

Sculthorpe Church of England Primary School

Creake Road, Sculthorpe, Fakenham, NR21 9NQ

Inspection dates

5–6 February 2014

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

- Children get off to a good start in Reception because transfer to school is smooth and the good range of activities is well taught.
- Pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics because they respond positively to the good teaching they receive.
- Pupils with learning difficulties get skilled support to help them make good progress.
- Information about pupils' progress is used well to see that each one makes good progress.
- Pupils behave well, showing respect for their school, staff and class mates.
- Pupils have a good understanding of safety and feel safe in school.
- Parents say their children are happy at school and enjoy all the opportunities it offers. A typical comment was 'We've never had a day he didn't want to come to school.'
- The headteacher and governors have improved teaching and learning since the previous inspection. Staff potential is developed just as well as that of pupils, to mutual benefit.
- Membership of the Unity Federation is beneficial to pupils and staff, extending and expanding opportunities.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Sometimes pupils are not given sufficient time to think about the teacher's questions before the answer is given to them.
- Some pupils have few chances to work together to develop their collaborative skills.
- Pupils' ability to judge for themselves how well they are doing develops too slowly because these skills are neither taught systematically nor practised routinely.
- Some parents do not feel it is easy to communicate with the school and are not sure who to approach when they have a problem.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed eleven lessons. Ten were shared observations with the headteacher.
- The inspector made other visits to classes, looked at pupils' workbooks and listened to pupils reading.
- Discussions were held with pupils, the headteacher, other staff, governors, parents and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector took account of the 28 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and a number of direct communications from parents. The responses to seven staff questionnaires were also considered.
- The inspector looked at a number of documents including: the school's own information on pupils' progress; planning and monitoring documentation; the school's view of its own performance; records of how the school uses its funding, especially how the money from the 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 smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The vast majority of pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (the extra government funding for pupils looked after by the local authority, those known to be eligible for free school meals and some other groups) is below average but increasing.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is broadly average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also broadly average.
- Pupils are taught in three mixed-age classes.
- The headteacher is a National Leader of Education and the school offers support and guidance to other schools, most notably small Church of England schools, through the 'Improving Teaching Programme'.
- The school is part of 'The Unity Federation of Church Schools' with Colkirk and West Raynham Voluntary Aided Primary Schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - improving questioning skills, in particular giving pupils time to think about their answers
 - sharing the best practice in pupils working together, in line with the school's policy on 'learning spots'
 - building pupils' skills in evaluating their work as they progress through the school.
- Improve the ways in which governors and school leaders communicate with parents by:
 - giving parents opportunities to express their views in ways and at times convenient to them
 - explaining to parents the staffing structure of the school and federation, particularly who to go to if they have a worry, concern or question.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start in Reception with skills and experiences that vary greatly but are slightly below the expected level overall. They settle quickly because of good induction arrangements. They are inquisitive and keen to learn from a good balance of adult-led activities and those they choose for themselves. As a result, they make good progress and catch up by the start of Year 1.
- Good progress continues throughout the school. In reading, writing and mathematics, pupils learn well in classes grouped by ability rather than age. Pupils themselves bring effort and determination to their learning and try hard to succeed.
- Over the last two years, standards at the end of Year 6 have improved. The school's assessment data and other inspection evidence suggest that this will continue, with nearly half of the pupils currently making more than expected progress.
- Reading standards are high. The school works closely with parents to ensure pupils read regularly. Those seen as reluctant readers benefit from an informal 'club' before school. Phonics (how letters link to the sounds they make) is taught using similar methods in all classes so pupils know what to expect. In the Year 1 phonics screening nearly all pupils met or exceeded the level expected.
- Writing standards are good, too. For example, in the 'red hot write', pupils draft their ideas, look to improve liveliness and interest for the reader, and so produce high quality work.
- Mathematics standards are also good. When the school's analysis revealed a relative decline in attainment, school leaders identified the causes of the problem and put effective changes in place. These included short daily sessions to practise mental agility and opportunities to develop calculation skills. As a result, in 2013 all Year 6 pupils made the expected progress.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs do well. Teachers make well-judged decisions to teach them in whole-class sessions or small group activities that can provide a higher level of support. Often they work on the same activity as the class but with their task carefully adjusted, so giving a sense of involvement and accomplishment that enhances their self-esteem.
- The pupil premium funding is used well to support individual pupils and, as a result, the progress they make in English and mathematics is as good as, or better than, that of their classmates. Throughout the school, about three-quarters are currently making faster progress because extra help is tailored closely to their needs. In 2013 there were too few pupils to comment on their attainment without identifying them.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good and occasionally outstanding. Lessons are typified by a buzz of learning as pupils actively engage in the interesting work their teachers give them. All adults give them good guidance and they try hard.

