

Gillingham St Michael's Church of England Primary School

The Boundaries, Geldeston Road, Beccles, NR34 0HT

Inspection dates 10–11 July 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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.

- Pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics because teaching is good.
- Practical, problem-solving mathematics' lessons have a real 'buzz' of activity. Pupils are very enthusiastic to apply their skills.
- No time is wasted in lessons because staff and pupils have such positive relationships.
- Pupils known to be eligible for pupil-premium funding do equally as well as others.
- Extra help, often in small groups and tailored precisely to their needs, means pupils with special educational needs, and those who struggle, do well.
- Pupils say, and their parents agree, that they feel safe in school.
- The vast majority of pupils behave well.
- The effective curriculum is built on first-hand experiences and relevant activities.
- Staff form an excellent team. Morale is high, everything they do is for the benefit of pupils.
- Good quality training is given high priority so teaching is always improving to pupils' benefit.
- The headteacher and governors manage the school well. They are forward-thinking.
- Leaders have brought about very good improvements to teaching and pupils' achievements since the previous inspection.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Questioning is not used enough to encourage pupils to think further.
- When marking work, teachers do not always make it clear how pupils can improve it.
- Achievement in writing is not as strong as in reading and mathematics, especially for more-able pupils.
- Improvement plans do not make clear what success will look like.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed five lessons. All were joint observations with the headteacher.
- The inspector made other visits to classes, looked at pupils' workbooks and listened to a sample of pupils read.
- The inspector held discussions with pupils, the headteacher, other staff, governors and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector took account of the 12 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). The inspector also spoke to a number of parents and carers. The responses to seven staff questionnaires were also considered.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents including the school's own data on pupils' progress; planning and monitoring documentation; the school's view of itself; the records of how the school uses its funding, especially how the money from pupil premium is spent; records relating to behaviour and attendance; and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Robert Greatrex, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a much smaller-than-average sized primary school.
- All pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (the extra government funding for children looked after by the local authority, known to be eligible for free school meals or whose families are in the armed forces) is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is below average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- Pupils are taught in two mixed-aged classes, one for four to seven year-olds and the other for seven to 11 year-olds.
- There were too few Year 6 pupils in 2012 to comment on floor standards.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to outstanding by:
 - using questioning regularly to probe pupils' understanding and encourage them to think more deeply
 - making sure that pupils have a clear understanding of how to improve their work and have time to respond to the advice given in marking, and that staff check they do.
- Raise standards in writing for more-able pupils by:
 - offering regular opportunities for these pupils to work with others similar to themselves
 - increasing staff understanding of how to develop higher writing levels.
- Make sure targets in the school improvement and development plan are clear, measurable, realistic and challenging so that staff and governors are clear what precisely must be done, and how and when it will be achieved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Data show that, since the headteacher and new teaching team were appointed in September 2010, standards have risen at an increasingly rapid rate. In the last two years, every pupil has made at least the expected rate of progress in reading, writing and mathematics, and many have exceeded it. In Year 5, for example, pupils have already reached the levels expected in Year 6.
- Year groups vary in size and many are very small. As a result, one year's results can be very different from another. For example, test results at the end of Year 2 in 2012 were above average in reading only. This year, results are higher in writing and mathematics. Together with reading, they are all above average.
- 2012 was the first year the school had Year 6 pupils. In that year and 2013, very small numbers took the tests, and a relatively high proportion had special educational needs. From below average standards at the end of Year 2, most had made good progress in reading and mathematics, but only nationally expected progress in writing.
- Children start school with a range of skills and experiences that are broadly as expected by this age. Because of good links with the local pre-school, they settle quickly.
- Reading standards have been good for many years. Much emphasis on reading, including regular practice, often with volunteers, is beneficial. Teaching of phonics (how to link letters to the sounds they make) is very accurate and nearly every pupil exceeded the expected level in the Year 1 reading check.
- In reading and mathematics more pupils make better-than-expected progress than in writing. This is because tasks given in writing do not enable pupils to achieve the breadth and depth of content necessary to demonstrate a higher level. More-able pupils, in particular, do not always produce writing of the highest quality for this reason.
- Mathematics standards have improved over the last two years. When the school identifies younger pupils with particular aptitude they work with the older class and so learn quicker.
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because they are given the right extra help, often in short, focused small-group sessions.
- Pupil premium funding is spent well. The very few eligible pupils do equally as well as other pupils in the school and there are no gaps in their attainment.
- Basic skills are good. For example, pupils skilfully open computer programs, construct presentations, take photographs and use them to illustrate their writing.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The teaching of mathematics is particularly strong. Teacher knowledge and expertise is used very effectively and shared well between all staff for consistency. Enthusiasm and interest abounds when pupils are given problem-solving activities and opportunities through the 'see it, do it, model it and record it' approach staff use so well.

