

Hethersett VC Junior School

22 Queen's Road, Hethersett, Norwich, NR9 3DB

Inspection dates 11–12 July 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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

- Pupils have not made the progress they should in the past and standards have not been high enough.
- Teaching is not consistently good across the school. The quality varies between classes and across year groups.
- Teachers do not always use information on pupils' previous progress to set work at the right level, or adapt teaching in response to pupils' understanding in lessons.
- Planning does not always focus enough on what pupils will learn, rather than what they will do.
- Marking does not consistently show pupils what they have learnt and the next steps in their learning.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to write at length, and the presentation of their work varies.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to use and apply their mathematical skills in solving problems in real-life situations.
- Leaders do not routinely check the work in pupils' exercise books to find out whether progress is improving or that agreed procedures are being consistently followed.
- Leaders do not work together closely enough to form a coordinated and accurate view of how well the school is doing.

The school has the following strengths

- Progress has improved across the school and a greater proportion of pupils are making good progress.
- Pupils achieve well in reading because the teaching of reading is good.
- Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning.
- Pupils behave well in class and around the school.
- The school has a very caring ethos where pupils feel valued and very safe.
- Pupils benefit from an extensive range of additional activities that enrich learning, including interesting visitors.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 20 lessons or parts of lessons, some of which were seen together with the headteacher.
- The inspection team heard pupils read, attended an assembly and, together with the headteacher and Nursery teacher manager, reviewed examples of pupils' work.
- The inspectors looked at a wide range of documents, including development plans, policies, and the school's own judgements on its strengths and weaknesses, safeguarding and subject planning materials, records relating to working with other agencies, and information for families.
- Meetings were held with pupils chosen at random. Discussions were held with the headteacher, members of staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and another governor, and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspection team took account of the 47 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) as well as speaking with parents.
- The inspectors considered 14 staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

Nick Butt, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Lisa Fergus

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is average in size.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- A small number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below average. This is additional funding for children in local authority care, those known to be eligible for free school meals and those with a parent in the armed services.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The headteacher is a 'local leader of education' and has supported other schools.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make teaching consistently good or better by:
 - using information about pupils' previous attainment and progress to set work at precisely the right level of difficulty for all pupils
 - using questions to check pupils' understanding and adapting learning in the light of their responses
 - making sure planning has a clear focus on what pupils will learn in each lesson
 - making sure that marking consistently shows pupils what they have learnt and what they need to do next to improve their work.
- Raise achievement in writing and mathematics by:
 - giving pupils more opportunities to write at length
 - making sure that teachers all insist on high standards of presentation in pupils' work and neat handwriting
 - giving pupils more opportunities to use and apply their mathematical skills by solving problems in real-life situations.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - checking pupils' exercise books regularly for improved rates of progress and to make sure that agreed procedures are being applied consistently
 - making sure leaders at all levels work together systematically to develop a coordinated and accurate view of the school's performance.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Achievement has not been as good as it should be, because the school focused in the past too much on pupils' attainment rather than on their progress from their different starting points. This meant that some pupils underachieved.
- Current standards are above average in reading, writing and mathematics in all year groups. As pupils join the school with attainment that is above average this represents no better than nationally expected progress.
- Achievement is not good because teaching is too inconsistent. This was observed both in lessons and through the outcomes of teaching evident in pupils' exercise books. Teachers' expectations vary and this means that not all pupils achieve as well as they could.
- The school has started to devote more time to writing so that pupils can write at length and apply their skills across different subjects. For example, Year 5 pupils wrote a ship's log from 1569 about their voyages on the high seas. While this is proving successful in some classes, it is not consistent across all of them because teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve vary. This is also true of the quality of pupils' handwriting and the extent to which they are encouraged to present their work neatly.
- Standards in mathematics have risen rapidly because the school invested some of its pupil premium funding in additional teaching time and this meant smaller groups and more focused support for eligible pupils, especially in Year 6. Across the school, while pupils' progress in mathematics is improving, the rate of progress varies because pupils do not always have enough opportunities to use and apply their problem-solving skills in real-life situations.
- Pupils achieve well in reading. This subject is taught well and pupils have plenty of opportunity to read a variety of texts and read widely both at school and at home. They are very enthusiastic about reading and speak knowledgeably about the books they enjoy. The school's library is easily accessible to all pupils and very well stocked and used.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to their classmates because they are well supported by teaching assistants, who work closely with teachers to meet their specific needs. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are also helped to keep up with other pupils. Teaching assistants have received good-quality training to enable them to carry out this work effectively.
- In 2012 a very small number of Year 6 pupils were eligible for the pupil premium and three quarters of them also had special educational needs. In terms of attainment, these pupils were a year behind the others in the school in both English and mathematics. While there are a small number of eligible pupils again this year, the gap in attainment has closed rapidly. This is because these pupils have had more time to benefit from the additional funding, which is spent on one-to-one tuition from teachers and extra support from teaching assistants.
- The school invested in a new tracking system to enable it to measure pupils' progress more effectively, and since then staff have been much more aware of pupils at risk of falling behind and have arranged support to help them catch up. The impact of this has been to accelerate progress for many pupils.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching is too inconsistent to be good, as teachers do not always set work at the right level for pupils based on what they already know about them. Sometimes too much focus is on what they are going to do rather than upon what they are going to learn. In lessons teachers do not always try to find out how pupils are getting on, for example through asking searching questions so that they can adapt the work in the light of their responses.
- Teachers are not always clear enough about what they want pupils to learn and this makes it difficult for pupils to make good progress. When work is not set at the correct level of difficulty pupils either find it too easy and are not sufficiently challenged, or too difficult and struggle to make sufficient progress.
- Pupils' exercise books show that teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve vary. While work is routinely marked, teachers do not always make clear to pupils what they have learnt well and the next steps they need to take. Around the school the quality of the learning environment is uneven and while every classroom has 'working walls' some work more effectively than others in engaging pupils in learning.
- When teaching is good pupils know exactly what they are learning and are given work that is sufficiently demanding to enable them to progress well. This was seen in a Spanish lesson, which involved all pupils at their own level of ability and maintained a brisk pace, with plenty of opportunities for pupils to speak the language. As a result pupils enjoyed the session and made good progress in using Spanish vocabulary.
- In many lessons teachers show pupils what they expect from them, sometimes using the interactive whiteboard as an interesting resource. In this way Year 6 pupils were clear about how to set out the introduction to a leaflet on health and safety.
- Reading is taught well. Through regular guided reading sessions pupils develop a range of skills and have plenty of time to read. They become confident and fluent readers and understand clearly what they are reading. As a result, standards in reading have been higher than in writing and mathematics over time.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour is good in classrooms and around the school. Pupils are polite and work hard. They have positive attitudes to learning. Parents who responded to Parent View mainly considered behaviour to be good.
 - Pupils say there is no bullying in school, and they have a good understanding of the forms bullying can take such as cyber-bullying. They value the school's very caring ethos, and the support they receive from staff. One pupil said, 'The teachers never give up on you. They will stand by you.' Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.
 - Pupils say they feel safe in school. They know about keeping safe. During the inspection, Year 6 pupils attended a safety course and learnt about different ways of managing potentially dangerous situations they may come across.
 - Pupils enjoy taking responsibility, whether as members of the school council or as 'playground
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pals' helping other children resolve any minor differences they may have. They link up with children from the infant school to help them as well.

