

# Duchy of Lancaster Methwold CofE Primary School

Hythe Road, Methwold, Thetford, IP26 4PP

**Inspection dates** 21–22 May 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Pupils' progress is improving and, currently, compares favourably with the nationally expected rates.
- Small numbers in year groups lead to fluctuating attainment across Key Stages 1 and 2 but, over time, standards in English and mathematics are broadly average.
- Teaching is good. The basic skills of speaking and listening, reading, writing and mathematics are taught effectively.
- Pupils also achieve well in other subjects seen – for example, in art and design, drama, physical education and information and communication technology.
- Behaviour during lessons and around the school is exemplary. Pupils of all ages work hard in lessons and always strive to do their best. They enjoy the interesting range of learning activities that the school provides for them.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is highly effective.
- The headteacher and governing body provide effective leadership. Together they have improved pupils' achievement and ensured that teaching is good. They have a clear and realistic vision for the school's continued improvement.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The work set for the potentially highest achieving pupils is not always matched closely enough to the stage they have reached.
- Questions designed to challenge and extend pupils' thinking do not always involve enough of them in working out the answers for themselves.
- Marking does not always explain precisely enough what pupils need to do to improve.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 10 lessons or parts of lessons. Throughout each observation, the inspector was accompanied by the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, the headteacher, pupils and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector looked at the work in pupils' books and discussed it with them. He also listened to pupils reading.
- The inspector took account of the school's information about pupils' attainment and progress, its self-evaluation and plans for continued improvements. He also looked at documents and policies concerning school management and keeping pupils safe.
- The inspector considered the 12 responses to the online survey (Parent View), the school's recently completed survey of parents' views and 16 questionnaires completed by staff.

## Inspection team

Godfrey Bancroft, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average primary school.
- Pupils are currently taught in four mixed-age classes.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from other ethnic backgrounds is very low and there are currently no pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is low. The proportion supported at school action plus or by a statement of special educational needs is a little above that found in most schools.
- The proportion of pupils supported by additional government funding through the pupil premium, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils who join the school or leave partway through their primary education is significantly higher than that found in the majority of schools.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for the pupils' attainment and progress.

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

- Sustain the current pattern of good achievement so that more pupils attain the higher levels, by:
  - ensuring the work for the most-able pupils is always matched precisely to the stage they have reached and builds effectively on their existing knowledge and understanding
  - frequently posing challenging questions that involve all pupils in discussion, reflection and in working out answers for themselves
  - making sure that the marking of pupils' work explains precisely what they have to do to improve and involves them fully in understanding what they need to do next.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start in the Reception class with skills and understanding that are below those expected for their age. They make good progress there. Most enter Year 1 with attainment that is broadly average. The attainment of many children currently in the Reception class is on course to be above average.
- Standards and the rate of pupils' progress, particularly in Years 3 to 6, have fluctuated from year to year. This is partly because of the low numbers of pupils in each year group. Significant numbers also join the school and leave at other than the usual times, giving the school less time to influence the amount of progress they can make and their attainment, particularly in Key Stage 2. Assessment information shows that the majority of pupils who stay at the school throughout their primary education make better progress than those who are there for shorter periods.
- Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics is, usually, broadly average but, sometimes, higher. Attainment at the end of Year 6 in English and mathematics is also broadly average, although attainment in writing in the current year is lagging a little behind that in reading and mathematics. The work in pupils' books and the progress seen during lessons indicate that pupils in Years 4 and 5 are on course to attain standards that are above average.
- A far more consistent pattern of attainment and progress has been established for pupils who are in school from Reception onwards. This is mainly because school leaders have ensured that teaching is good. Historically, pupils' progress in Years 3 to 6 tended to stall. This is no longer the case. Pupils now make, at least, the progress expected of them, with an increasing proportion exceeding the nationally expected rate.
- Standards in reading, while currently broadly average at the time pupils leave, are improving and exceed expected levels in the Reception class and in Years 1, 2, 4 and 5. Younger pupils make good progress in acquiring an early understanding of the sounds made by letters (phonics), and results of the Year 1 phonics reading check in 2012 were ahead of national performance. Pupils of all ages enjoy reading, with a pupil in Year 1, when reading to the inspector, announcing, 'I love reading; I'm a bookworm.'
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs progress at the same rate as those in other groups. There were not enough pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium in 2012 to comment on their attainment and progress in English and mathematics. In the current Year 6, standards attained by eligible pupils show some of them are about a term ahead of most other pupils.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers invariably plan lessons that capture pupils' enthusiasm and interest. Work is also usually matched closely to the stage that pupils have reached and provides them with what they need to move on to the next level. Even so, there are occasions when the work provided for the potentially highest-attaining pupils is not matched closely enough to their abilities and does not challenge them sufficiently.
- Teaching in the Reception Year is well matched to the learning needs of the youngest children.

There is a carefully planned balance between activities that are led by adults and those in which children can decide for themselves what they are going to do. There are also excellent opportunities for these children to extend their learning outside the classroom.

