

Arden Grove Infant and Nursery School

Arden Grove, Hellesdon, Norwich, NR6 6QA

Inspection dates 5–6 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy
	This inspection:	Outstanding 1
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
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.

- The pupils' best interests are at the heart of everything the headteacher, other school leaders, and staff do. As a result, pupils make rapid progress and leave having attained high standards.
- Leaders at all levels, including governors, are relentless in their drive to continually improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievements.
- Pupils respond very positively to the high expectations of leaders and staff, always aiming high and giving of their best.
- Early years' provision is excellent. As soon as children join the Nursery, they are introduced to the school's highly effective approach to teaching and learning. In Reception, rapid progress continues so children are well prepared for Year 1.
- Pupils' progress is tracked very closely so all, including the most able, the disadvantaged, the disabled and those who have special educational needs, make the progress of which they are capable. In this way, the school successfully meets its aim to be a 'learning for all school'.
- Pupils are kept very safe and are extremely well cared for. They are very proud of their school.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted exceptionally well. Their excellent personal development is the foundation for their high academic achievement.
- Subjects are meticulously and thoughtfully planned to offer pupils an enormous range and variety of stimulating activities which fire their imagination, enthusiasm and thirst for learning.
- Pupils' behaviour is excellent and they delight in taking responsibility for their own learning. They blossom in this trusting and positive atmosphere to become highly committed and enthusiastic learners.
- Pupils greatly enjoy all that the school has to offer.
- Teaching is of a very high standard. Consistency between teachers means that pupils know what is expected of them, and what they can expect, too.
- Parents work very closely with the school and play a very significant part in their pupils' success. All those who responded to the online survey said that they would recommend the school to another parent.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited 11 lessons, including all year groups and in a range of subjects. They were accompanied on five observations by the headteacher.
- The inspectors met 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 and the 66 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. Opinions shared through the 27 questionnaires returned by staff members were also considered.

Inspection team

Robert Greatrex, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Janet Tomkins

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Arden Grove Infant and Nursery School converted to become an academy on 1 June 2013. When its predecessor school, of the same name, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good.
- Nearly all pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is below the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils previously known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- On 6 December 2013, the school formed The Norfolk Schools and Norwich Theatre Royal Trust, an 'umbrella trust' with Hellesdon High School and Theatre Royal. This is a body that oversees the work the three institutions undertake together. It has two 'directors' from each institution and is governed by articles of association. It does not trade and holds no funds.
- The school runs two part-time Nursery classes, one in the morning and one in the afternoon.
- The school runs an 'early morning club'.
- The headteacher has recently become a 'Norfolk Systems Leader' for the local authority, to advise other schools.
- An independent pre-school operates on the school site. This is separately inspected.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make speaking and listening skills even better by giving pupils time to gather their thoughts before answering.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher places no ceiling on what pupils can achieve and is relentless in his drive and ambition for them. Other school leaders, staff and governors share the same vision for the school so all work together very effectively to maintain the focus on high-quality education. As a result, the school is a hive of endeavour where teaching and learning thrives in a very orderly, well-managed environment.
- Staff set an excellent example, doing all they can to see that everyone is respected and there is no discrimination. This is reflected in the 'golden rules', which pupils know, understand and follow closely.
- Staff welcome checks on the quality of their teaching so that even the smallest area for improvement can be addressed. Morale is very high, as highlighted by the very positive responses to the staff questionnaires returned during the inspection.
- Teachers' performance is managed very effectively. These arrangements contribute significantly to the improvements in pupils' progress; for example, in boys' writing.
- The school knows itself well. Self-evaluation is accurate and perceptive. Although results are outstanding there is no complacency and everyone is constantly looking to improve.
- Staff training is highly effective. Any innovation is preceded by thorough training so that all staff involved – teachers and assistants – are 'on the same page'. Staff who join later receive identical preparation. As a result, pupils benefit from very high levels of consistency between all staff.
- Information about pupils' progress is used very effectively. For example, although boys' writing standards at the end of Year 2 are above the national average for all pupils, the school felt they could be higher. Changes were introduced so writing is more appealing to boys. Results are now higher still.
- Subject leaders use a wide variety of information, such as book checks, to ensure learning is effective. Staff work together to plan excellent links between subjects so skills learnt in one subject are practised in another.
- The enormous variety of rich learning experiences is exceptional. Pupils say they come to school each day excited to see what awaits them. Topics generally include visits or visitors. Pupils say they like the visits and visitors that help them, and that they feel they learn best by seeing for themselves.
- The link with the theatre supports learning in numerous ways. For example, a 'time traveller' visited and talked to pupils studying medieval castles about life in those times. He answered their questions and, briefed by staff, set them challenges that reinvigorated their enthusiasm. The high school provides subject expertise – for example, in physical education – and older students to lead play and games.
- Pupil premium funding is used very effectively so eligible pupils make rapid progress in their learning and participate in activities that broaden their education.
- Additional sports funding is also used very effectively. Pupils are introduced to a very wide range of activities, including badminton and tennis. 'Healthy Week' teaches them about diet and fitness and how energetic activity helps. Each week, pupils look forward to tackling the headteacher's new lunchtime activity challenge. Staff work alongside specialist coaches so that they, too, learn many new skills.
- Fundamental to the school's success is the very close and trusting partnership with parents. The school recognises it asks a lot of parents, particularly to support learning at home. For example, the current focus on mental mathematics skills closely involves parents, and the school appreciates their support.

