

Northern Infant School

Richmond Rise, Portchester, Fareham, Hampshire, PO16 8DG

Inspection dates 12–13 March 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

- All groups of pupils make good progress from their low starting points and many reach standards above other pupils nationally by the end of Year 2.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage settle quickly to school and they too make good progress.
- The good achievement is largely due to teaching that is typically good. Teaching has improved recently because of very effective quality training and coaching, and through rigorous checks on its quality.
- Teaching assistants are skilled and provide good support, especially for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. As a result, these pupils make good progress.
- Pupils enjoy school and feel safe. Their behaviour in lessons is never less than good. Parents agree that the school is a safe and enjoyable place to learn.
- Strong emphasis on provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development underpins excellent relationships seen across the school.
- The executive headteacher, well supported by the head of school and governors, has provided a welcome new vision and impetus to the school's development through her strong leadership.
- Improvements in teaching, the consolidation of pupils' achievement, a clearer and a more accurate system of checking on progress have all been achieved with considerable success.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not enough outstanding teaching to ensure that pupils' achievement can be improved further, especially the most able.
- Some middle leaders, who are comparatively new to the role, are not yet playing the fullest part in checking on their subjects and driving forward improvements.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited eight lessons, two of which were observed jointly with the executive headteacher and head of school.
- The inspector talked with a group of pupils about life in the school and heard individual pupils from Year 2 read.
- A wide range of documents was scrutinised, including pupils' work, systems for checking progress, records relating to behaviour and attendance, records relating to the monitoring of the quality of teaching and documents relating to safeguarding.
- A meeting was held with members of the joint governing body, school staff and a member of the local authority.
- Questionnaires received from 17 members of staff were analysed. The inspector took account of the views expressed in 17 online responses to Parent View.

Inspection team

Gavin Jones, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Northern Infant School is much smaller than the average-sized infant school.
- Although the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national average, the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding (those eligible for free school meals, those in local authority care and those with a parent or carer in the armed forces) is well above average because of the larger proportion of children of forces personnel.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is well below average.
- The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well below average, as is the proportion who speaks English as an additional language.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of two Reception classes.
- There is a private nursery on site.
- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are taught in mixed-age classes.
- Since the last inspection, eight teachers have left or joined the school.
- The school is federated with the adjacent junior school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching in order to raise achievement further by:
 - giving opportunities to teachers to observe how outstanding teaching caters for the most able pupils
 - ensuring that feedback following lesson observations focuses clearly on how teaching can be improved to outstanding.
- Develop the skills of middle leaders so that they play a full part in driving forward further school improvement by:
 - offering them opportunities to learn alongside well-established high-level leaders in an outstanding school
 - enabling what they learn to be used to develop the practice of their colleagues within their own subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join the school in Reception with skills, knowledge and understanding that are well below what are typical for their age. This is especially the case in language and communication skills and personal development.
- The ways in which children are encouraged to make choices about their learning, and the thoughtful ways in which adults take part in activities, help children become confident learners and make good progress in Reception.
- Phonics (the sounds that letters make) is now taught well, after the school changed its approach following a year of poor results in the annual phonic screening check. The most recent results are much improved and at the national average.
- When listening to children read, it is clear that they are able to use their phonic skills to help them to read. They read aloud with enthusiasm and are excited by the books they have. Many parents of Reception children come into school for 'Early Bird Reading', when they join their children for 10 to 15 minutes at the start of the day to share reading experiences.
- Key Stage 1 results of the national tests show that, over several years, pupils have achieved above national averages. This has been particularly the case in reading and mathematics. Pupils are currently well on track to make similar good progress, heading for at least average and possibly above average attainment by the end of the year.
- Work in pupils' books shows that the vast majority are making good progress in their learning; although, very occasionally, the work given to the most able is too similar to that given to other pupils and is not always challenging enough.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are well supported by both teachers and skilled teaching assistants. This support, combined with the use of a range of specific programmes, ensures that they make good progress. The oversight of these pupils by the special needs coordinator is of a high standard.
- The gap between pupils who are being supported by pupil premium funding and all other pupils is reducing over time. Many of these pupils have other specific needs, which might slow their progress. The school's tracking, however, shows that with good support, at most, these pupils are about one term behind others in both English and mathematics. This gap continues to close.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is typically good, with a small proportion that is outstanding. Teaching enables pupils to make good progress and achieve well. Where teaching is at its best, teachers place a keen focus on providing for the full range of abilities of their pupils.
- Teaching and learning in the Reception classes are consistently good, and sometimes better. Teachers are skilful at judging the right level of support and guidance in order to keep learning moving.
- Pupils are generally clear about what they are going to learn and the varied abilities of learners are usually recognised through different challenging work. From time to time, this is not the case; learning can become too easy for the most able, which means that they do not make the progress they could.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour. They manage behaviour well and this allows pupils to work well. This was very easy to see in Reception where teaching was consistently effective and children were working eagerly and discussing what they would be doing and learning in their next 'discovery' lesson.
- Teachers mark pupils' work well, so that pupils know how well they are doing. Teachers often write specific comments on how pupils could improve their work. Very occasionally this is not discussed with the pupils and limits their rate of improvement.

