

North Denes Junior School

Jellicoe Road, Great Yarmouth, NR30 4HF

Inspection dates

27–28 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.

- The headteacher's outstanding leadership has brought about rapid improvement since her appointment shortly before the last inspection.
- Teaching is now good and sometimes excellent because senior leaders have provided a wide range of training for all staff and regularly check on the quality of teaching.
- More pupils than previously are making better than expected progress so that attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is rising across the school.
- Attainment is now at least average by the time pupils leave the school.
- The deputy headteacher and other leaders have played a key part in helping the school to improve rapidly.
- Governors are effective partners in leading the school and offer a good level of challenge to the school's performance.
- Teaching and the activities provided for pupils contribute very strongly to their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Relationships throughout the school are excellent and pupils are very keen to improve their work and achieve well.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good and often excellent.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The work set is sometimes too easy for the more-able pupils, who really enjoy responding to the challenge of more difficult work.
- Comments in teachers' marking too frequently praise pupils when they have not produced enough work.
- Pupils do not write enough at length so that they can practise their good literacy skills.
- Pupils, particularly those who are more able, are not being taught the best way of solving their mathematics problems as soon as they are ready.
- In some mathematics lessons teachers are not checking the accuracy of pupils' work. This means that mistakes are not being identified quickly enough.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 15 lessons, four of which were observed jointly with the headteacher. Inspectors also observed pupils moving around the school, in the dining room and at break and lunchtimes. They listened to pupils read.
- Discussions were held with pupils, senior and subject leaders, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 15 responses to Parent View (Ofsted’s online questionnaire for parents) as well as the views of a large number of parents who spoke to inspectors and those expressed in the school’s most recent parental questionnaire. Inspectors took account of the responses to a questionnaire by 21 staff.
- Inspectors looked closely at a range of documentation, including the school’s data about the progress of pupils, leaders’ evaluation of the school’s strengths and weaknesses, improvement plans, safeguarding policies and records relating to the management of teachers’ performance.