- Teaching assistants and higher-level teaching assistants do an excellent job working with individuals, small groups and, at times, teaching full classes. They are involved closely in providing support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, those who are known to be entitled to free school meals and any who show signs of falling behind. The abilities of all these groups are identified at an early stage and they are provided with support that is matched closely to their learning needs. This work is proving central to bringing about improvements in the progress of all these groups of pupils.
- The basic skills of speaking and listening, reading, writing and mathematics are all taught well. A concerted focus on improving pupils' confidence as speakers is proving to be particularly successful and is linked directly to significant improvements in pupils' writing. Pupils in Year 6 speak confidently and thoughtfully when making presentations to their class about global warming and preserving the environment. This activity also served to illustrate the above-average standards attained by pupils in using information and communication technology and the highly effective contribution that teaching makes to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The high quality of pupils' public speaking was also seen during the auditions for the school's end-of-term production. However, there are times when teachers do not use questions to challenge pupils sufficiently, to extend their thinking or to promote discussion which involves all pupils in providing an answer to the question.
- The work in pupils' books provides compelling evidence of the good teaching that is supporting improvements in their writing. There are many good opportunities for pupils to produce lengthy pieces of writing in many subjects – for example, in art and design and in history. The most telling feature is that teaching clearly enables pupils to develop their writing skills with increasing confidence and independence.
- Assessments of pupils' attainment and progress are frequent and accurate. Pupils know their targets for improvement and older ones know which level they are on. Marking encourages pupils by celebrating what they have done well. However, it does not always point up with sufficient precision what it is that pupils need to do to bring about further improvement.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are outstanding

- Pupils' behaviour around school and during lessons is exemplary. They are proud of their school, willing to take responsibility and are helpful and supportive towards each other. Attendance is above average and no pupils have been excluded, even temporarily, in recent years.
- In lessons, pupils consistently work hard and show great enthusiasm for their learning. Even the youngest children quickly acquire the ability to work without direct adult intervention, often for sustained periods. Older pupils are rightly proud of their confidence to speak publicly and their ability to write independently. Their commitment to learning and to their school is amply illustrated by the enthusiasm they show for art, drama, music and sport.
- Teachers and support staff all manage behaviour consistently well. Pupils understand the sanctions that will be imposed if they misbehave, although it is rare for these sanctions to be needed. As one pupil said, 'None of us ever wants to lose our playtime.' They also value the

rewards and recognition they receive for working hard and doing well. In this respect it is regarded as a great privilege to participate in the cookery group as a reward for doing well.

- Pupils understand fully what constitutes bullying and the implications of bullying. They show great respect and understanding towards those less fortunate than themselves and to those who come from other backgrounds and cultures. Pupils are also fully aware of the potential threats posed by the misuse of mobile telephones and computers.
- Pupils have justifiable faith that should they face any problems, be they work related or personal, they will receive all the help they need from the adults in the school. Pupils express their appreciation for the guidance and support they receive.

### **The leadership and management are good**

- The headteacher and governing body are determined to maintain the current pattern of school improvement and the whole staff are united with them in this ambition. The capacity for sustained improvement is good, based on the current track record of pupils' improved achievement and the promotion of good teaching. Self-evaluation is accurate. Plans for continued development are ambitious, while realistic and achievable.
- Staff morale is high. Teachers and others are proud to work at the school and value the opportunities for their continued professional development. The governing body and headteacher ensure that the national standards expected of teachers are adhered to and that arrangements for the management of staff performance, rewarding of good teaching and provision of opportunities for promotion are linked closely to the school's priorities from improvement.
- With few exceptions, parents are right to be pleased with the quality of education provided for their children. The school also keeps parents well informed about their children's progress. Many parents help in the school and are very supportive – for example, by helping to raise funds.
- The programme of learning opportunities for the youngest children meets their needs well. Learning activities for older pupils also enable them to learn successfully. The basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics are promoted effectively. Being taught in mixed-age classes helps to provide pupils with a smooth transition as they move to the next stage of their learning. Pupils greatly appreciate the effective contribution to their learning made by visiting specialists, who teach art and design, music and physical education.
- The school makes excellent provision for pupils' personal – as well as their academic – development. Additional activities, educational visits and residential trips all help to widen pupils' horizons, stimulate their ambition and prepare them well for the next stages of their education. Pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development is promoted exceptionally well. In this respect art, drama, music and sport make a significant contribution.
- The local authority has provided the school with helpful support to evaluate its performance accurately and to identify areas for improvement.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body is supportive and well informed about all aspects of the school's work. Governors visit regularly and communication with the headteacher is good. As a result, governors are well placed to pose challenging questions to school leaders and are well

informed about the priorities for development, including priorities that relate to the continued improvement of teaching. Governors know what the quality of teaching is and make sure that teachers' performance is well managed so that rewards are based on evidence of pupils' achievement. Governors fulfil their required duties well and arrangements for safeguarding meet current requirements. They oversee the spending of the school's budget with great care, ensuring that the best value for money is achieved. For example, they are fully aware of how the pupil premium funding is spent and of the progress made by those pupils who are eligible to benefit from this funding.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	121046
<b>Local authority</b>	Norfolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	405987

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	101
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Cathy Marriage
<b>Headteacher</b>	Lynne Stabler
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	27 January 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01366 728280
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