- Parents say unanimously in the school's own questionnaire, and in the online survey, that teaching is good and provides a firm foundation for their children's learning.
- Pupils enjoy their learning and say it is fun.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and across the school is never less than good. Exclusions and incidents of challenging behaviour are rare. Parents agree that behaviour is good and that staff deal with any incidents quickly and fairly.
- In discussion with pupils, they showed themselves to be very proud of their school, and while they knew of different forms of bullying, they confirmed that it was extremely rare.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe is good. Pupils say they feel very safe 'because teachers look after us'. They also say that there is always someone to talk to if they are worried.
- There are good systems for promoting good behaviour. Rewards are used carefully and pupils work hard and behave well to gain them.
- Attendance is average, although it does vary from year to year.
- In lessons, the vast majority of pupils are interested in what their teacher is saying; they respond readily to questions and are well motivated. This positive attitude to learning contributes to the good progress they make in their work.
- Where teaching is outstanding, so is behaviour. In an outstanding lesson in Reception, children listened carefully as the teacher showed them how a beam balance worked and then they took turns sharing the equipment without any fuss. In another lesson, children watched carefully as a child moved coins around the interactive whiteboard pretending to give change.

The leadership and management are good

- Since the previous inspection, the school has been through significant upheaval in terms of changes in staff. However, over the past year, the new executive headteacher has created, with the close cooperation of the headteachers of the two senior leaders of the federation, 'two schools one family'. Together, they have made a significant number of changes which have improved achievement, teaching and behaviour.
- Together, they have been seen as a strong force for change. They have a clear understanding of what is working well and what needs to be changed or improved. This is clearly understood by staff who all responded positively to the questionnaire. Parents responded in the same positive way.
- Teaching has improved and is now more consistently good. Regular checking has highlighted individual needs, and support has been given to help improvements take place. For example, marking, a weakness at the last inspection, is now much clearer and more helpful to pupils.
- The school now has a much more rigorous and accurate approach to gathering and using information about pupils' progress. Teachers log their own information on a school-wide system, which enables leaders to access it and check progress across the school. It is also used successfully at pupil progress meetings where the progress of individuals is shared with senior leaders, and so any early signs of underachievement can be tackled.
- Leaders monitor developments carefully and accurately. They use this information effectively to set targets for improvement. Improvement plans are overseen by governors who have a clear picture of how the school is developing. Some middle leaders are quite new to their posts and have not yet had enough opportunities to observe experienced high-quality leaders at work and to use this experience to help them improve their subjects further.
- There is a strong partnership between the infant and junior schools, which is mutually beneficial. Middle leaders are shared; a new computer system links the two sites, and many other

resources, together with the expertise of staff, are shared to the benefit of all pupils.

- The development of the curriculum is something that both schools are currently engaged in. They have worked together over some time already, discussing how they might create schemes of work, show how pupils will learn a range of skills over their whole time in the two schools and how the school will be ready for the new National Curriculum at the end of this year. This is a very innovative and well-planned joint venture led by senior leaders.
 - Equally strong is the partnership with parents and carers. Their responses to various questionnaires are very positive and their rates of attendance at a range of school functions are usually high. Recent opportunities for parents to see how they could support mathematics with their children were popular, as are 'Early Bird Reading' sessions.
 - Sports funding is used effectively to train and support staff in their knowledge of physical education teaching. This has resulted in staff gaining skills and pupils having more opportunities to take part in competitive events. There are now more sport-related clubs for them to join and an overall improvement is being seen in their understanding of healthy lifestyles.
 - The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. For example, pupils play important roles in the school as part of its 'Pupil Voice'. Older pupils help younger ones at play times and all pupils are developing a clear picture of how to behave and relate to others.
 - The local authority provides good support to the school. It offers a range of support and responds readily to specific requests. This has been particularly helpful in the development of work in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors bring a wide range of skills to their work. They have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for development, gained through discussions and visits to the school. They monitor the work of the school carefully and not only support the school in its work but, at the same time, are prepared to challenge decisions or information they are given. Governors are well informed about the expenditure and impact of pupil premium funding and the sports funding money. Governors have comprehensive information about teachers' performance and how that might lead to increases in pay. They carry out their statutory duties well in relation to safeguarding.
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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	116030
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	443551

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	129
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Ryan
Executive Headteacher	Carol Walters
Head of school	Sally Townsend
Date of previous school inspection	8–9 November 2010
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