

Recreation Road Infant School

Recreation Road, Norwich, NR2 3PA

Inspection dates 8–9 October 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Early years provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- High standards have been sustained since the last inspection. Pupils' attainment has remained significantly above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics for the past six years.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher, well supported by governors, have developed a highly professional school community in which all staff have high expectations and relentlessly pursue the school's vision for pupils' learning.
- The leadership team has been restructured and new year group leaders, who are outstanding examples for their colleagues, have been effectively mentored to take up their roles.
- Well planned training ensures that staff at all levels develop and improve their practice. Leaders use research and evidence from other outstanding practice continually to question and shape the work of the school.
- The curriculum encourages pupils to become independent, inquisitive learners and many make outstanding progress. Significantly more pupils than nationally reach higher levels of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics over time.
- Standards of literacy are particularly high. Pupils learn to love reading and use drama as inspiration in their talk and their writing.
- Teachers show great respect for their pupils; relationships in classrooms are fun, warm and trusting. Teachers continually assess learning. As a result, the level of challenge, nurture or support is adapted frequently. All groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, succeed very well.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding; they work and play together harmoniously and develop independent, resilient, questioning approaches to their learning.
- Procedures for keeping pupils safe are good. Pupils' knowledge of how to keep themselves safe is exceptional and this is endorsed by parents. Staff are well trained in child protection procedures.
- Outstanding provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is evident in all aspects of the school's work; especially in the 'values' pupils are taught to enable them to become inquisitive, independent learners.
- Children in the early years are very well supported to settle quickly into school routines. The teaching of key literacy and numeracy skills is strong. Children learn to use these independently in a wide range of stimulating and exciting activities.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 20 lessons, talked to pupils and looked at their work. Some of these were joint observations with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, other senior leaders and four governors. An inspector spoke to a local authority adviser by telephone.
- Inspectors reviewed the school’s safeguarding records, behaviour and incident logs, minutes of governing body meetings, action plans, monitoring records and performance information.
- Inspectors spoke to two groups of pupils, looked at a range of work from this term and the last academic year, and heard pupils from Years 1 and 2 read.
- Inspectors spoke to parents as they brought their children to school, took account of parents’ letters and the 23 responses to Parent View, the online questionnaire for parents.
- They took account of 45 questionnaire responses from staff.
- The behaviour of pupils was observed in lessons, around the school, at lunch and at playtimes.