Inspection team

Nichola Perry, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Lynn Lowery

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school.
- The vast majority of the pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium funding is much higher than average. This is additional money given to schools for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those looked after by the local authority 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 lower than average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is higher than average.
- The headteacher, who joined the school shortly before the previous inspection, is also the headteacher of Ormesby Junior School with which North Denes is in a partnership.
- The number on roll at the school has increased very significantly this year from 211 to 243. Pupils joined Year 3 from eight schools instead of two in past years.
- 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 more teaching outstanding and raise achievement, particularly in mathematics and writing, by all teachers:
 - challenging pupils, especially the most-able pupils, to aim higher by routinely setting more demanding work in lessons
 - making sure they cover more efficient ways of solving problems in mathematics as soon as pupils are ready and checking pupils' answers more closely so that mistakes are rectified straight away
 - not giving undue praise when pupils produce too little work of a good standard in the time allowed
 - providing more regular opportunities for pupils to write at length and practise their skills.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Standards have improved since the last inspection. Results in the national tests in 2013 were average in reading and writing, although attainment in mathematics slipped from the previous year. In the current Year 6 standards are continuing to rise and are on track to be above average in 2014. Attainment in all three subjects is rising in Years 3 to 6 because more pupils than in the past are now making the progress expected for their age. An increasingly higher proportion now make faster than the expected progress. This accelerated progress represents good improvement since the previous inspection.
- Learning is well planned and structured, and focuses strongly on making sure that all pupils have a good grasp of basic skills. Pupils who struggle with their learning are effectively supported by skilled additional adults. As a result, pupils are now working at higher levels than in the past. This means that teachers need to spend less time helping the older pupils to fill gaps in their learning. Where pupils still need to catch-up, additional sessions are put in place quickly so that pupils are not disadvantaged.
- Good emphasis is placed on communication and language, for example through drama activities, role play, use of talk partners or group work, all of which help all pupils to develop greater confidence in their reading and writing. Focused teaching of basic mathematical skills is having a similar effect on most pupils' learning. However, more-able pupils are sometimes prevented from making more rapid progress, and reaching the higher levels, when they are not learning the best methods to solve problems and apply their skills.
- Effective teaching of reading means that pupils in all year groups make good progress in developing their skills. Younger pupils make rapid progress, based on their good knowledge of phonics (the link between letters and the sounds they make) because they are successfully taught how to use their skills to help them with their reading. Pupils read very regularly, both formally and informally in lessons, and many are developing a love of reading.
- The way teachers link reading and writing is helping pupils' understand how authors use rich and exciting language in their books. Pupils are learning well how to improve their own sentences and this is increasingly reflected throughout their writing. However, pupils do not apply their good knowledge in unstructured formats, for example when writing at length in other subjects.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress. A range of additional sessions and one-to-one support for pupils with specific or complex needs enables them to make up lost ground and provides extra help when pupils struggle with their learning. The increasing numbers of pupils joining the school from other countries, who speak English as an additional language, are supported well and helped to settle quickly so that they can achieve as well as others.
- Progress and attainment for pupils supported by pupil premium funding, many of whom also have special educational needs, continues to improve. In 2013, pupils in Year 6 supported through the pupil premium were one and half terms behind their classmates in writing, three terms behind in mathematics, but slightly ahead in reading. School data and lesson observations indicate that the current progress of eligible pupils is accelerating to match that of other pupils and the attainment gap is reducing.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is typically good. Consistently good and often outstanding teaching in Year 6 challenges pupils particularly well. Several lessons observed during the inspection showed teaching to be outstanding. Best practice is being shared effectively to improve teaching both within the school and with the headteacher's partner school. Teachers are also being helped to improve their practice when subject leaders offer help and advice about teaching specific strategies.
- A strong aspect of all teaching is the respect that adults show towards each other and the pupils. This very successfully develops pupils' desire to improve their work and the way they listen to and respect the views and contributions of others. This approach to teaching has resulted in a delightful atmosphere for learning in classrooms and was summed up by a pupil saying, 'We are encouraged to be better, not just at things we're not good at but to be even better at the things we're already good at'.
- Teachers mostly plan work which challenges pupils of all abilities. Often pupils are encouraged to choose their own level of challenge, although there is no routine checking of this so that work set is sometimes too easy for higher-attaining pupils. Teaching usually exemplifies precisely what is expected of pupils and how they can achieve this. As a result, pupils are rapidly acquiring important skills. For example, the many opportunities they have to practise their basic literacy skills systematically in their English books contribute strongly to better progress.
- Teaching makes very good use of speaking, either through whole-class discussion involving skilful use of questioning or through using 'talk partners'. This helps pupils to practise and rehearse their thoughts. Another strength in teaching is the use of drama, which pupils thoroughly enjoy. They benefit greatly when, for example, they start to really understand a text by physically 'feeling' the emotions of a character. This is proving to be a highly effective strategy that is bringing about much improved writing.
- Marking is positive, mostly regular and identifies where pupils have achieved well. Marking increasingly makes it clear precisely what pupils need to do next to improve their work. In some books there is evidence of pupils responding to their teachers' advice, although this is not yet happening routinely. In English and mathematics, some pupils are not producing enough work of a good standard in the time allowed. This is not always recognised by teachers' marking so that pupils are being led to believe this is acceptable. Some marking gives undue praise for limited work.
- The quality of ongoing feedback to pupils about how well they are doing is mostly good. Frequently teachers stop lessons when they notice that pupils are struggling or when pupils have clearly not grasped a concept. This is helping to move pupils' learning on. However, in some mathematics lessons teachers are not checking the accuracy of pupils' work thoroughly. Mistakes are not being identified quickly enough and teachers do not always recognise when pupils are ready to learn better strategies for solving problems.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils, in lessons and around the school, is good and often excellent. Pupils learn well how to take responsibility for their own actions because they are encouraged to make the right choices. The pupils themselves consider behaviour is good and well managed by the teachers. Just occasionally, in lessons where activities are less interesting, a few pupils become fidgety and disengage.

