

Redcastle Family School

St Martin's Way, Thetford, IP24 3PU

Inspection dates

13–14 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	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 achieve well in English and mathematics and standards are rising. The proportions making more than expected progress are above national averages, often by a considerable margin.
- Teaching is good. Teaching assistants and teachers work well together to reinforce pupils' learning.
- Attendance rates are broadly in line with national averages and improving. Fixed term exclusions are dropping as pupils' attitudes to learning improve, often significantly, during their time in school.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils understand what is expected of them in and out of the classroom and respond accordingly.
- Pupils feel safe and well supported. Their parents agree.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
- The headteacher, staff and governors are working effectively to improve the quality of teaching and raise levels of achievement.
- The roles of subject leaders have developed well. They are monitoring teaching and progress increasingly well.
- Governors know the school and its surrounding community well. The challenge they provide accurately identifies those areas requiring improvement.
- The school has good capacity for sustained improvement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- More-able pupils are not always stretched by the work they do, especially in mathematics.
- Not all teachers make use of the data held by the school on the pattern of pupils' performance or respond to what these are saying quickly enough to close any gaps in pupils' learning.
- Materials used to promote reading and writing do not always interest pupils or catch their imagination.
- The outdoor learning space in the Early Years Foundation Stage does not provide enough stimulating activities to help children develop important personal and academic skills.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 17 lessons taught by eight staff. Four joint observations were carried out with the headteacher. Inspectors also observed a range of activities the school provides to support individuals and small groups of pupils.
- The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, members of the governing body, staff, and two groups of pupils. The lead inspector spoke to a representative of the local authority by telephone.
- In planning and carrying out the inspection, inspectors took account of the seven responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and responses to an inspection questionnaire from 28 staff. An inspector spoke to parents in the playground.
- The inspectors looked at the school's development plan, data on pupils' attainment and progress, records of the monitoring and evaluation of teaching, a wide range of policies and procedures, and the school's arrangements for the safeguarding of children.
- An inspector attended an assembly. Inspectors carried out a scrutiny of pupils' work jointly with subject leaders and members of the senior leadership team.
- An inspector listened to pupils reading.

Inspection team

Michael Sutherland-Harper, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Lynda Beale	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The school is situated in an area where levels of deprivation are above the national average.
- The large majority of the pupils are White British.
- An increasing number of pupils whose first language is other than English are joining the school. Some of them are at a very early stage of learning English.
- Some pupils join the school part way through their primary education or at times other than the usual starting dates.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above the national average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also above average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is above the national average nearly half the school are eligible and more than half in some year groups. This premium is additional government funding for particular groups of pupils, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, and those in the care of the local authority.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make more teaching outstanding by:
 - making sure that more-able pupils are always stretched by the work that they do, especially in mathematics
 - ensuring teachers make effective use of the data on pupils' progress to refine lesson planning
 - providing pupils with stimulating materials to promote their interest and skills in reading and writing.
- Provide pupils with more interesting and better-designed outdoor learning activities that match the quality of those they receive inside.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children enter the school, which is situated in an area of considerable deprivation, with skills and knowledge significantly below those expected for their age when they start in the Nursery. Reading, writing, number and language skills are especially weak. Cohorts include a significant number of pupils who do not speak English or who only have it as an additional language. By the end of Reception, however, most pupils have made rapid progress because of the good teaching they receive.
- Children who have English as an additional language make good progress because they are well supported in Reception and subsequent years. The school assesses them quickly on entry and reinforces their learning individually or in small groups, as it also does for the growing number of pupils, often without good English, who join at times other than the usual starting dates. The school has a strong emphasis on providing equal opportunities for all pupils and it does this effectively.
- Achievement in English is good, given pupils' starting points. Results in the Year 1 test of sounds and letters (phonics) and in the Year 2 recheck are above average. Key Stage 1 pupils benefit from an increasing amount of specialist teaching, first developed at Key Stage 2, to raise literacy levels and ensure good progress. Pupils are supported effectively in all years, especially where reading skills are not fully developed. For example, intensive work on sounds and letters (phonics) for a Year 5 pupil ensured that his English quickly picked up.
- Attainment and progress in mathematics are generally good but the more-able could do more. Following the focus on writing, which has been particularly successful for more-able pupils, the school is looking at ways to ensure that attainment in mathematics reaches and remains at the same good level as it is in English. It has engaged a specialist mathematics teacher to ensure that pupils are fully stretched in mathematics and well-prepared for secondary school. However, this extension work for the more able has only started recently and this group of pupils has not always been challenged enough by the work they have been given in mathematics.
- By the time pupils leave the school, progress in reading is significantly above average for most groups and increasingly so in mathematics and writing. Percentages making more than expected progress are now above the national average in all skills. Current data show that this trend is expected to continue at both Key Stages 1 and 2 in 2014 and beyond. The school attributes this rise to improved pupil attitudes towards learning and the more exciting ways in which all subjects are now taught.
- Pupils' reading skills are good. The library is well stocked and includes electronic readers which may be borrowed. Pupils have frequent opportunities to read in class. Reading logs follow the reading scheme closely. Pupils say that 'reading is fun because there are new words to learn and it makes you laugh when you read.'
- Literacy and numeracy skills are reinforced systematically in all year-groups across the school. Pupils are given new vocabulary in nearly every lesson and encouraged to apply it right away. Mathematical skills, including use of numbers, are linked carefully to real-life situations, such as the Year 4 mathematics lesson which looked at how builders use scales. This helps pupils make rapid progress
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium attain standards that are significantly above those gained by other pupils in all subject areas, including English and mathematics. Eligible pupils now

