

The Free School Norwich

Kings House, 11 Surrey Street, Norwich, NR1 3NX

Inspection dates 10–11 July 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Senior staff and the governing body communicate high ambition for pupils and staff to do well. The governing body is rigorous in its pursuit of excellence.
- All pupils make good progress from their differing starting points.
- Pupils are very positive about the curriculum and say that lessons are fun.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and make explanations clear to pupils so that they make good progress.
- Pupils appreciate the way that senior staff seek their views so that their interests are taken into consideration.
- The school celebrates pupils' good behaviour frequently. Pupils say they feel safe in school.
- The Principal and Vice-Principal have successfully put the school on a firm footing for the future by continually reflecting on their own effectiveness and by removing any reasons for mediocre performance by pupils and staff.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Tracking of pupils' achievement in subjects other than English and mathematics is not yet secure.
- Teachers' marking and use of individual targets do not lead to accelerated progress for all pupils.
- Pupils' writing is not extended fully in all subjects.
- The curriculum does not yet make the most of opportunities for pupils to make a significant contribution to the local community.
- Pupil-premium funding is not yet targeted for the intended purpose of improving pupils' academic performance.
- Opportunities for leadership to be distributed fully are just being planned for the future.

Information about this inspection

- Meetings were held with the four senior leaders, teachers, classroom staff and non-teaching staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and three other governors, formally with four groups of pupils and informally with others.
- The views of 50 parents who completed the Parent View questionnaire, two parents who contacted the inspector by email and 19 staff who completed the questionnaire were considered.
- Parts of eight lessons, an assembly, breakfast and breaktimes were observed.
- A range of policies, plans, assessments, pupils' work and minutes of meetings were scrutinised.

Inspection team

Heather Yaxley, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than most primary schools and opened in September 2011 having registered with the Department for Education as a non-maintained free-school academy to take a maximum of 168 pupils.
- The school currently has pupils from Reception to Year 5, with Year 6 pupils from September 2013, so there is no published data yet for the end of Key Stage 2.
- The school operates around six school terms with a break of two weeks between each term except between the summer and autumn, when the break is for four weeks.
- The governing body manages three activities that occur in addition to the normal school day, none requiring separate registration or inspection, and these were considered as part of this inspection: The Squirrels extended provision offers parents before- and after-school care; the Indigo Dyslexia Unit provides in-school support as well as for pupils in the community between the ages of seven and 14 years; and Little Acorns is pre-school provision for two separate groups of children and their parents. With the exception of the before-school provision, it was not possible to see these groups in operation but discussions took place with some of the pupils who attend the extended provision and others who get extra support for their dyslexia.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage.
- Pupils have come from 48 different schools across a wide area to join the school.
- Proportions of pupils with a range of disabilities and special educational needs supported through school action, school action plus or a statement of special educational needs are higher than in other schools, and include approximately an eighth of the pupils formally diagnosed with dyslexia.
- The school received pupil-premium funding for the first time recently. This is additional funding to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those in the care of the local authority and those from families in the armed services. A lower than average proportion is known to be eligible for support through this funding.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that all pupils make accelerated progress towards attainment that is at least above the national average by:
 - making sure that teachers' marking contributes significantly to pupils' development as highly active learners
 - providing a wide range of high quality opportunities for extended pieces of writing
 - targeting pupil-premium funding on academic achievement
 - assessing and promoting pupils' achievements thoroughly in all subjects.
- Provide a highly effective curriculum by:
 - distributing subject leadership so that each subject is developed fully
 - making pupils' personal development a key feature in all areas of the curriculum
 - providing good, sustained opportunities for pupils to make a positive contribution to the local community.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' attainment in each of reading, writing and mathematics is at least in line with national averages.
- Pupils generally make good progress from their individual starting points. There is no difference in the rates of progress for different group of pupils, including those with disabilities, special educational needs, including dyslexia, and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- By the end of the Reception Year, children attain as well as those of the same age nationally.
- Pupils who started in Years 1 to 5 over the past two years often had lower attainment on entry than those found nationally at that age.
- Pupils of all ages read aloud with confidence and apply the strategies that they have learned to sound out words.
- As a result of specific work to improve writing, standards have risen over the past year. Pupils say that they like the new approach to writing long pieces of work in literacy lessons because it is fun and it gives them lots of ideas to write about. Pupils do not yet achieve the same standard of writing in other lessons.
- Not all pupils take enough care over their handwriting, particularly in forming letters correctly.
- Children in Reception concentrate for quite long periods of time and pay good attention to what the teacher has asked them to think about, such as in activities that were all about using money.
- Current Year 5 pupils have settled well to their first year at the school and, having made up for some previous underachievement, are confident that they will continue to do well in Year 6.
- It is not yet clear how much progress pupils make in subjects other than literacy and numeracy because of limited assessments for the full range of subjects.

