

Surlingham Community Primary School

Walnut Hill, Surlingham, Norwich, NR14 7DQ

Inspection dates 23–24 April 2015

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- The school is improving but recent changes made by leaders and governors have not yet ensured good teaching and achievement.
- Subject leaders have not had sufficient impact on improving standards in writing and mathematics.
- The upheavals of the last year due to staffing changes have damaged the relationship between the school and parents.
- The quality of teaching is not consistently good through the school so pupils' progress varies too much from one year to another.
- Not enough pupils make good progress in writing and mathematics to reach the higher levels in their work.
- Some teachers' marking and use of questions are not helpful in guiding pupils to achieve more.
- Too few activities encourage pupils to want to write.
- In mathematics, the lack of opportunities for pupils to use and apply their knowledge in solving problems restricts their progress.
- The quality of pupils' handwriting and general presentation of their workbooks vary too much.

The school has the following strengths

- Governance is much improved. The governing body is beginning to hold leaders effectively to account. An effective partnership with the local authority underpins the school's recent improvements.
- Behaviour is good and pupils say they feel safe in school. All parents who expressed a view share this opinion.
- The school is a harmonious community and staff promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- Reading standards are stronger now because changes here, particularly to the teaching of reading skills, have had more time to make an impact.
- Improvements in the Reception class in particular are having a positive impact on teaching and children's progress.
- The school's approach to homework enthuses pupils. They and their parents say they like it very much.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was coordinated with the inspection of the other school in the federation, Rockland St Mary Primary School.
- The inspector observed learning in seven lessons, including all year groups and in a range of subjects. Some observations were carried out jointly with a senior leader and all teachers present were seen.
- The inspector met with: the interim executive headteacher; the acting deputy headteacher; members of the governing body; subject leaders; parents and pupils; and representatives of the local authority.
- The inspector looked at pupils' work and heard a group of pupils read.
- The inspector considered documents about the school's self-evaluation, plans for improvement and arrangements to ensure that pupils are safe.
- The inspector took account of the views expressed by parents in discussions, letters and the 31 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.
- The staff were invited to share their opinions through a questionnaire. None chose to do so. The inspector spoke to members of staff during the inspection to hear their views about the school.

Inspection team

Bob Greatrex, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is below the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils who are looked after by the local authority or known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average.
- There were too few pupils in Year 6 in 2014 to qualify for the usual judgement about whether the school meets the government's current floor standards. These are the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Children in the Reception class attend full time.
- The school forms part of The Three Rivers Federation with Rockland St Mary Primary School. These schools share one governing body and an interim executive headteacher. Other leadership roles are also shared.
- The school operates a breakfast club on four mornings each week.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been many staff changes. Four of the five class teachers have been appointed since then.
- The executive headteacher is currently unable to attend school. An acting headteacher filled the post in the latter part of 2014. An interim executive headteacher from the local authority currently leads the school and was appointed in January 2015. The position of deputy headteacher is currently filled in an acting capacity.
- The local authority provides an improvement board to oversee the work of the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and accelerate pupils' progress further by making sure that:
 - teachers use questioning consistently well to extend and deepen pupils' understanding
 - teachers' marking and verbal feedback accurately identify the precise improvements pupils need to make to help them improve their work faster, and teachers check that pupils understand and follow this guidance
 - the teaching of writing engages and enthuses pupils so they want to write
 - pupils have sufficient opportunities to use and apply their mathematical skills in solving problems to enable them to deepen their understanding
 - teachers demonstrate high expectations of the quality of pupils' handwriting and presentation of work.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - the role of teachers who have responsibility for aspects of the school's work, including subjects, is developed further so that they make a greater contribution to raising pupils' achievement
 - the school engages with all parents more effectively to rebuild the partnership between home and school and ensure that the concerns of all parents are addressed.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- The many changes leaders have made to improve the school are very recent and, although helpful, have not yet made a significant difference in ensuring consistently good teaching and achievement.
- The role of subject and key stage leader is yet to be fully developed. Consequently, these staff have made a limited impact on teaching and standards in their subjects. Good training through the local authority and guidance from the interim executive headteacher are helping these staff to begin to fulfil their roles more effectively, particularly in monitoring standards and the quality of teaching.
- Seven in 10 of the parents responding to the online questionnaire said they that did not feel the school is led and managed well. However, they said they are impressed by the recent changes, have positive relationships with class teachers and receive good updates about their children. They appreciate that the interim executive headteacher and Chair of the Governing Body have begun to rebuild the partnership with them. One parent commented that the interim executive headteacher is 'like a breath of fresh air'.
- The interim executive headteacher and Chair of the Governing Body are creating a clear sense of a fresh start for the school, and morale among staff is improving. Above all else, the school's strong culture ensures classrooms remain purposeful, positive learning environments where the conditions are well established in which teachers can be effective and pupils understand it is important they behave well.
- Equality of opportunity is at the heart of everything the school does. Should any form of discrimination arise, the school has clear policies and procedures to take effective action and eliminate it.
- The school's leaders collect information about pupils' progress effectively. Teachers are fully involved in gathering and analysing the resulting information, and held to account for any pupils falling behind.
- The interim executive headteacher and the acting deputy headteacher monitor and evaluate teachers' performance rigorously. As a result, the quality of teaching is improving. Staff morale is high because they know precisely what is expected of them and that they will receive good training. For example, staff observe outstanding and good teaching in schools similar in size and type to Surlingham. Leaders accompany them, so follow-up discussions draw out key points and lead to action. Each visit has a direct and immediate impact on the quality of teaching, for example in new approaches to marking.
- The school's new curriculum increasingly matches the abilities and interests of the majority of pupils. Areas of study are well chosen, but some writing tasks do not inspire pupils and they have limited opportunities to apply their mathematical skills in solving problems. Visits and visitors extend learning further. The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. For example, pupils have powerful, well-reasoned debates about important moral topics such as deforestation and logging.
- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Values such as respect and tolerance are promoted in all aspects of school life. They develop a good sense of tradition, for example through maypole dancing.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to increase the range of opportunities open to disadvantaged pupils and provide extra help to support their progress.
- Primary school sports funding is used well to widen pupils' opportunities. Many pupils take part in traditional sports beyond school so more unusual activities, such as kayaking and climbing, are provided through school. Pupils enjoy these and their participation in sport has increased. They also recognise the role exercise plays in a healthy lifestyle and enjoy energetic activity. Further staff training is planned.
- Excellent local authority support is key to the recent and rapid improvements. For example, the local authority has provided expertise to improve the Reception provision, training for key staff, and links to outstanding schools.