constitute a majority of the school's population, for example, two-thirds of Year 6. Funding is used effectively to provide additional support staff, reduce class sizes and provide small group work so that pupils' needs can be identified accurately and addressed quickly. Pupils are currently just over three terms ahead in mathematics and slightly more in reading and writing.

- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make increasingly rapid progress as they move up the school. In most cases, their progress is good. Progress in reading and writing is slightly better than in mathematics. The recent appointment of a specialist teacher is designed to close any remaining gaps.
- Pupils say they enjoy school and their parents agree. Pupils are interested in the range of topics covered in lessons and keen to expand this work, as seen in some high quality individual work pupils completed in one class on clowns.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is consistently good. There is no inadequate teaching.
- Teachers know their pupils well, make good use of questions to probe and extend pupils' understanding and support improve their learning. In this work, they are supported well by teaching assistants. Teachers have high expectations, assess pupils' progress accurately and plan lessons which pupils enjoy. Teachers model what they expect from pupils and adjust their teaching when necessary to ensure pupils are clear about the next steps towards improvement. As a result of this good teaching, pupils are now achieving good results.
- Relationships between pupils and adults are good. Teachers' own enthusiasm is promoting good attitudes to learning from pupils. All staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils understand that they are in the classroom to learn. Good displays show pupils how to improve what they are doing.
- In a Reception class, the display included many examples of pupils' own work. This emphasis on what they could do made them keen to read out their own efforts in writing and contributed to the good progress seen in pupils' books over time. Teachers' close work with parents is increasingly helping them to reinforce the work going on in the classroom.
- Reading, writing, mathematics and communication skills are taught well in the large majority of classes. Teachers have an enthusiastic approach to delivering the different subjects aimed at providing pupils with an increased range of skills. Teaching assistants' work with individuals and small groups, in and out of the classroom, is linked well to the teacher's approach, especially in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The school acknowledges the need to develop the outdoor learning space there to provide pupils with further opportunities to help them learn.
- The school has recruited specialist staff recently to ensure that teaching enables pupils to achieve at an even faster rate and to deepen their understanding in English and mathematics, especially in the case of the more-able. This approach, initially in Key Stage 2 but now being extended into Key Stage 1, is enabling teachers to work more closely with individuals and groups and provide tasks that develop pupils' strengths and interests.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, as well as those who have English as an additional language, are taught well because teachers know the individuals in their classes and usually ensure teaching meets their needs. Pupils' understanding is checked

regularly and parents are kept well informed about their children's progress.