- Teachers constantly check pupils' progress within lessons so everyone is working at the right level. If pupils are ready for harder work, they are moved up a group. If the teacher senses the class has understood, even if it is quicker than she expected, they will be moved on.
- Technology is used well to support learning. It is used to illustrate teaching points, reinforce key skills, and to interest pupils in activities.
- Teachers often start lessons with some useful learning for the whole class, but quickly divide into ability groups for more precise teaching. Summing up at the end of lessons is effective when done in the same groups and focused on key learning, such as what makes the learning successful.
- In whole-class sessions, teaching assistants have very good awareness of the class and quickly recognise and help any who struggle to understand or concentrate. In group work, they make a skilled and significant contribution to pupils' progress.
- As far as possible, learning is based on pupils' first-hand experiences. A camp or castle visit, for example, gives pupils the memories to talk and write about their feelings and recollections.
- The use of questions is inconsistent. At its best, for example in mathematics, pupils are asked, 'What do you notice?' to check their understanding or provoke them to think further. On other occasions this does not happen and opportunities for learning are lost.
- Several marking systems are used, or have been used, leaving pupils sometimes unclear. They say they learn best when their teachers' comments clearly tell them what to do next.
- Homework supports learning in school well, particularly in mathematics where a computer program is used to give each pupil tasks tailored to their precise needs. The school promotes equality by making opportunities available in school for those pupils with limited or no access to computers at home.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The school is a very strong community. A particular strength is the way older pupils look out for those younger than themselves. They will very naturally spot a young child looking confused and offer to help.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are generally very positive and support the good progress they make. They engage more with practical and relevant tasks they understand and feel confident about. With some other tasks, they are more reticent.
- Pupils feel safe because they know staff have their best interests at heart. They themselves have a good understanding of how to stay safe, for example when using the internet.
- Pupils and their parents and carers feel the school makes sure pupils behave well. Both also agree that the school deals quickly with the rare incidents of bullying. One or two pupils struggle to manage their own behaviour.
- Pupils say they have a real voice in the school, and know that they will be listened to. They like the way that governors are involved in helping the school council.

- Pupils feel very strongly for those less fortunate than themselves. They are proud to support a child overseas of similar age to themselves, as well as people in their own community.
- Attendance is broadly average. Most pupils attend well because they like school so much. A very small number are absent for a relatively high proportion of time. Punctuality is good.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, staff and governors have a clear understanding of what the school does well and where it needs to improve. The role of subject leader is well developed so that all staff benefit from the knowledge and expertise of each individual.
- The school has clear momentum for improvement. Morale among staff is high and they make a very effective team. The results of the staff survey were very positive.
- Emphasis is given to raising staff expertise through good quality training, as in mathematics, which is highly beneficial to pupils' learning. Staff's skills and interests are nurtured. Staff visits to outstanding schools to observe teaching, for example of phonics, also help. However, staff understanding of how to enable pupils to reach high writing levels is not fully developed yet.
- Data are used very effectively to track each pupil. Staff discuss how extra help can be tailored to meet the needs of pupils falling behind. Later, progress is checked again to make sure this is working, and to change it if not.
- The school improvement and development plan accurately sets out what needs to improve, although how leaders will know sufficient improvement has been achieved is vague. This is because the plan does not set out in clear, measurable, realistic and challenging ways how improvements will be measured.
- Links are often made between subjects, to practise basic skills and use current knowledge in new tasks. Some days, such as 'Art Day', everyone studies the same subject. Pupils enjoy these days and feel they learn well. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is consequently promoted well.
- The partnership with parents and carers is very strong. Parents and carers responding to the on-line survey were overwhelmingly positive. Parents and carers say the regular opportunities to be involved, for example in the 'maths cafe' led by pupils, give them better insight into how they can help their children.
- Partnerships with other schools are strong because the headteacher understands the importance of a small schools working collaboratively together.
- Good support from the local authority helps the headteacher, staff and governors, particularly to improve standards.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have ambition for the school and plan for the future. Training is chosen well to help their various roles. They have a good understanding of information about the school, whether financial, including pupil-premium funding, or data about the progress of pupils. They know about the quality of teaching. They meet statutory requirements, including those for safeguarding. They know staff have clear targets and check arrangements to promote staff

and link to pay. They know what the school is doing to tackle any underperformance. They are beginning to question the school more. They know writing is a relative weakness, but not precisely how they and staff can check improvement.

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	121140
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	405997

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	45
Appropriate authority	The Governing body
Chair	Clare Seppings
Headteacher	Mrs Heather Brand
Date of previous school inspection	September 2010
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