

# Necton VA Primary School

School Road, Necton, Swaffham, PE37 8HT

**Inspection dates** 20–21 March 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
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 make good progress, particularly in reading and mathematics, because leaders have successfully improved teaching.
- Children progress quickly in Reception because teaching is good. They are well prepared for Key Stage 1. Throughout the school, teaching is equally good and sometimes outstanding.
- Developing skills in sport is a strength because of the excellent sporting facilities and the use of coaches to support teachers.
- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Pupils feel safe and well looked after by staff. Pupils attendance is above average.
- A wide range of learning opportunities effectively promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The headteacher constantly looks for ways to improve the school and is supported effectively by the deputy headteacher, other senior leaders and the governors. All leaders regularly check the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. The slower progress of some pupils in writing has already been identified as the next priority for improvement.
- Governors bring considerable expertise to the school. They know how well it compares to others nationally. Their regular visits ensure they are knowledgeable about all aspects and are in a good position to challenge leaders about the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' achievement.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils' progress in writing does not always match that in reading and mathematics in classes throughout the school.
- Pupils do not always write enough in English lessons, and have insufficient opportunities to practise and consolidate their skills through writing in different subjects.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 16 lessons, including examples taught by every class teacher. Three lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Lessons were observed with sports coaches, including one in the swimming pool.
- Meetings were held with the pupil council, six Year 6 pupils, members of the governing body, the headteacher and deputy headteacher and other teachers responsible for different areas of the school, such as the leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- A discussion took place with a representative from the local authority about the support and advice it gives to the school.
- There were 44 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) by the end of the inspection. The inspectors took account of a recent questionnaire completed by parents in January and also sought the views of parents and carers as they arrived at school with their children.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents, including the school's own information on pupils' recent and current progress, planning for school improvement, records of governing body meetings, checks on teaching and behaviour, attendance and safeguarding records.

## Inspection team

Joseph Peacock, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Sarah Fielding

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school. Pupils come from a wide rural area and there are very few who are from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The number of pupils is due to rise with the development of new housing in the area.
- There is one single-age class for each year group from Reception to Year 6. Some year groups are much smaller than others.
- The proportion of pupils supported by additional government funding through the pupil premium is broadly average. In this school, it mostly applies to pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is well above average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Many more pupils than usual join partway through their primary school education.
- The school occupies the former middle school buildings and site. The accommodation is spacious and the grounds extensive, incorporating a woodland area for forest school activities. Sporting facilities include expansive grass play areas, an all-weather pitch, swimming pool and large adventurous play area.
- The school was one of the first to be involved in the 'Norfolk 2 Good and Great' project (N2GG) managed by the local authority. The purpose is to improve teaching and raise standards.
- The headteacher is a professional partner, supporting new headteachers, and will be part of a local authority fact-finding team going to China shortly to study teacher training there.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate progress in writing by:
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to write longer pieces of work, and to practise and consolidate the skills learnt in literacy sessions in other subjects
  - ensuring that subject leaders and the senior leadership team check frequently on the quality and quantity of writing and the progress of all pupils.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- School data show that virtually all pupils now make good progress in Key Stages 1 and 2. Local authority support for the past two years has resulted in improvements in teaching and this is making an impact on pupils' progress. Good progress in every year group means that each year, more pupils are making and exceeding nationally expected progress by the end of Key Stage 2.
- Overall attainment varies from year to year because of the sometimes small year groups, mobility of pupils and the proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. There was a sharp rise in attainment in 2013 from very low levels the previous year, because of more consistently good teaching. In 2013, pupils achieved higher standards in writing than in reading and mathematics because of more emphasis on developing their skills in Year 6. Pupils could not make up for earlier weaker progress in reading and mathematics.
- Attainment on entry to the Reception class is well below the level typically found at this age. Although most children have reading, writing and mathematics skills that are much lower than usual, they all make good progress. Supportive and caring teachers and other adults ensure children settle quickly into school routines and go on to achieve a good level of development in all areas of learning by Year 1. However, their writing skills remain weaker than other skills.
- The good start children make when they first enter the school is due to effective planning and good use of the opportunities offered by the spacious and well-equipped indoor and outdoor areas. Children enjoy their sessions in the swimming pool, quickly gaining confidence.
- Pupils make good progress in learning phonics (the sounds that individual and groups of letters represent in words). Overall achievement has been improving from below the national level to be average last year. Staff have worked together to introduce new systems that are helping to raise standards. Early assessments show that these are proving successful. Many pupils are on track to exceed the expected standard this year.
- The school has introduced a raft of measures to raise attainment in reading and mathematics. Every morning starts with a quick 10-minute mathematics session. These, together with the good support parents give to home reading and the huge selection of books in the impressive school library, have ensured reading and mathematical skills are improving rapidly. Some pupils are making exceptional progress from low starting points. Attainment is on track to be in line with the national average by the end of Year 6.
- In Key Stage 2, the more-able pupils do particularly well in all areas by the end of Year 6. However, the work in books shows that although most pupils are making good progress in writing, it is not as consistently good as in reading and mathematics. Teachers are beginning to provide more frequent exercises to improve pupils' grammar, spelling and punctuation. These are helping to accelerate progress in writing. However, pupils are not writing regularly enough or tackling sufficiently long pieces to consolidate their skills in these areas. Few opportunities are being planned for pupils to extend their writing skills when studying in other subjects.
- Tasks in mathematics are consistently challenging and help pupils of all levels of ability to progress well. In Year 2, for example, pupils knew how to estimate and measure length and many were able to calculate the difference between the two.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs usually make good progress in mathematics and English. They benefit from the expertise of skilled teaching assistants who