- Not all teachers make good use of the data held by the school to identify patterns in pupils' attainment and progress so that they can further refine their teaching to address precisely the needs of all pupils and reflect what is known about their achievement. The materials used to engage pupils with reading and writing especially do not always take pupils' interests and skills sufficiently into account.
- Pupils' work is regularly marked and homework is assigned, and parents are asked to work with their children when they complete homework. Marking gives pupils clear guidance on what they need to do next to improve their work and pupils, in writing in particular, are beginning to respond. They have good opportunities to assess their own work and that of others. Presentation is generally good because pupils are proud of their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils behave well in lessons and have positive attitudes to learning. They are courteous to each other and work co-operatively, taking turns and listening to one another when they are having discussions. Pupils enjoy good relations with adults. Policies for the management and support of pupils' behaviour are followed consistently and are kept up to date and all teachers and pupils are clear about what the school expects.
- Members of the school council are proud of their contribution to the systems currently in place. They confirm that pupils respond positively to the rewards on offer for good behaviour and know that poor behaviour will result in a sanction. Parents spoken to in the playground say that behaviour is good and has improved.
- Pupils are well-behaved in their movement around the school and in the playground. When a fire drill occurred during the inspection, pupils moved out of the school in an orderly fashion to their allocated positions and checked that their fellow pupils were alright and with them. Year 6 pupils apply for jobs around the school, and are interviewed and receive a bonus at the end of their work if they do it well. In this way, pupils are prepared for the expectations of behaviour that they will encounter in the world of work.
- Pupils say that bullying is not tolerated. They are reminded repeatedly by teachers and teaching assistants that, 'we don't allow bullying in this school and take it seriously.' Pupils are clear about the different forms of bullying, such as name calling and cyber-bullying, and how the school takes action quickly to address any issues that arise. For example, inappropriate internet sites are blocked and anyone who mocks anyone else is quickly challenged by staff and other pupils.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils feel safe and parents agree. Pupils know that an adult is always nearby to help. One of the governors is known as the 'school grandma' because pupils can always go to her with any issues or worries. Policies to keep pupils safe are reviewed regularly. The school maintains good risk assessments to keep pupils safe on visits and in school.
- Attendance is broadly in line with national averages and has improved because of concerted action by the school. Pupils spoke positively about the rewards for good attendance. In response to school requests, the local authority attendance officer monitors attendance closely and procedures to ensure good attendance are now fast tracked. The family support programme is proving effective with the very small number of families where attendance is a continuing difficulty. Persistent absence rates are falling. Holidays during term time are actively

discouraged.

- There have been no permanent exclusions for a number of years. Fixed term exclusions have fallen to national levels. This reflects the school's approach to working with pupils in school to resolve issues.

The leadership and management are good

- The school is well-led. The headteacher, staff and governors are intent on creating an environment where pupils are well prepared for life outside and beyond the school. They are working successfully to raise achievement and ensure that all teaching is good or better. The school's self-evaluation and identification of areas for further development are accurate. It has a good capacity for sustained improvement because attainment and progress rates are rising, teaching is good and leaders are driving improvements forward.
- Subject leaders' roles are developing well. They have increased responsibility for monitoring the quality of teaching and meet frequently to ensure that planning helps pupils to make at least good progress in lessons. Subject leaders are reviewing the impact of increasingly specialised teaching for the more-able pupils but this work is still at an early stage, especially in mathematics.
- Procedures for the management of staff performance are focused on ensuring that pupils are taught well and make continual progress in their learning. Staff are held responsible for the progress of their classes. Progress up the pay scales is assessed against that progress.
- The range of subjects on offer is broad, balanced and reviewed regularly as part of the school's strategies to engage pupils more with their learning. The school has acquired a neighbouring field to enhance its provision for outdoor learning. It has recognised the need to develop the outdoor learning environment for the Early Years Foundation Stage to provide children with additional opportunities to develop their learning in imaginative and creative ways.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. In lessons, pupils have regular opportunities to use their imagination. In a Year 4 English lesson, pupils responded to a request to describe where Charlie (from the chocolate factory) lived by providing an impressive range of adjectives that went well beyond the picture they were considering. At the same time as it celebrates pupils' attainment, the school values the many cultures which it includes. Putting up the flags of the different nations represented within the school to celebrate important occasions reinforces the school's promotion of equal opportunities and cements its links with parents and the local community.
- Sports premium funding has been used to develop pupils' interests and skills by bringing in additional sports like archery and petanque and to provide a specialist football pitch. These initiatives aim to keep pupils fit and healthy and to offer facilities not currently available locally.
- The school has strong links with the local authority which knows the school's needs well and has provided regular support to help it overcome the variety of challenges it faces.
- Safeguarding procedures meet all current requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is good. Governors have enhanced their understanding of data and its uses

through further training. They are also well trained in safeguarding and safer recruitment procedures. They monitor closely the use and impact of pupil premium funding in raising attainment and progress rates. Governors are supportive of the school's work and offer challenge where they feel that achievement and the quality of teaching need to improve. This means that they are able to keep a close eye on the management of staff performance and ensure staff are accountable for their pupils' results. Governors' regular visits and frequent communication with the headteacher ensure that they know about the quality of teaching and what is going on in lessons. Good teaching is acknowledged in minutes of the governing body and by appropriate reward when appropriate.

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	120905
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	439426

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	208
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Pat Pearson
Headteacher	Andrew Sheppard
Date of previous school inspection	11 October 2012
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