- The school has responded to parental wishes and provided a before-school club where pupils engage in a variety of activities in a social atmosphere.
- Good links with other local schools are very valuable. For example, staff share new ideas and pupils compete with one another in sports and design-and-build challenges. The school is working with another outstanding infant school to develop a new approach to assessment, to be introduced shortly.
- Links with the local authority are strong. In particular, the school buys a wide range of valuable services to help support further improvement.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are highly effective and play a strong part in leading the school forward. They managed the move to academy status very smoothly.
 - Collectively, governors have many skills that are used very effectively. For example, accountants oversee the budget. Training is used well by governors to improve their own performance.
 - Governors' management, of themselves and the school, is very efficient. They ensure, for example, that finances are used in the best interests of pupils, and follow precisely correct financial regulations.
 - Governors have a very clear and accurate understanding of the school. They check information about pupils' achievements very carefully, and use it to hold the school to account. They ask searching questions if a group of pupils appears not to be progressing as rapidly as others.
 - Governors have a clear understanding of the quality of teaching and make sure that staff pay is justified by the progress pupils make. They know how additional funds, such as pupil premium and sports funding, are spent and the positive impact these have on pupils' learning and staff expertise.
 - Governors ensure that all legal requirements, including those to ensure pupils are safe, are in place, understood by staff, and adhered to.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. In classes and around the school, pupils' behaviour is exemplary.
- Pupils thrive because staff take every opportunity to affirm what they have achieved, in both their academic and personal development. As a result, pupils have a strong sense that they are improving and, consequently, they grow in self-confidence and try even harder.
- Pupils show sustained interest in their work, and persevere when it gets hard. They respond very positively to the training they are given. For example, pupils in Year 2 have learnt to check handwriting, spelling, punctuation and grammar at the end of any piece of writing. Most do so without the need for any reminder.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. A close relationship exists with a school in India so pupils develop a clear understanding of similarities and differences. The variety of performing arts that the pupils experience at Arden Grove is exceptional. The opportunity to challenge themselves to perform for an audience on a professional stage as part of a large ensemble is extraordinary. Parents say they are stunned by their pupils' accomplishments.
- Pupils' personal development is further enhanced by the annual Year 2 residential trip, where they learn to be more independent and to take greater responsibility. They also like being responsible for Thomas, the school cat. They are always eager and willing to help one another. Pupils are very appreciative of the way the school recognises and celebrates their efforts, achievements and good behaviour.
- Pupils are taught fundamental British values such as 'respect' and 'tolerance' in the 'golden rules' that they live by and see staff practise in the daily life of the school community. Pupils spoken to know about the British and English flags the school flies, that their trip to London was to the 'capital' where the government is, and so they begin to build a sense of 'nation'.

- Pupils welcome responsibility and appreciate the many opportunities they are given. For example, they collect paper from each room to recycle, and can explain why this is important.
- Attendance is above average and pupils are punctual to lessons. There have been no exclusions at this school.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils' safety is seen as paramount to everything the school does. Pupils are trained to take care of themselves, too.
- Arrangements to see that all adults are appropriately checked for working with young people are rigorously applied. Access to the school premises is secure. Pupils and their parents feel they are safe in school.
- The care that staff provide for pupils is excellent; every pupil is known as an individual and has five particular people they can turn to if worried. Staff create a climate in which pupils feel safe and well cared for, seeing this as fundamental to pupils' academic success.
- Pupils say that, if they fall out with one another, staff quickly help them to resolve matters so they are friends again. Those spoken to could not remember a case of bullying. They have a good understanding of the potential dangers of the internet and say, for example, that they would never pass on their names. Their understanding of other dangers – for example, road safety – is equally strong. They are trained to be aware of potential dangers around them, too. Consequently, they have a very good sense of risk.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive. Enthusiastic and joyful teaching greets pupils, who respond by trying their best. No time is wasted because everyone is keen to get on with the day's learning. Mutual respect is evident; pupils look up to their teachers and want to please them.
- Teaching is outstanding because teachers and their assistants are clear on the school's approach to every aspect of their work with pupils. Whichever adult pupils work with, or when they move classes every year, pupils know what is expected of them, and what they may expect in return. As a result, the rapid pace of learning is maintained.
- Teachers have very high ambition for their pupils and always expect them to do the best they can. While being clear to pupils about how they can improve, they focus on affirming what has been achieved and on creating a climate of success. They affirm and celebrate achievement, reassure pupils they are doing the right thing, and motivate them to go on to make further progress.
- Teachers are very skilled at using information about what pupils know, understand and can do to plan future lessons, so the tasks all pupils are given challenge them without being too hard or too easy.
- On occasions, staff group pupils according to their ability; for example, in some mathematics lessons and when pupils learn phonics (the understanding and application of the sounds made by letters and words). They feel this is very effective because pupils in each group learn at a similar pace; the most-able forge ahead, while those who struggle get more time to practise and master fundamentals.
- Teaching assistants play a full and active part in learning. They are constantly alert to any pupil who is struggling and give them extra help so they quickly catch up. Pupils who have mastered the learning may be asked to explain it to the class. This boosts their self-confidence and confirms their understanding.
- Homework is closely linked to work in school, so it is very beneficial to pupils' progress. A task at home will reinforce learning in school, or prepare pupils for something they will learn shortly.
- Reading, writing and mathematics are taught very effectively. Every teacher and assistant has been