work closely alongside the teachers to support individuals and small groups.

- The school uses the additional pupil premium funding well to provide individual help for eligible pupils and school records show that this is helping to improve their attainment in English and mathematics. Virtually all these pupils now make the same good progress as their classmates. In 2013, those in Year 6 lagged behind their classmates by about three terms in mathematics, two in reading and a term and a half in writing. Overall, this is similar to the picture found nationally.

## The quality of teaching

is good

- Giant strides have been taken in improving teaching in collaboration with advisers from the local authority. This has ensured that teaching is consistently good or better. All teachers have worked on improving the way they ask questions to gauge pupils' understanding and extend their thinking. Pupils respond well to the high expectations of teachers. As a result, most make good progress in lessons.
- Where learning is most effective, engaging tasks challenge and motivate pupils. All groups approach their learning enthusiastically. In a Year 5 lesson, for example, pupils prepared police witness statements about flying toads they had seen. This followed up a much-enjoyed storybook. Wearing a policeman's helmet to share their accounts with others helped to ensure that all wrote lengthy statements.
- The teaching of sporting activities is a particular strength. Sports coaches with specialist skills, such as those from a premier league football club, work each week with pupils and are able to share their specialist knowledge with teachers, helping to improve their teaching. Outstanding coaching in the swimming pool ensures that pupils quickly gain confidence in the water. Some Reception-age children were able to swim through an underwater hoop, for example, 'I did it! I did it!' they shouted with joy.
- In Reception, children benefit from the close support of adults when working indoors and outside. Skills in class, such as sequencing numbers and adding or subtracting one or more, are duplicated in activities outdoors, giving more opportunities to consolidate these new skills. Other activities with teaching assistants, such as talking about sports photographs including historical ones, are well planned and hold children's interest.
- The school's revised arrangements for teaching phonics are proving to be much more effective in helping pupils to develop reading skills. Parents willingly support the weekly Reading Café sessions and pupils read at home regularly. All these, with the improved ways of helping pupils develop their developing reading skills in school, are helping to raise standards. However, progress in developing pupils' writing skills is less marked. In some classes, teachers are not providing pupils with sufficient opportunities to write. At times, the tasks pupils are set are too restrictive and do not require them to sustain the quality of their writing across longer pieces of work.
- In mathematics, a focus for improvement following the last inspection, consistently good teaching and numerous strategies to encourage all to make good progress are having the required effect. The work in pupils' books showed that virtually all in Year 6 had already made expected or better progress in the first assessment of the spring term.
- Teachers accurately and regularly assess pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics, giving them a clear picture of each pupil's progress. Assessment information is shared with pupils and all are set new targets, twice each term. This gives pupils a good

understanding of their progress and the steps they need to take to attain higher standards.

