

Diss Church Junior School

The Entry, Diss, IP22 4NT

Inspection dates 12–13 February 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Writing standards, especially those of boys, are too low.
- Although improving, pupils' progress is not rapid enough over time.
- Pupils' work is not always presented to a high standard.
- When stuck with their work, some pupils wait for an adult to help them rather than trying to resolve the problem themselves.
- The behaviour of a few pupils is not consistently good or well managed by some staff.
- Improvements in teaching are too recent to ensure that pupils make consistently good progress. Work does not always challenge all abilities.
- Teaching assistants, and the groups they help, do not always get the guidance they need from teachers.
- Not all teachers use questioning well to promote good learning and to test pupils' understanding.

The school has the following strengths

- The executive headteacher has started to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. Governors, staff and parents are united behind her determination to raise standards. The changes made have already improved the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.
- Teachers now use information about their pupils' progress well to check, and if necessary change, their lessons. As a result, progress is improving.
- Teachers use marking effectively to explain to pupils what they should do next to improve their work.
- The school works closely with outside agencies, As a result, attendance, for example, has improved.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school. Their parents agree and say the school cares for their children well.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is good.
- Pupils say they enjoy the range of learning opportunities. As a result, they learn better.
- Pupils are given a good variety of activities to interest them at lunchtimes and their behaviour out of classrooms is much improved.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited 11 lessons, including in all year groups and in a range of subjects. They were accompanied on all observations, either by the executive headteacher or acting deputy headteacher.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, members of the governing body, other members of staff including subject leaders, parents and pupils.
- The inspectors looked at pupils' work and considered documents about the school's self-evaluation, its plans for improvement and arrangements to ensure that pupils are safe.
- The inspectors took account of the views expressed by parents in discussions, letters, the school's own survey of parents, and the 19 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. Opinions shared through the 26 questionnaires returned by staff members were also considered.

Inspection team

Bob Greatrex, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

John Ubsdell

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Nearly all pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is above the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is a little above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school has been through a period of staff changes. Since 2010, the school has had six headteachers or temporary headteachers. The executive headteacher has been in post for one and a half terms. The deputy headteacher is currently seconded to other duties, and an experienced teacher is acting deputy headteacher. Her class is taught by a temporary teacher. Since 2011, many new teachers have been appointed.
- Since April 2014, the school has been in federation with Diss Infant and Nursery School and Diss Children's Centre. The federation has resulted in a shared governing body since that time.
- The school receives support from a Local Leader in Education, the headteacher of Harleston Primary School.
- Two parent-support advisers for the Diss Cluster of Schools are based at the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make the quality of teaching consistently at least good, so pupils in every class make good progress by ensuring:
 - all teachers understand and fully implement school policy on how to manage pupils' behaviour
 - questioning is used more effectively to promote learning and test pupils' understanding
 - teaching assistants and the pupils they support are given the guidance they need from teachers so that progress improves.
- Raise the standard of pupils' writing, particularly that of boys, by:
 - providing tasks that interest pupils more so they want to write
 - ensuring work is challenging for all pupils, including the most and least able
 - always insisting that pupils follow the school's expectations for neat handwriting and good presentation of work.
- Give the pupils who need it consistent support so they learn how to:
 - manage their behaviour and concentrate fully in lessons
 - understand their responsibility to learn, and help them to find ways to tackle problems when they are stuck.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Governors, staff, parents and pupils agree that the executive headteacher has introduced many improvements that are improving the quality of teaching and pupils' learning, while recognising some have not had sufficient time to become fully embedded. These are building successfully on those improvements started previously, in particular those regarding pupils' behaviour and the quality of teaching.
- The headteacher and acting deputy headteacher are tackling poor behaviour and taking decisive action. As a result, classrooms are a hive of activity in which teaching and good behaviour thrive. Even so, a few staff do not implement behavioural policies and procedures consistently so, while much diminished, poor behaviour is not fully eradicated.
- Staff do all they can to ensure there is no discrimination. As a result, everyone is respected and treated equally. For example, all pupils are given opportunity to use school computers to complete on-line homework. Therefore, those who lack internet access at home have equal opportunity to do so with other pupils.
- School leaders are bringing about rapid improvements in teaching. Regular discussions give staff a much clearer understanding of what is required, and why. As a result, teachers' expectations are higher and important aspects of teaching, such as lesson planning, are effective. Arrangements to check and evaluate the quality of teaching are thorough, although some weaknesses in teaching remain.
- Subject leaders provide good guidance and support for their colleagues. They work closely together to link subjects so that new skills learnt in one subject are practised in another, to deepen pupils' understanding.
- The school's self-evaluation accurately identifies areas for improvement because school leaders are analytical and perceptive. Staff are proud of what they have achieved, for example how their marking helps pupils improve their work. They are determined to sustain these improvements.
- Staff morale is high. High-quality training of staff is beneficial to pupils' learning. Several staff are taking advanced courses which are very closely linked to pupils' learning and achievement. All staff benefit from effective performance management. It contributes well to improving their professional practice and supports pupils' achievement.
- The new curriculum is stimulating. Consequently, pupils are more interested in learning and standards and behaviour improve. Pupils' learning opportunities are extended by visits. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Whether voting in elections, such as those for school council, or in the daily application of school values, such as respect and fairness, pupils get a real sense of how to live and work in modern society.
- The school accurately assesses pupils' learning and checks their progress. Teachers now play a pivotal role in this, so they understand how their pupils are progressing and use this information to modify their lesson planning. Regular meetings enable the executive headteacher to hold them to account for each pupil. The school is sharing ideas with other local schools, so all benefit.
- Parents spoken to are positive about the school's work and actively support the changes the headteacher has made. They particularly like the better communication between school and home.
- Additional sports funding is used effectively to widen the opportunities offered to pupils and increase staff training. Coaching expertise is used well. As a result, pupils are energetic and understand why physical fitness is important and more are participating in sport.
- School leaders have improved provision for pupils eligible for pupil premium funding. As a result, these pupils are achieving much better this year than in the past.

