

Hickling CofE VC Infant School

The Street, Hickling, Norwich, NR12 0XX

Inspection dates 11–12 July 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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 of all abilities make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Achievement is particularly strong in mathematics because the school has recently focused successfully on improving it.
- Teaching is good. Pupils are given a good range of interesting and enjoyable activities that make learning fun.
- Pupils behave well and have very positive attitudes to learning.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school and have good relationships with adults.
- The partnership with two other schools has strengthened leadership and management. The executive headteacher provides strong leadership and receives good support from the two senior leaders.
- Leaders and managers have successfully improved teaching and raised pupils' achievement since the previous inspection.
- Parents are full of praise for the work of the school. They value the opportunities that they have to visit the school and work with their children.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In some lessons teachers miss opportunities to use pupils' speaking and listening to provide a foundation for their writing.
- Not all pupils are confidently using their knowledge of phonics (the sounds that letters make) to help them break down and build up words that they have not met before.
- The school is still in the early stages of developing an appropriate leadership and management structure as it moves to a formal federation and a shared governing body.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed six parts of lessons. Five were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspector also observed an afternoon session where parents were invited to work with their children, pupils' behaviour at playtime and attended an assembly.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, the headteacher, other leaders and managers, pupils and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector looked at pupils' work and listened to pupils read.
- Account was taken of the school's information about pupils' attainment and progress, its view of itself and plans for future improvement. The inspector also looked at documents and policies concerning school management, including minutes of governing body meetings, records relating to behaviour, attendance and information on keeping pupils safe.
- Discussions with parents took place at the start of the school day. Not enough parents responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View) for this information to be used, however the results of the school's own recent survey of parents' views were also taken into account. Consideration was given to the five responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Sue Rath, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is a much smaller than the average-sized infant school.
- The school is, at present, in a partnership with two other local schools, Catfield C of E Primary School and Sutton C of E Infant School, which have their own governing bodies although they share the same executive headteacher. In September 2013 these schools are due to federate with the three schools sharing one governing body.
- There is currently only one class of 21 pupils. Teachers plan separate work for the children in Reception and use an additional classroom to provide a learning base for the Reception children.
- All pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. No pupils are supported at school action plus or with a statement for of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding for particular groups, including those known to be eligible for free school meals) is below average.
- The school shares a site with Hickling Hunnies pre-school but this is privately run and subject to separate inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the progress that pupils make in writing by:
 - creating more opportunities for pupils to talk about what they will write before they start writing
 - giving pupils more opportunities to write on their own without the support of an adult.
- Make sure that pupils use their knowledge of phonics to help them break down and build up unfamiliar words.
- Strengthen the leadership of the school as it moves into a federation with two other local schools by:
 - developing the skills of senior leaders to manage the school when the headteacher is off site by making use of expertise across the federation
 - aligning the priorities of Hickling with those of the other schools when formulating a federation improvement plan
 - making sure that governance arrangements across the federation make clear the roles and responsibilities of governors.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- There is no typical pattern of attainment when children join the Reception year. This is because of the relatively small number of pupils in each year. School data show that the balance changes from year to year. Good links have been developed with the pre-school. Children make regular visits to the school to share playtimes, attend assemblies and work in the classroom. They quickly become familiar with the school routines and get off to a good start when they join the Reception group.
- Recent improvement to the provision made for Reception children has meant that they are now making better progress. The current Reception group are making good progress. They are on course to join Year 1 with the same skills and knowledge as other pupils nationally.
- This good progress, illustrated by work seen in books and the school's own information on how well pupils are doing, is sustained in Years 1 and 2. All pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, make good progress. Progress is particularly good in mathematics because of the recent training for teachers across the partnership schools which has been provided by the local authority.
- With such small numbers in each year group staff get to know the individual strengths and weaknesses of all the pupils. Assessment systems are used which record and track their progress well. This enables well-targeted support to quicken their progress when necessary. Pupils respond readily to this help from teachers and teaching assistants.
- Although a recent focus on improving the teaching of writing has meant that pupils are now making better progress in lessons it is still slower than in reading and mathematics. Sometimes progress slows because pupils have not been able to plan what they want to say by talking it through with an adult or friend before starting the task. They then become dependent on an adult to help them structure their writing and do not learn to write for extended periods without support.
- In the 2012 Year 1 national reading check pupils had a weaker understanding of phonics than expected for their age. The school has carried out a review of their teaching methods and more pupils in the current Year 1 group are on course to reach the expected level. However pupils are not confidently using their knowledge of phonics to help them break down and build up words that are new to them.
- Pupils of all ages read regularly and often and say that they enjoy reading. They make good progress because of the individual and group support that they receive and the access they have to an extensive range of high quality books.
- The very few pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium are making good progress. This is because of the effectiveness of carefully targeted support from a teaching assistant. There are too few pupils to comment on their attainment without identifying them.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good across the school. The school's records and evidence in pupils' books show that this is consistently the case.