- Teaching assistants ensure pupils are attentive to their teachers, interested in their work and kept busy at all times. There is a quiet, calm atmosphere for learning. Any rare incidents of inappropriate behaviour are handled immediately and effectively by staff.
- Through regular checks on pupils' progress, teachers quickly identify the specific learning needs of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Tasks are planned carefully to ensure they are suitable and help all these pupils to progress, whatever their difficulties and needs. The school makes good use of a wide range of outside specialists such as an educational psychologist to provide specialist support from the moment pupils first enter the school.
- More-able pupils do well in all subjects because teachers plan appropriately challenging tasks for them and they show good ability to work without direct supervision. All show a strong determination to do well.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- Pupils say that they feel safe and 'always feel happy' at school. All those spoken to said that they enjoy school. This is evident from their above-average attendance over the past three years. There is hardly any persistent absence and very few pupils have been excluded in the past two years.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. All benefit from road safety training and sensitively are made aware of the danger from strangers and the internet.
- The behaviour of pupils is good. They show good attitudes towards learning. Pupils are attentive and respond quickly to teachers' instructions. They live up to the school motto of 'We care, we share, we love to learn.'
- All pupils have a good understanding of different types of bullying, such as name-calling and misuse of mobile phones or emails. A member of the pupil council was able to explain cyber bullying to Year 1 and 2 pupils, for example. All said that bullying is not an issue in the school, a view backed up by school records. All were clear about what to do if they felt threatened or intimidated.
- Assemblies effectively promote good conduct towards one another and values such as trust. Well-established reward systems such as team points, 'special day person' and peer mediators encourage all to try their best and to be friendly towards one another. All are proud to be appointed to the school council, eco council or to be nominated as the 'class greeter', who is responsible for welcoming anyone coming into their class and explaining what is going on.
- Staff manage behaviour consistently well and deal with the rare incidents of inappropriate behaviour immediately and effectively. Class rules are matched well to the age of pupils. Good behaviour in lessons and pupils' positive attitudes to learning ensure most do well, completing tasks set for them and making good progress.
- 'Teachers try all the time to get the best out of us' was a typical view. Pupils say that learning is fun and remember hunting for snails or 'Chocolate Week' when they found out all about chocolate, designed, made and ate chocolates. Year 2 pupils are anxiously waiting for the duck eggs to hatch and rush to school each morning to check progress.

**The leadership and management are good**

- The headteacher's determination to improve the school is fully shared by all staff and governors. All leaders have worked effectively as a team to successfully improve teaching and raise attainment. They have implemented a number of teacher-led strategies aimed at improving results and raising attainment in reading and mathematics. At present, these far outweigh the number implemented to improve writing skills.
- There is a well-established system for collecting and analysing data on pupils' progress. The use of this information to support those who need additional support to keep up with others has led to continuously improving standards in reading and mathematics. It has not been so effective in writing, where pupils are not provided with such good opportunities to practise their skills.
- Leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage are good. This ensures that children have a good start to school.
- The national guidance on standards in teaching is used as the basis for judgements on how well teachers are doing their jobs and to provide the evidence to inform decisions about teachers' pay.
- Pupils have good opportunities in religious education to study a variety of cultures and religions. These underpin pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. A series of well-planned topics such as 'pack your passport,' when pupils boarded an imaginary aeroplane in the hall and travelled to different countries, and learning to speak French, Spanish and German add to their cultural awareness.
- Staff are already working in collaboration with other local schools to prepare and implement the new curriculum, which is due in September. The strong emphasis on promoting basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics continues. Additional physical education lessons, some with specialist coaches, and weekly sessions in the 'forest school' for each class further enhance the curriculum. Learning opportunities beyond the normal timetable, such as a choir, knitting and crochet and residential visits, add to pupils' enjoyment of school. All enjoyed the recent trip to London, commenting that buildings were taller in London than in Necton!
- The additional funding allocated to increase sporting opportunities is being used to provide sports coaches. As well as increasing opportunities for pupils to enjoy different sporting activities, it is helping to improve staff expertise. Governors are ready to evaluate the impact on pupils' participation in sporting activities.
- Parents and carers spoken to during the inspection hold positive views about the school. They rightly think that staff treat every pupil equally, that their children are safe and looked after well, and that discrimination is not tolerated. Every parent who responded to the inspection questionnaire and the parent survey said that they would recommend the school to others. 'Best school in Norfolk, by far' was a typically held view of parents.
- The local authority has very effectively supported the school over the past two years. It recognises the skills and abilities of the headteacher and makes use of these to support and advise colleagues. The school was one of the first to be involved in the N2GG project and this has helped to improve teaching and raise standards.

**■ The governance of the school:**

- Governors are deeply committed to helping staff create an outstanding school. They are able to draw on their varied and considerable professional expertise to challenge staff. The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body demonstrate a good understanding of the quality of teaching and how well pupils are achieving in comparison with others nationally. Their knowledge of performance data gives them the confidence to hold the school to account for the achievement of different groups of pupils. An effective system has been established for governors to check how well staff are tackling aspects identified for improvement. Governors regularly review the performance of the headteacher and ensure that of other teachers is reviewed carefully each year to determine pay increases and promotion. Governors with specific expertise ensure that all current national requirements relating to safeguarding and child protection are met. They have assessed the impact of the pupil premium funding and are ready to do the same for the funds designed to develop opportunities for sport and the promotion of healthy lifestyles and pupils' well-being.



## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	134043
<b>Local authority</b>	Norfolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	430778

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	168
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Andrew Arnold
<b>Headteacher</b>	Graham Steel
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	14 May 2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	01760 722975
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