The quality of teaching is good

- Good teaching is characterised by teachers' strong subject knowledge with clear explanations to pupils about how they can test out what they have been taught, by themselves and through a range of activities and resources relevant to their needs and interests.
- The use of information and communication technology as a tool for learning is well established and pupils use the technology with confidence.
- Pupils do not get as much out of teachers' marking as they could because, although pupils now get constructive written feedback routinely, feedback is not always linked clearly to the quality of the learning that has taken place or followed up to extend learning from any mistakes or suggestions.
- Teachers plan different activities appropriately for different ability groups but not carefully

enough at an individual level when this could reinforce particular targets, such as incorporating targets from individual education plans or more widely for each pupil's social and emotional development.

- The training that took place this year to enhance the way that adults question pupils about their learning is put into practice well. However, sometimes the pupils have too little time to reflect on what they think they know through independent work because too much time is given over to teachers' questions.
- The climate for learning is good and encourages pupils to talk about what they are learning, why and what they can do.
- Relationships are good and any inappropriate behaviour is generally managed well.
- Pupils like lessons and say that they feel well supported by adults so that they can do their best. This includes pupils receiving extra support for their dyslexia.
- The suitability of homework is raised by some parents. The current system was implemented after the senior team canvassed parents' views and will be reviewed in the future.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- A wide range of rewards ensure that good behaviour is celebrated frequently. Pupils really like getting rewards for kind deeds as well as for working hard, such as The Owls, who take part in additional challenges, and pupils of all ages who work enthusiastically towards the bronze, silver and gold badges for citizenship, which are worn with great pride.
- Pupils' behaviour has not always been good, especially in the first year after opening. Some bullying does take place and is identified as a concern by some parents. School records show that, over time, incidents of inappropriate behaviour have reduced and such incidents are now rare. Pupils agree with this.
- Consistent implementation of the behaviour policy means that incidents of inappropriate behaviour are followed up appropriately by senior staff. Pupils know about different forms of bullying from assemblies and topic work.
- Pupils' attendance has not always been high enough, but is now at least in line with the national average as a result of some rigorous work with families and pupils.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and are taught how to stay safe. Pupils in Year 2 and The Squirrels can explain in great detail what they have learned about staying safe when out on school trips and how to play sensibly at break times.
- Now that there are more pupils on roll, playtimes can be quite lively and noisy, and staff and pupils agree that this needs to be looked at so that playtimes are quieter and calmer for all. Pupils would particularly like to use the garden area to sit and read or talk quietly with friends.
- Increasingly, pupils put themselves forward to take part in extra sporting activities and a wider group now represent the school in competitions, often doing very well against local schools, as in football and basketball recently.

The leadership and management are good

- The senior leadership team and the governing body have an accurate view of teaching and pupils' achievements, and have invested considerable time and money to train staff in the skills they need to improve pupils' learning, particularly for literacy.
- The Principal and the governing body know their limitations and the potential weaknesses as a newly established team setting up a different educational experience. They have sensibly made sure that priorities are clearly communicated and that expectations are firmly established within the school community. This has taken some time but is working well to provide pupils with good teaching and good achievement.
- The work done to improve pupils' attendance, academic performance and their behaviour has been effective in raising standards because of the attention to detail and high aspirations from the staff and the governing body.
- Parents who expressed a view are generally satisfied with their children's experience of school and, where there are concerns, such as for bullying, homework and communication, leaders are aware of the issues and have already taken some appropriate steps in response.
- The thematic curriculum, supported by a series of personal learning activities, is still in its infancy and subject to on-going development.
- Having appropriately prioritised raising pupils' achievements in literacy and numeracy, staff are now turning their attention to systematically improving achievements in other subjects.
- Opportunities to develop pupils' personal skills and for them to make a significant and sustained contribution in the local community are not planned in enough detail.
- Currently, the Vice-Principal leads on most aspects of curriculum development. This has worked well so far but is not sustainable in the long-term. Now that teachers, most of whom are relatively new to teaching, are more experienced as general practitioners and in the way that leaders want their vision to be realised, they will shortly take up responsibilities as subject leaders.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Appropriate arrangements are in place to safeguard children.
 - The Chair of the Governing Body leads governors well because he is very clear about the importance of a strong professional working relationship with staff at all levels and with parents so that governance is as objective, strategic and effective as possible.
 - The governing body has a well-organised system of meetings and responsibilities to inject rigour to their work and to provide continual challenge to senior leaders.
 - Governors know a lot about the quality of teaching and pupils' learning, and check that performance management is linked to pupils' performance and staff salaries, because they have the information that they need from the Principal to ask searching questions of its validity and sufficiency.
 - It is too soon for governors to have a view about the effectiveness of the pupil premium funding because it has only come to the school recently, but the funds have not yet been allocated to resources that will specifically improve pupils' academic performance; some parents have an inappropriate expectation of how the funds must be used.

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	136821
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	400323

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

Type of school	Academy free school
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	136
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Roger Margand
Headteacher	Tania Sidney-Roberts
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01603 761044
Fax number	01603 761044
Email address	office@freeschoolnorwich.org.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2013