- Behaviour is not outstanding because pupils can become compliant and passive when the work they are given is undemanding, so they do not engage with learning as well as they could.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Leaders and managers at all levels have not brought about consistently good progress or removed all the inconsistencies in teaching preventing it from being good. The checking of the school's work is not always sufficiently coordinated to arrive at an accurate view of the school's performance. Sometimes it has been too generous.
 - Leaders do not spend enough time looking at pupils' exercise books to make sure that they are making sufficient progress, or that agreed procedures are being consistently applied. This means that some inconsistencies persist between classes in the same year group and across year groups, such as expectations about the amount of work pupils can produce and the quality of marking.
 - The headteacher and senior staff have established a very caring ethos and created a happy school where pupils feel valued and very safe. They make sure that all pupils are included and are committed to equal opportunities for all, although not all receive the same quality of teaching at present.
 - In the past two years a greater emphasis on measuring pupils' progress has meant most pupils are making expected progress and the proportion making good progress is rising. Leaders accept that there is more to be done in making sure that all pupils achieve well and that teaching is consistently good.
 - The school has begun a programme of coaching for teachers and this has proved effective in improving teaching. Leaders set clear targets for teachers' performance, which are linked to pupils' progress and school priorities and hold them accountable for how well pupils perform.
 - The curriculum interests pupils, especially topic work. There is an extensive range of enrichment activities including clubs, visits and visitors. During the inspection a member of the Muslim community spoke compellingly about her faith during Ramadan, and an explorer was in school regaling pupils with tales of derring-do on the slopes of Mount Everest and the arctic wastes of the North Pole.
 - Other visitors have included a world expert on the Amazon rainforest. These experiences contribute well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils also benefit from having their own swimming pool and specialist tuition in art, design and technology and modern foreign languages.
 - Parents who spoke to inspectors or responded to Parent View were positive about the school. The school involves them well in supporting their children's education.
 - The local authority has provided light-touch support in line with the school's previous good rating, but has become more involved recently as it has identified that the school requires improvement.
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■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors are well informed by performance data about how well pupils are doing and the quality of teaching. They know how the performance of teachers is managed, what the school is doing to reward good teachers and how it tackles underperformance. They ask challenging questions, especially about pupils' achievement compared with other similar schools. Governors keep a close eye on finances and know how the pupil premium is spent and the impact it is having. They make sure that safeguarding arrangements meet current national requirements.
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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	121042
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	412137

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	230
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Appleby
Headteacher	Andy Whittle
Date of previous school inspection	6 July 2010
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