

Alderman Swindell Infant School

Beresford Road, Great Yarmouth, NR30 4AB

Inspection dates 4–5 December 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	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 often make slow progress from their starting points and they do not always reach the standards they are capable of.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage do not rapidly develop their early writing and mathematical skills.
- Teachers do not set accurate targets for individual or groups of pupils. Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to solve problems on their own, particularly the more able pupils.
- The quality of teachers' marking is too variable. Comments from teachers are not used well enough to help pupils to improve. Staff do not always insist on high quality presentation of pupils' work.
- Systems for recording pupils' progress is not sufficiently rigorous. Not all subject leaders have the skills to secure rapid improvements in the quality of teaching, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- Leaders and governors are not looking carefully enough at the progress made by pupils in each year group. Leaders rely too heavily on the end of Key Stage 1 results to assess pupils' achievements.
- Governors are not fully aware of all the school's weaknesses. The governing body, until very recently, has failed to challenge leaders robustly enough about pupils' achievements over time.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils' behaviour is good because they have positive attitudes to learning and they are keen to work hard.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage quickly learn to play co-operatively together, because adults handle children's emotional needs carefully.
- Good use is made of pupil premium funding to help eligible pupils to achieve higher standards than such pupils nationally.
- There is a very strong sense of community across the school and there is a deep mutual respect between adults and pupils.
- The headteacher knows the school well and she has worked successfully with leaders to minimise the disruption caused by the substantial changes in staffing since the time of the last inspection.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 12 lessons or parts of lessons. Three lessons were jointly observed with the headteacher. Two assemblies were observed. The school's use of a local wood (the forest schools scheme) was sampled.
- They examined the work in pupils' books, and looked at the schools records about pupils' attainment.
- Inspectors heard pupils read.
- They spoke with pupils during the school day, and at playtime and lunchtime.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, staff, and three members of the governing body. In addition, the lead inspector talked with a representative of the local authority by telephone.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's work including a wide range of documentation, assessment data, safeguarding information, minutes from governing body meetings and the school's own evaluation of its work.
- Inspectors took account of 20 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and spoke to a small number of parents in the playground.
- Inspectors took account of the 39 questionnaires completed by staff working in the school.

Inspection team

Teresa Kiely, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Moyra Pickering

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is slightly smaller than the average sized primary school.
- Most of the pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, supported through school action is now slightly higher than the average. This is a significant reduction from previous years. The proportion of pupils who are supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is much higher than average.
- The proportions of pupils supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding given to the school for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and other identified groups) is higher than average.
- Since the last inspection there have been a number of significant staffing changes including among the senior management team.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching so that pupils reach the standards they are capable of, by making sure that:
 - children in the Early Years Foundation Stage develop their early writing and mathematical skills more rapidly
 - teachers use pupils' progress information to plan work in each lesson that is at the right level of difficulty for pupils, particularly for more-able pupils
 - teachers' marking provides pupils with clear guidance about what they need to do to improve their work and to reach the next level in their learning
 - pupils rapidly improve the presentation of their work.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that all managers have the skills necessary to check the quality of teaching more rigorously
 - improving the systems for tracking pupils' progress and rapidly identifying individuals and groups of pupils at risk of underachieving
 - ensuring that the governing body is rigorous in challenging leaders and staff on the impact of their work in raising pupils' achievement.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Although attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 is consistently at or above that seen nationally, achievement requires improvement because pupils often make slow progress from their starting points and they do not always reach the standards they are capable of.
- Work seen in pupils' books, discussions with pupils and observations of teaching confirm that pupils are not making rapid progress. The attainment and progress of pupils in writing and mathematics are below those in reading at the end of Key Stage 1.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the recent national screening check for reading (Year 1 phonics check) is below the national average at the end of Year 1 and there is variation in the achievement of different groups of pupils. Boys did not achieve as well as girls and the proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs reaching the expected standard was below that of similar pupils nationally.
- Pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium funding reach higher standards than similar pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. This is because the school makes effective use of this funding to provide this group of pupils with additional support. In 2013, however, attainment for this group of pupils was around a term behind other pupils which demonstrates that there is still a gap between the performance of this group of pupils when compared with others in the school.
- Children usually join the Early Years Foundation Stage with levels of skills, knowledge and experience below those typical for their age, although there is a range of ability. Their progress requires improvement because not enough attention is paid to the development of their early writing and mathematical skills and children make slow progress. In 2013 around one third of children achieved the national expected level of development. Consequently, pupils' achievement is below that expected when they enter Year 1.
- The school's own system for recording pupils' progress identifies individual pupils who do not achieve their personal targets but this system is not sufficiently rigorous. There is insufficient reference to pupils' achievement of the national curriculum standards in reading, writing and mathematics at Key Stage 1. Teachers do not set accurate targets for individual or groups of pupils to always enable them to reach the standards of which they are capable.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs receive effective support from teaching assistants to enable them to reach the standards expected nationally and their progress is similar to that of other pupils.
- Effective use is made of online learning resources such as 'Mathletics' to enable pupils to progress their learning in English and mathematics at home and this is having a positive impact on their enjoyment of learning on their own and on involving parents in their child's learning.
- Continued emphasis on applying the methods and resources used to teach phonics (the sounds that letters make) has enabled pupils to continue to reach high standards in reading at the end of Year 2.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- The quality of teaching has not been maintained since the previous inspection. Teachers do not use accurate information about pupils' attainment and progress when planning lessons. Consequently, tasks are sometimes too easy or too hard for pupils.
- Teachers do not always ensure that tasks and activities build effectively on pupils' previous learning to enable them to make more rapid progress in lessons. Teachers are not clear enough about exactly what they want pupils to learn next and they do not have sufficient opportunities to think hard and solve problems on their own, particularly the more able. Resources, activities and the quality of teachers' questions are not well designed to enable pupils, across all the ability groups, to make good progress from their starting points.
- Teachers in the Early Years Foundation Stage do not provide children with enough adult-led activities or well-designed resources to help them to quickly develop their early writing and mathematics skills.
- Teachers' assessments of pupils identify those who are not achieving their individual targets but they do not focus sufficiently on addressing specific weaknesses in pupils' achievement against the national curriculum standards. This prevents teachers from planning appropriate activities that will help each pupil to make at least good progress from their identified starting points.
- The quality of teachers' marking is too variable and on occasion, work is not marked at all. Comments from teachers are not used well enough to help pupils to understand what they have done well and what they need to do to reach the next level. Staff do not always insist on high quality presentation of pupils' work.
- In the best lessons, teachers plan effectively to ensure that all ability groups have the right level of challenge. These teachers provide pupils with good support in their learning. For instance, in Year 2, the teacher modelled good writing, and this helped pupils to identify ways to improve their own writing further. They enthusiastically worked together in pairs and responded energetically to challenging questions which deepened their learning, particularly that of the more able pupils.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' behaviour is good because they have positive attitudes to learning and they are keen to work hard, even when lessons do not enable them to do so. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children quickly learn to play co-operatively together, and disagreements are rare because adults handle children's emotional needs carefully.
- Leaders have effectively ensured consistency in the use of the behaviour policy by staff, including those who are new to the school. This secures strong relationships, demonstrated by the deep mutual respect between adults and pupils.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school and they feel strongly about belonging to the school community. The school's own records show that it manages all incidents of poor behaviour very carefully and on occasion, pupils help one another to resolve their own issues, without needing adult support.
- Equality of opportunity underpins all aspects of the school. Incidents of bullying and racism are rare, and any occurrence is quickly and efficiently followed up by the school. Pupils, staff and parents say that pupils' behaviour is good.