trained in the same approaches, so teaching is consistent whoever teaches the pupil. In most lessons, speaking and listening skills are promoted equally effectively. However, on a few occasions, pupils are not always given time to think about their answers to questions before the teacher offers it to another pupil.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Pupils consistently leave the school exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of their education. Year after year, their standards in reading, writing and mathematics are in the top fifth of schools nationally. Almost every pupil reached or exceeded the expected level of attainment at the end of Year 2, and well above-average proportions exceeded them. This does not tell the whole story because pupils leave with a very broad general knowledge and the life experiences to give them the self-confidence, perseverance, resilience and independence to make the most of their next school.
- Current data, the work seen in lessons and, over time, in pupils' books indicates that pupils throughout the school continue to do exceptionally well and pupils currently in Year 2 are on track to reach equally high standards.
- The most-able pupils make outstanding progress because the tasks they are given offer the right level of challenge. In 2014, for example, about half exceeded the expected level in reading. In writing, the proportion was one quarter and, in mathematics, one third.
- The results of the annual phonics screening check in Year 1 are almost identical to those found nationally. Of those who take the re-test a year later, almost all reach or exceed the nationally expected level. The consistent approach recently introduced is already having benefit and standards are set to rise.
- Basic skills are used well. Pupils have a very clear understanding of how to use the 'tools' of writing, such as punctuation, effectively. No time is wasted; when lining up, pupils juggle sums in their heads.
- Disadvantaged pupils currently at school do very well. Those in Year 2 are already working at the same advanced tasks as the most able, above the expected level in reading, writing and mathematics. The vast majority of last year's group, however, had special educational needs that had an impact on their attainment. In mathematics, there was no gap between them and pupils nationally, although they were three-quarters of a term behind their classmates. In reading and writing, they largely achieved the rate of progress expected of them, but not the accelerated progress to catch up. In reading, they were about three-quarters of a term behind all pupils nationally, and a term and a half behind others in the class. In writing, they were a term behind all pupils nationally and nearly two terms behind their classmates.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs generally make rapid progress from their various starting points. They receive excellent support and show enthusiasm for learning. Parents of these pupils say how fully the school involves them.

The early years provision

is outstanding

- Attainment on entry to Nursery is broadly typical for the children's age, although boys' early writing skills are below those of the girls. Excellent links with the pre-schools mean that children settle quickly. They make rapid progress throughout Nursery and Reception and, in 2014, about eight in every ten children reached a good level of development, above that expected nationally, and were very well prepared for Year 1.
- Those with speech, language and communication needs make good progress because their particular needs are catered for very well. Staff are skilled at asking questions to encourage them to express their thoughts in virtually every activity they do. Staff knowledge of other needs is equally strong, so all thrive.
- Fundamental to children's rapid progress is how thoroughly and systematically the school works to train them in key skills. For example, children know they practise 'funky fingers' to improve dexterity, and can say the stage their pencil grip is at, and how it is improving. Already they have an impressive

understanding of themselves as learners, and the steps they need to take to improve.

- Every activity is stimulating and interesting, so children are absorbed in learning. Every moment has a carefully planned purpose, and their education broadens enormously; for example, when they sketch the ducklings visiting their class.
- Teaching is excellent. Staff provide a rich and stimulating range of activities catering for all areas of learning, both inside and out. From their first day, children are shown where everything is in the Nursery and encouraged to take out and put back the equipment they want to use.
- Staff are very skilled at supporting children to acquire basic skills. For example, a high proportion of Reception children are already reaching high standards in phonics. Thinking skills and perseverance develop quickly because staff skilfully ask the right questions so children come to the answer themselves.
- Children behave well because they enjoy these marvellous activities and the way they are taught. They thrive socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically. They make friends very rapidly, and quickly begin to enjoy their new environment.
- Strong links with families mean that parents are frequent and regular participants in activities with their children. Children see parents and staff working closely together, and how this helps them.
- Leadership and management of the early years are excellent. Accurate assessments of children's progress are made through careful observations. This information is used very skilfully in planning future activities.

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	139736
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	449952

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

Type of school	Infant and Nursery
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	228
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rebecca Bell
Headteacher	Daniel Thrower
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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