- Pupils do well because teachers are adept at adjusting their lessons in the light of pupils' responses. If pupils rapidly demonstrate that they have acquired the expected knowledge or skills, teachers move onto to harder work; if slower, they break it down into smaller steps.
- Teachers also use their observations of what their pupils say and do to help them plan future lessons. In Reception, for example, technology is used effectively so children's responses to tasks are recorded and checked there and then against what it is intended they learn; this means the next lesson starts from the right place. This effective use of assessment is a significant improvement since the previous inspection.
- Information about pupils' progress is used well to set challenging targets, to check no pupil falls behind and to give extra lessons if they do. Teachers give harder work to more-able pupils, so they do well. In Reception, for example, it is a routine that the teacher explains the task to the children and then gives a further level of challenge to the more-able.
- A strong feature of teaching and learning is the way pupils are 'prepared for the unknown'. In the eldest class, for example, a new way of working is followed by the teacher asking, 'What may be the problems in doing this?' This teaches pupils to think ahead and be aware of potential pitfalls.
- Relationships are excellent. Staff trust pupils because they know they will not let them down; pupils are resilient and determined in their learning, with a desire to get better and better.
- Well-trained teaching assistants contribute very positively to pupils' learning. Their role is clearly explained so they always know what is expected of them. They are business-like, keeping pupils focused on successfully completing the task set.
- Pupils say they particularly like it when staff ask what they would like to learn about each topic they study. In a Reception topic about 'people who help us', for example, they asked to find out about a police officer's equipment and its uses.
- Teachers ask a variety of questions to clarify and probe their pupils' thinking so that they have to think carefully and call on their knowledge and understanding. On occasion, however, teachers' questioning requires improvement because they do not give pupils time to think about the question before providing them with the answer or asking another pupil, so they do not get the chance to work out a developed answer.
- In some classes regular opportunities are provided for pupils to work together, for example discussing work they find difficult with their neighbour on the next 'learning spot'. However, this strategy is not applied consistently in line with the school's teaching and learning policy so that at times some pupils struggle.
- In the youngest class, pupils are developing well their ability to judge how they are doing, for example by using 'thumbs up' to show the teacher that they understand. However, much the same methods are used by older pupils when they should be developing and refining evaluative skills against more specific criteria in the same way as they do for other skills.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The few occasions when pupils misbehave are generally

restricted to the small and crowded playground at lunchtime.

- Sculthorpe is an inclusive school. Pupils thrive; parents speak positively of how well staff cater for each individual's needs, the support their children receive and how the school builds their confidence and self-reliance.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils have a good understanding of personal safety and how to stay safe when using the internet, for example.
- Pupils enjoy working with the two other local partnership schools. For example, those preparing for high school say they benefit from having worked closely with others of similar age. Pupils say they particularly like working with others of a similar age from partner schools on 'federation day'.
- Older pupils look out for those younger than themselves and help to see they do not come to harm.
- Pupils have a real voice in their school so they are highly motivated. Their ideas are listened to and acted upon, for example events in school and which visits would most help their learning. The order of service at key religious events follows the suggestions of the pupils' Ethos Committee.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils understand the key values the school promotes, such as tolerance and respectfulness.
- Attendance is about average. The school has worked well with parents to improve the attendance of those regularly absent.

The leadership and management are good

- There is no standing still at Sculthorpe. The school is outward-looking and keen to hear new ideas that may benefit the pupils. Working closely with the local authority and seeking other expertise, school improvement is given high priority.
- The youngest class typifies how good management ensures that all pupils receive high quality education. As the class teacher has to spend time on other duties as assistant headteacher, her time and that of others is carefully deployed to make the most of their expertise. As a result, these pupils make good progress.
- The school has a strong focus on staff training. High regard is given to enabling staff to achieve their potential. Staff repay this with their highly committed approach. Morale is high.
- Particularly through the federation, staff are given opportunities to develop their skills and make a wider impact. 'Home-grown' specialists lead lessons in specific subjects such as art. However, staff are very aware that they must balance time supporting other schools with their prime focus on the pupils of Sculthorpe.
- The curriculum is excellent. Pupils and their parents speak positively about the 'varied diet of experiences' that are provided. The curriculum is enriched by activities such as shelter and fire-building in the outdoors. Clubs and visits extend and enrich work in school.

- Primary school sports funding is used well. Pupils enjoy a wide variety of activities, including some that they have suggested, and staff have received extra training. The school intends to evaluate the effectiveness of the spending through pupil, parent and staff surveys.
- Parents are generally very supportive of the school. They willingly help, for example with the school's allotment, and are keen to attend every event in support of their children. However, some parents feel that it is hard to get their thoughts across to governors and school leaders because opportunities given, such as the parents' forum, are not always at convenient times. Parents say they would also appreciate leaders being more visible.
- Work with the high school helps pupils prepare for their next stage of learning. All pupils have several opportunities to use and experience the high school's facilities. Gifted and talented pupils benefit from a wide range of opportunities using the high school's specialist facilities.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is forward-thinking and receptive to new ideas and innovation. It embraces the challenge of running three small village schools so that pupils enjoy the benefits of the 'family feel' of a small school, while the economies of scale and efficient use of funds make a wider range of opportunities possible. Pupils' safety is given high regard. Staff pay is linked to performance and governors know how underperformance would be tackled. Governors understand information about pupils' progress and school finance, particularly how specific funds such as the pupil premium are used. Governors remain reflective and self-critical and so, for example, have formed a standards committee with a tighter focus on providing challenge to school leaders. Governors also recognise that roles in school and the federation need to be explained more clearly to parents.

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	121126
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	440576

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	69
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike Coates
Executive Headteacher	Christopher Allen
Date of previous school inspection	5-6 May 2011
Telephone number	01328 862704
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