Inspection team

Prue Rayner, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Angela Podmore

Additional Inspector

John Mason

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Recreation Road is an infant school which is larger in size than the average primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils or those with special educational needs supported by the school at school action and at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the pupil premium (in the school's case, additional funding to support pupils eligible for free school meals) is below average.
- Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is full-time. A small number of pupils attend part-time during the first half term of the Reception year while they settle into school.
- The headteacher leads the school for four days a week sharing the role with the deputy who takes the headship role for one day.
- Senior leadership roles have been changed to incorporate year group leadership from September 2014. Governors have matched their roles to this change and are now allocated to work with year groups.
- The school holds the budget for the local cluster collaborative work and plays a strong leadership role in its joint professional development.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Undertake regular reviews of risk assessments of the external premises.
- Refine the systems for planning and monitoring the school's work to reflect the leadership roles of the reshaped senior leadership team, and the new structure of the governing body.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Working closely together, the headteacher and deputy headteacher have created a highly professional staff team. They work with the common vision of ensuring that pupils become confident, interested learners who receive the support and challenge they need to achieve well across all subjects. Despite the limitations of the building and the space available, staff and pupils thrive within a culture of equal respect where learning for everyone is valued.
- Every aspect of the school's work is developed to help pupils enjoy their learning. Pupils are taught learner 'values' which enable them to develop key learning skills such as resilience and perseverance. These prepare them well for the next stage of their education and enable them to understand and celebrate their own strengths while overcoming weaker aspects as they learn.
- Senior leaders regularly use research into effective practice to consider how the work of the school can be continually improved. Staff discuss and use this information, and their visits to other schools, to shape their own approaches. Leaders and staff at all levels demonstrate deep understanding of the principles on which their work is based. Leaders work closely to develop work with other local schools; the deputy headteacher has been instrumental in leading work to improve teaching and assessment.
- Leaders enable staff to develop and improve their teaching through a rich and varied programme of training. Some is planned in response to aspects of the school's work that need to improve. For example, last year staff received training in the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) which directly resulted in an increased proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard. Mentoring and coaching programmes draw well on the experiences and enthusiasm of staff to improve practice and to ensure provision is consistent across year groups.
- Pupils' attainment and progress are assessed and tracked regularly. A strong feature of the assessment policy in place across the school is that staff continually use observations during lessons to change and shape pupils' learning as it happens. This approach results in all groups of pupils being equally involved in meaningful learning tasks. As a consequence they make good and better progress.
- The school's curriculum is planned thoughtfully and with passionate determination to enable pupils to enjoy and actively engage in their learning through exploring their own interests, questions and motivations. This is carefully underpinned by the systematic teaching of key literacy, mathematical and learning skills. Pupils have wide and equal opportunities to learn across subjects and to discover and celebrate their own and each other's strengths. Pupil premium funding is used very effectively to develop pupils' confidence in their social relationships, and in their ability to learn. Where necessary, extra support is provided to accelerate progress.
- Extra primary sports funding is used to promote all pupils' participation in, and enjoyment of, physical education. High profile is given to skills development and to supporting pupils to understand good habits and lifestyle choices. Specialist coaching is used to enhance teachers' skills and inspire pupils. Pupils experience a wide range of sports through taster sessions and almost all have learnt to swim by the time they leave the school. A number choose to pursue their learning further outside school.
- Pupils develop a very strong sense of right and wrong; they demonstrate the ability to be open minded in their approaches to their learning and learn about other cultures and beliefs. Their learning supports them to investigate and ask questions but also to respect differences and to show compassion. In this way they are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The local authority has identified the school as having the potential to support others. An adviser has validated the school's assessment and self-evaluation for governors.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements. Staff are trained well in child protection procedures.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors have a detailed knowledge of the school's strengths and the areas it is working to improve. Several recently appointed governors bring a range of relevant expertise to support the school's work. To further enhance this, a governor is undertaking visits to other schools to enable the governing body to better understand and compare the quality of the school's work. Responsibilities have been restructured so that governors can more closely track the impact different year groups have on pupils' achievement.
- Governors receive accurate information about pupils' achievement which enables them to ask challenging questions about how well the needs of all groups are met. They evaluate how well the extra funding received for pupils eligible for the pupil premium and for primary sports is spent and understand the impact of these initiatives on pupils' well-being, confidence and achievement.
- Governors monitor how well the school meets statutory requirements, including performance management; they ensure that teachers' pay is related to how effectively they support pupils to make progress, and monitor how well funding is used continually to improve the outcomes achieved by pupils. For example they are currently considering how well funding to provide staffing to support pupils' transition to the junior school is working. Their approach to ensure leadership is secure during a time of change is a strength.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. The school's ethos and vision to nurture pupils as confident and inquisitive learners who work well together, respond positively to challenge and show compassion for others, permeate every aspect of its practice.
- The very strong policy for learning through inquiry is evident in every class. As a result, pupils become creative, resilient, risk-taking learners who are not afraid to try new ways of solving problems and who tackle their learning with concentration and confident enthusiasm. In a Year 2 class, pupils grappled to understand how subtraction works. With their teacher they decided on which level of challenge was appropriate and set problems for each other to solve. In the following work, one child quietly tackled a number of different problems set by her peers, visibly growing in confidence with each sum completed. The teacher skilfully pulled the class together to address some misunderstandings which had arisen. As a result of this careful intervention, mistakes became success and more-able pupils learned how to use negative numbers.
- Pupils benefit from being given a range of responsibilities. They know they are listened to and that they have a voice in influencing the work of the school. 'Digital leaders' use tablet computers to record the work of the school and evaluate aspects of learning. Through this, they develop self-confidence and collaborative learning skills. In a gymnastics lesson, a 'digital leader' filmed and reviewed the development of his friend's work and then discussed how it could be improved. This enhanced his own and his friend's understanding of the development of key skills.
- Pupils are lively and enthusiastic in lessons, as they move around school and at playtimes. Pupils know how they are expected to behave and remind each other unprompted of school policy. Incidents of less positive behaviour are recorded in detail and effective support is provided for pupils whose behaviour is challenging, and for their parents. Parents are very positive about how much this helps as one said, 'My child is getting the best support possible'.
- Attendance is broadly average, it is checked on a weekly basis, and good attendance is celebrated. Parents and other professionals are involved at an early stage if a pupil's attendance starts to become a concern; as a result of this attendance has improved since 2013 and the incidence of longer absences is being reduced.

Safety

The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Appropriate checks are made when staff are recruited and child protection procedures are understood and used by all staff. The school's records show

good relationships with other service providers secure effective support for pupils who are at risk. Health and safety checks are made regularly but risk assessments relating to some aspects of the external premises are not reviewed regularly enough.