- Children in the Reception year benefit from good teaching and a range of activities that enable them to learn effectively when working with an adult or on their own. Staff respond to their emerging ideas and extend their thinking through careful questioning.
- Very good relationships mean that teachers and teaching assistants work very effectively together to plan lessons. They work in partnership to support individuals and to check pupils' understanding.
- Teachers plan carefully to make sure that the tasks are stimulating. As a result of this attention to detail pupils have a positive approach to learning. This was evident in a Year 1 and 2 lesson where pupils responded with enthusiasm to a letter received from a 'friendly giant'. They took to the task of responding to his letter with relish.
- Goals to judge success are used well to help pupils know how to produce a good piece of work and teachers regularly use these to involve pupils in checking their own work. However, on occasions there are too many of these goals for some pupils to manage.
- Since the previous inspection good improvements have been made to the quality of the marking of pupils' work, particularly in English. Targets are now set and shared with pupils on an individual basis which have had a positive impact on helping them to understand what they need to do to improve.
- The two classrooms are stimulating, positive working environments that encourage learning. The outside is also used to promote active learning. For example, during an afternoon lesson shared with parents, pupils were following an orienteering trail on the field, using a grid and solving mathematical problems.
- The support provided for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs enables them to take a full part in all activities and achieve well, in line with their friends.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' behaviour is a strength of the school and the parents, pupils and staff confirm this. Pupils enjoy their lessons and are keen to do well. This was clearly seen in their enthusiasm to answer questions. Pupils celebrate each other's good work and listen thoughtfully to each other's ideas. They show empathy for each other and there is no discrimination evident in their relationships.
- Pupils are polite, friendly and get on well together. They show good levels of confidence and self-esteem. Their positive attitudes and good levels of concentration and involvement contribute to the positive learning environment. Just occasionally, when they are given too many goals to judge their success in a lesson, some pupils' concentration wavers because they become confused about what to do.
- Playtimes are great fun and mainly free from any incidents because the school has provided a wide range of activities which keep pupils busy. Pupils play happily together and enjoy talking to their pre-school friends over the fence which separates them from the pre-school.
- Bullying of any kind is rare. Pupils say that any upsets, minor arguments or frustrations are dealt with quickly and effectively by the school. Pupils are aware of how to keep themselves safe and say they are safe at school and parents agree with this.

- Attendance is average and there are good systems in place to tackle any issues.

The leadership and management are good

- The school is extremely well led by the executive headteacher. She has a clear vision for how the school can improve. Staff and governors support this vision well and are enthusiastic about the leadership of the executive headteacher. This was seen in the unanimously positive response to the staff questionnaire.
- Senior leaders have risen to the challenge of leading and managing the school while the executive headteacher is off site at one of the other partnership schools. They have benefited from working with other leaders across the partnership, but this is still at an early stage of development.
- Leaders have an accurate awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and their improvement plan focuses on the right priorities to bring about improvement. However the school has still to consider how this plan will work effectively when Hickling formally federates with the two other schools so that the priorities of all three partners are aligned cohesively.
- The executive headteacher understands the features of high quality teaching and is able to judge teaching accurately. Teachers have clear performance targets that have brought about improvements in the quality of teaching.
- Subjects are taught through exciting 'themes' which engage and motivate pupils. These are regularly adapted to meet the particular needs of pupils. One example of this was the recent pirate theme which was particularly aimed at enthusing the large number of boys presently in school. A valuable contribution is made by additional teachers who teach music and French. The curriculum strongly supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This was evident in the way that pupils sensibly considered how to support a pupil who had no friends.
- Parents are very pleased with the school. They welcome the many opportunities that they have to visit the school and work alongside their children. This gives them a good understanding of how well their children are doing and how they can help them at home.
- The school works effectively to make sure that all pupils have opportunities to achieve well. Pupils' progress has improved and the school's capacity for further improvement is strong.
- The local authority has supported the partnership effectively during its creation and provided appropriate professional development for staff and governors.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has worked over the last two years to strengthen the partnership arrangements with the other two schools. However, as the school moves towards one shared governing body across three schools, roles and responsibilities are likely to change for governance to continue to be effective.
 - As a result of careful monitoring, governors know the school well and are clear about its strengths and what could be improved. They use information on the school's performance to compare it with schools nationally. Governors visit the school regularly to check on the quality of teaching and what progress has been made.
 - The governing body works effectively to make sure that arrangements for the professional

development and management of staff performance lead to improvements in pupils' progress. Governors know what the school is doing to reward good teachers and tackle any underperformance.

- Through appropriate training governors have developed the skills that they need to support the school and also challenge where appropriate.
- The relevant committee keeps a close check on the school's financial position and makes sure that money is used effectively for the benefit of pupils. Governors make sure that the school uses the additional pupil-premium funding wisely and check the effect it has on raising achievement.
- The governing body fulfils its statutory duties and takes safeguarding seriously making sure that 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	121043
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	412063

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	21
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nicki Hewitt
Headteacher	Mary Blackie (executive headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	01 February 2010
Telephone number	01692 598355
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