doing. However, they do not yet have a comprehensive system for monitoring the success of the school first hand through regular visits.
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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	120973
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	401985

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	211
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jacqui Ridpath
Headteacher	Debra Whiting
Date of previous school inspection	25 October 2010
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