- The school has a number of effective strategies to encourage all pupils to attend school regularly and attendance is in line with the national average.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because the school does not have an accurate understanding of children's achievement when they enter the Early Years Foundation Stage. Consequently, leaders' monitoring of pupils' performance as they move from class to class is not robust and this is why there has been deterioration in the quality of pupils' achievement since the time of the last inspection.
- Leaders do not have a robust understanding of the progress pupils make. They do not accurately identify pupils who are underachieving or ensure that the most able make more rapid progress. Subject leaders are not sufficiently clear about their responsibilities and not all of them have the skills to secure rapid improvements in the quality of teaching, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- The headteacher knows the school well and has accurately identified the priorities for development. She has worked successfully with leaders to minimise the disruption caused by the substantial changes in staffing since the time of the last inspection and together they demonstrate capacity to continue to improve the school. There is a very strong sense of community across the school.
- The subjects offered are balanced and are rightly designed to focus on improving achievement in pupils' reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils particularly enjoy their sessions in the 'forest school' and talk confidently and enthusiastically about what they learn there. The school's assemblies contribute well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural and development. New initiatives to improve the teaching of writing are proving to be effective.
- Pupils enjoy physical activity during planned time outdoors, and in 'forest school' sessions. The new school sport funding is used well to promote pupils' health and well-being in a number of ways.. There are good plans to develop the skills of all teachers in delivering gym sessions, develop outside play at lunchtime, and also replacing older climbing equipment.
- Leaders and the governing body ensure that good use is made of pupil premium funding to help eligible pupils to achieve well and take part in all aspects of school life. This has ensured that these pupils achieve higher standards than such pupils nationally.
- Teachers and their assistants understand their roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability. Staff accept responsibility for pupils' outcomes and teachers are set clear performance targets which have to be met before a rise in salary can be considered.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is supportive of the work of the school, and values the work of the headteacher. Governors are strongly committed to the school and its pupils and want them to do well. They meet regularly and ensure that resources are spent well, including the use of the pupil premium and school sports funding. Governors effectively manage the performance of the headteacher but have not been fully aware of the inconsistencies in pupils' progress. Governors are not clear about the quality of the teaching in the school, because they have relied too heavily on the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 and have not asked sufficiently challenging questions about the progress that pupils make in each class. Governors have undergone training given by the local authority and ensure that safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.

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	120974
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	427227

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	230
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris Wihl
Headteacher	Alison Hopley
Date of previous school inspection	10 July 2008
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