- The local authority has worked closely with the school and governors, particularly to give advice about the formation of the federation. The church, too, has played a helpful role. As a result, the federation has started very positively and has widespread support.
- The school works with increasing effectiveness within the federation. Consequently, staff expertise is shared and pupils are beginning to follow similar courses and teaching methods in both schools to the benefit of their learning and progress. For example, approaches to teaching handwriting are identical in both schools. As a result, transition from one school to the other is improving.
- The school works closely with other local schools, sharing ideas and expertise to make sure that all pupils benefit. Valuable support for parents and families is provided by this group of schools, too.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are effective. They know the school well. They moved decisively to appoint a new permanent executive headteacher, knowing how unsettling the changes in the last five years have been.
 - They have a clear vision for the school's future and have managed the move to federation smoothly. This federation, resulting in one governing body for both schools from April 2014, has brought in a wider range of skills and expertise to governance. The management structure is much stronger and teaching expertise shared across the federation, to the benefit of pupils' learning.
 - Governors benefit from regular training and fulfil their duties effectively. Each individual's skills are used to the benefit of the school.
 - Governors welcome the thorough and comprehensive information they receive from the headteacher, ask perceptive questions and analyse data on pupils' attainment and progress well so they fully understand areas needing improvement.
 - They are actively involved in performance management, have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and how staff pay is linked to pupils' progress.
 - Additional funds, such as pupil premium, are carefully monitored to see they are spent effectively.
 - Governors see all the required arrangements to ensure pupils are safe are in place.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

require improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Although reducing, the number of exclusions remains relatively high and a small minority of pupils are having an adverse impact on their own learning and that of others. Parents and pupils recognise many improvements have been made but say learning time can be lost because not all staff use the good procedures effectively.
- In lessons, pupils work cooperatively with adults. When working on their own, however, some pupils give up too easily and wait for adult help.
- Around the school and on the playground, pupils' behaviour has improved because of the good provision made by the school. Currently, pupils have many interesting activities to enjoy.
- Pupils eagerly volunteer to take responsibility, for example, leading games at lunchtime or helping others with internet searches. Governors gain valuable insight into pupils' thinking through the 'learning council' and pupils see how their views are taken into account. Through this, pupils experience democracy in action which contributes to their understanding of traditional British values.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is provided for well. For example, pupils are taught how to resolve conflicts themselves. They learn to cooperate and work together, and celebrate this by nominating the 'shining stars', fellow pupils who help them, for recognition in assembly.
- Attendance has improved and is, currently, above average and much higher than at the same time a year ago. The school works hard with outside agencies to offer support to families when needed, but is firm that pupils belong in school.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Actions to ensure all adults are fully checked to work with young people are rigorous. As a result, pupils say they feel safe and secure, a view confirmed by parents.
- Staff care well for pupils. Pupils say they are confident that any worries they feel, including instances of bullying, will be dealt with by school leaders. They like that they are taught how to try to resolve disagreements for themselves, and feel this helps prepare them well for later life.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the potential dangers posed by the internet and social media because the school makes sure they are very well prepared.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Over time, teaching has not ensured good progress for all groups of pupils and all year groups. Although improving rapidly, teaching is still not good enough in writing to bring standards up to those in reading and mathematics. Too often pupils, especially boys, see writing as a chore. The more able are not always receiving harder writing tasks, nor the less able the extra support they need.
- Staff and pupils say there are inconsistencies in how the school's approaches are applied. For example, handwriting and presentation of work vary because some staff do not insist on high standards.
- Not all teachers use questioning effectively to promote learning. For example, they do not check pupils' understand the work they are doing and correct any misunderstanding. Questions add little to the learning taking place in lessons.
- While all teachers plan tasks for teaching assistants to lead, some have little or no contact with assistants or pupils during lessons and do not sufficiently monitor what learning takes place.
- Many improvements have been made in teaching. For example, the clear marking policy is understood and used in all classes. Pupils know what to expect, whoever teaches them and whichever class they are in. Their learning benefits because they know what to do when work is returned.
- The tracking of pupils' progress has improved. Teachers are accountable, and have to explain to school leaders how their pupils are moving forward. Teachers also explain what they are doing to help those who struggle so that they can catch up.
- Reading is taught well. Teachers foster a love of books and reading. Older pupils read with great enthusiasm with those younger than themselves. Fun events celebrate books and promote reading.
- Mathematics is taught well. Strategies, for example how to teach calculation, are clear and taught consistently well by all staff. The subject leader checks this, and explains any misconceptions staff may have.
- Homework is used effectively. Key skills are practised regularly, and pupils have the opportunity to pursue their own interests. This motivates them well.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The achievement of pupils is not yet good. School information shows that most pupils who left at the end of Year 6 in 2014 entered the school a little above the expected levels in reading and mathematics. However, they made a little less than the progress expected nationally and, consequently, left with standards that were no more than broadly average. In writing, pupils made less progress and left with lower standards than in the other two subjects. Boys did less well than girls.

- The positive changes the executive headteacher has made, particularly to improve the effectiveness of teaching and hold teachers responsible for tracking how their pupils are doing, has improved pupils' progress. Pupils' workbooks and information held by the school indicate that pupils are making better progress this year.
- Writing standards are improving because more is being done to encourage pupils, particularly boys, to write. Some lessons capture their interest more, because of the way the work is presented or because the subject is more interesting. However, this improvement is not consistent and many boys remain reluctant to write.
- The most-able pupils are making better overall progress this year. They particularly enjoy the more stimulating curriculum and the challenge to stamp their own style on homework. However, more-able boys show less enthusiasm for writing than other subjects. In 2014, the proportion of pupils reaching higher levels was similar to the national average in mathematics, a little below in reading but well below in writing.
- School information and inspection findings indicate that disadvantaged pupils currently in the school are making better progress than in the past. This is an improvement on 2014 test results, when these pupils generally made less progress and reached lower standards than their peers. They were two terms behind in reading, three terms behind in writing and half a term behind in mathematics. When compared to pupils nationally, disadvantaged pupils were two terms behind in reading, three terms behind in writing and nearly a term behind in mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs currently make good progress from their various starting points. This improvement is largely because information about their progress is used more precisely to provide extra help.

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	121032
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	453586

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	194
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Janet Turner
Headteacher (Executive)	Karen Sewell
Date of previous school inspection	28 February 2013
Telephone number	01379 642675
Fax number	N/A
Email address	office@diss-jun.norfolk.sch.uk

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