- Pupils are immensely proud of their school and are quick to recognise how the school has improved since the current headteacher joined the school. They love coming to school, reflected in their average and improving attendance. One pupil said 'Our school doesn't just care for us, it cares for our parents too and if there are problems stopping us learning, they sort them out'. Pupils thoroughly enjoy the increased challenge in their work and speak excitedly about working and achieving at level 6 in reading and mathematics. They know how well they are performing and older pupils feel well prepared for secondary school.
- Pupils relish the many opportunities to take on responsibilities and have a say in how their school is run. They feel listened to. They wear their responsibility badges with pride and describe maturely what each 'job' entails. The greatest excitement is reserved for the 'digital leaders' who run the very popular lunchtime computing sessions. They also get to teach other classes, for example, how to write programs to design their own games. Pupils work constructively together and show a genuine delight at the success of others, as well as their own achievement.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say they feel safe in school and their parents agree. They feel totally able to trust any adult and understand well about personal safety. They understand what is and what is not bullying and say that it is no longer an issue in school, and not one which worries them. Exclusions are rare but have been used occasionally in the past to establish zero tolerance of any violence. There have been no recent exclusions.
- Very strong support is provided for pupils and their families and relationships with parents and carers are good. There is excellent liaison with parents and carers, schools and other agencies, and this is valued highly by the parents concerned. Excellent support is provided for pupils entering the school other than at the start of Year 3 so that they can settle quickly, learn well and achieve as well as others. This has been very much the case this year as increasing numbers of parents have transferred their children to the school from other local schools, as well as those which are further afield.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher's inspirational leadership has resulted in rapid improvement since the previous inspection, only a year and a half ago. Pupils, staff and governors say they are proud to have her as their headteacher and to be part of the school community. The headteacher has very successfully led the school through an extremely turbulent period since her appointment and staffing is now moving to a more stable position in all year groups.
- The headteacher is very ably supported by the deputy headteacher, whose leadership of pupils' personal development, supported by work done by all staff, has contributed strongly to the calm and purposeful atmosphere which pervades the school. His leadership of music and performance has brought the school alive, particularly with delightful singing, confident playing of instruments and a love of drama and music.
- Other leadership is developing well, guided by a clear plan, based on highly accurate self-evaluation and which identifies clear priorities for all leaders. In particular, strong leadership of English has led to good improvement in both reading and writing. Information and communication technology is well led and pupils' competency is increasing rapidly, as is their enjoyment of the subject. Large numbers of pupils attend the daily lunchtime club. The leader of the school's support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs checks the progress of all vulnerable pupils exceptionally well. This means that the help and support they need to learn well is tightly focused on their needs, and timely.

- Staff performance, including their teaching, is checked rigorously and regularly. As a result, there is no inadequate practice and the overall quality of teaching has been substantially raised. Wide-ranging training for all staff, including use of expertise from the headteacher's other school, has been used very effectively to develop their skills. Partnership between the two schools, and other local schools, along with well-focused input negotiated through the local authority, have all contributed very strongly to rapid progress, indicating excellent capacity for further improvement.
- The way subjects and activities are planned has improved considerably as a result of stronger links between subjects and a greater emphasis on the development of basic skills. Pupils are excited about learning and say it is more fun than in the past, for example, when becoming journalists and creating headlines for The Battle of Trafalgar.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness and development are all very well-promoted through all subjects and out-of-school clubs. Pupils particularly enjoy their learning in 'The Heritage Project' where they are consolidating knowledge about their own local environment and broadening their horizons. Pupils benefited greatly from attendance at a classical music concert so that they now recognise different instruments when listening to music back in school.
- Creative use of additional primary sport funding, as well as providing staff training and transport to sporting venues and competitions, is being used to foster pupils' interest in a wide range of physical activities, which they are not likely to have experienced. Pupils speak enthusiastically about all the sports and clubs on offer, such as speed stacking, horse riding, dodge ball, cheerleading, to name but a few. One parent is particularly proud to see their child now playing in a school team.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is ambitious, active and an effective partner in the leadership of the school. Governors are led very well and their individual skills are increasingly used to good effect. The Chair of the Governing Body has organised wide-ranging training from which all governors have gained considerably in both knowledge and confidence, and which empowers them to provide a good level of challenge to the school's leaders. They have an accurate understanding of pupils' attainment and progress and where and how the school has improved. They are kept well-informed by the headteacher and visit the school regularly to see for themselves. Governors understand the process for checking on staff performance and how effectively it has been used to bring about improvements in teaching and develop good leadership. Teachers receive pay increases only if their pupils make good progress. Finances are managed astutely, including the pupil premium and additional sports funding. They ensure that money is wisely spent to benefit pupils' learning and their ability to make better progress. They recognise the enormous and rapid change that the school has undergone since the appointment of this headteacher. They make certain that current requirements for safeguarding children are met, and that regular checks are made so that the school is a safe place to be.

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	120973
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	432100

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	243
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jacqui Ridpath
Headteacher	Debra Whiting
Date of previous school inspection	15 January 2013
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