- Pupils have an outstanding understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They speak knowledgeably about e-safety and 'digital leaders' know and explain in detail what is acceptable practice when they use the internet. Pupils understand that bullying is repeated acts of unkindness and that it takes different forms. Although they say it happens, pupils are very confident that when adults are informed they deal with it positively. A parent explained how effectively leaders had supported her in managing an issue providing her with guidance and effectively counselling all the pupils involved.
- The school's records of behaviour, racist and bullying incidents show how carefully this aspect of its work is monitored and addressed.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Teachers show great respect for pupils and for the knowledge, skills and abilities they bring to their learning. All staff value the contributions pupils make and through trusting relationships encourage them to use what they know and are interested in to make sense of new learning and experiences.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge, and their creative use of the curriculum, both indoors and outside in the exciting woodland area, ensure pupils learn extremely effectively. Analysis of pupils' work and observations of them learning clearly demonstrate how teachers take great care to plan activities that stimulate pupils' curiosity, develop their interests and enable them to acquire and use knowledge and skills confidently in lessons and over time.
- The school's approach to pupils' learning requires that expectations of every pupil are equally high. Pupils of all abilities work together and, in discussion with their teacher, set the appropriate level of challenge for their own learning. As a result pupils make good and sometimes exceptional progress.
- Teachers in all year groups provide strong verbal feedback to pupils individually, in groups and as a class as they learn. This skilfully addresses misconceptions, confirms thinking or extends learning; the assessments teachers make as this happens are used to plan future lessons. Because this practice is strong, written marking plays a less important role however, where it is used, it provides meaningful guidance for pupils on how well they are learning and on what they need to do next.
- All staff encourage pupils to recognise when they have done well and when they have used effective approaches to learning to help them make progress. A very successful feature of teaching throughout the school is the way teachers skilfully ensure that pupils realise that the gains they are making in their own learning are the best reward for success.
- Pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs work with their classmates as equal partners in learning. As a result, they develop independent learning skills and make good and often outstanding progress from their starting points. Teaching assistants skilfully intervene to support or challenge and provide well planned individual intervention to meet pupils' needs if necessary.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- The school has sustained overall outcomes that are significantly above the national average over several years. Children start school with a wide range of skills and abilities. A few have profound medical, learning or social and emotional needs. A significant number have language and communication skills that are above those expected. At the end of Year 2 in 2014, standards were sustained at well above national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. A higher proportion of pupils than nationally reached expected and higher levels of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics.

- In 2013, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standards in phonics at the end of Year 1 and Year 2 was well below the national average. Urgent action was taken by leaders to address this. Strategies were implemented to raise attainment in phonics while also maintaining the overall quality of reading and writing standards. In 2014, the proportion reaching the expected standard in phonics had risen significantly to broadly in line with the national average.
- All groups of pupils make consistently good and better progress. In the last academic year, boys and girls made similar rates of progress in all subjects in Year 1. In Year 2, boys made slightly better progress in reading than girls to catch up to similar levels of attainment. A few more girls than boys attained higher levels in reading and writing.
- The most able pupils are sufficiently challenged to reach the higher levels of attainment. They make similarly good or better progress to their peers.
- In 2013, the standards reached by pupils eligible for the pupil premium in reading, writing and mathematics were above those attained by similar pupils nationally and about half a term behind those achieved by their peers in school. In 2014, these pupils made accelerated progress to catch up with other pupils in Year 1 because they received well-planned support to improve their self-confidence and their learning. As a consequence, they started Year 2 working at a similar level to their peers. In Year 2, eligible pupils again made good progress so that most attained similar standards to their classmates. A small number of these pupils had specific educational needs so overall outcomes appear slightly lower.
- Pupils read well, they use phonics to decode words and because teachers share literature widely in class pupils develop a deep understanding of story structure, characters and language. They use this knowledge to talk about the books they are reading, to predict what might happen and to recall events from a story in very fine detail. These strengths in literacy are also seen in pupils' writing which reflects some excellent use of vocabulary and structure.
- A significant aspect of pupils' achievement is the extent to which they take responsibility for their own learning, work collaboratively with each other and develop good reading, writing and mathematical skills that prepare them well for the next stage in their education. They use these well in other subjects such as science and history. Because of the quality of teaching, pupils develop strengths across the curriculum; they achieve high standards in drama and creative work which in turn also influence the quality of their spoken language and their writing.

The early years provision

is outstanding

- Children in the Reception year learn quickly and achieve high standards because their learning and development needs are assessed frequently in lessons and teachers and teaching assistants make immediate adjustments to their activities so enable them to learn quickly. There is good evidence of rapid progress in children's learning logs, which parents enthusiastically share and contribute to. At the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, children have very well developed literacy and numeracy skills, they also show strong physical and creative development. In 2014, the proportion of children reaching and exceeding a good level of development was well above the national average.
- Play leads naturally into learning as children rise to the challenge of activities which develop and build on their skills and abilities. Gentle and humorous intervention from skilled adults helps children adjust their pencil grip, make a book, blow bubbles, build a den, explore the forest, be a doctor or plant strawberries in the pouring rain, all the time building on and using what they have learnt from very focused teaching.
- Early in the school year, literacy skills are particularly targeted. Much of childrens' learning is planned around special books and they quickly extend and develop their vocabulary and understanding of characters and story plots. Their imaginative thinking is further developed through very high quality role play, quickly facilitated by staff, in which children independently decide what the play house will be and become the characters to match. Opportunities to write and to use the new letter sounds they are

learning are plentiful and children use these emerging skills with confidence. A strength of the provision is the significant extent to which children are encouraged to work together and draw on each other's skills.

- Very strong leadership is the key to the success of the Reception Year. Work with the local cluster of schools is used to ensure assessment is accurate and staff use videos of their own practice to reflect on childrens' learning and to consider what actions will improve their work. Case studies of children who are at risk of not making good progress are also used to reflect on and improve practice so that the needs of all can be best met. Planning across the wider curriculum is underpinned by the systematic teaching of phonics, literacy and numeracy skills so children are well equipped to learn and progress well by the time they start Year 1.

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	134964
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	449284

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	355
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Marion Flaxman
Headteacher	Serena Dixon
Date of previous school inspection	14 May 2009
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