- The federation is beneficial because expertise is shared and staff work closely together. Some visits and events, such as sports day, are held jointly and pupils gain from working cooperatively together.
- The partnership with other local schools is effective. For example, resources and expertise are shared to mutual benefit. Pupils also take part in activities with those they will later meet at high school, so they can begin to form relationships.
- The effectiveness of the school's arrangements for safeguarding is good. For example, procedures and policies are known and followed by all staff and record keeping is thorough. All statutory requirements are met.

■ The governance of the school:

- Following the review of governance, governors have implemented many improvements to the way they work. They have a clear understanding of their roles and are increasingly effective.
- The new Chair of the Governing Body is skilled and knowledgeable; she leads the governors effectively and works well with the interim executive headteacher. The skills of each individual governor are used effectively.
- Governors know how to support and challenge the school and are increasingly doing so. They have a good and growing grasp of the school's strengths and areas for improvement, and use information about pupils' progress and attainment well to challenge leaders' plans. Governors' visits have a clear focus and help inform their discussions.
- The governing body has an accurate picture of the quality of teaching and oversees effective management of teachers' performance. It ensures that pay increases reflect improved teaching. Governors are determined to tackle underperformance of staff when necessary.
- The governing body makes sure funds, including additional money such as pupil premium and the primary school sports funding, are used effectively.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They make a strong contribution to the positive atmosphere in lessons. There have been no exclusions since the previous inspection.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are generally good, particularly when there is an element of choice in the activity, or it is intriguing to them, so their curiosity is aroused. The vast majority pay attention to staff and try to do their best, although the presentation of their work is sometimes untidy. They generally work well together in pairs, groups and teams, listening to each other's ideas and contributing their own.
- Whether in lessons or at playtime, pupils show respect for others and are polite and courteous. Their good behaviour contributes to their good personal development.
- Pupils are punctual to school and their attendance is above average. They say they enjoy school and want to come. Those who attend the good quality breakfast club enjoy it. This prepares them for learning and supports their punctuality.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say they feel safe in school and their parents agree with them. Pupils have a good understanding about how to stay safe. They know how to avoid risks when using the internet and older pupils have a good understanding of the purpose of 'filters' and 'firewalls'.
- Pupils are confident that staff quickly resolve the very rare incidents of misbehaviour or bullying, and have their own sensible strategies for keeping themselves safe.

- Procedures for checking the suitability of staff and visitors are thorough. Staff care for pupils well and create a positive environment in which pupils thrive. Staff undertake all necessary training to ensure pupils are safe. The school site is kept secure and any necessary repairs are prioritised.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The turnover of teachers and leaders has undermined the quality of teaching. Some parents say that the methods and approaches used to teach their children have changed often during the last year and they rightly feel this is detrimental to successful learning. The interim executive headteacher has moved rapidly to rectify the situation. Currently, each teacher knows the expectations of their teaching measured in what pupils should achieve. Staff meetings and training clarify these further. As a result, teaching is improving but not yet good.
- Teachers rarely use searching questions to encourage pupils to think further and deepen their understanding. Questions do not usually challenge pupils to apply what they have learnt in a different context. Teachers check that pupils understand the questions they do ask.
- In mathematics, the guidance teachers give to pupils through marking is often too general to help pupils know precisely what they should do to improve.
- Relationships between pupils and staff are very positive, and classrooms are often a hive of activity and purposeful learning. This sense of purpose has been maintained despite the relatively frequent changes in leaders and teachers.
- Learning is well planned and based on an understanding of what pupils still need to master. In the oldest class, for example, each activity is planned thoroughly to build towards achieving the learning objectives. As a result, learning is well directed and often successful.
- Pupils say they receive a lot more feedback than they used to, and that this is particularly useful in helping them to improve their skills and understanding. When they are given targets to reach, they are also given examples of what is expected and they say this is very helpful. They like the content of their lessons more. One pupil said, 'It is less repetitive and more challenging now.'
- Recent training has helped to ensure that reading is now taught well. All teachers use the same approach to teaching phonics (sounds and corresponding letters), so pupils are clear about what is expected. Good training has given teachers useful pointers to develop pupils' other skills, such as inferring meaning from what they read.
- Writing skills, such as punctuation, are taught well so pupils have the tools to write. Increasingly, pupils are given opportunities to write more and build their techniques, although some find this uninspiring when the tasks do not enthuse them.
- Mathematical skills and concepts are taught well. For example, one pupil said, 'I love guided maths because you know your teacher will work with you and go over something you struggle with until you understand.' However, pupils have limited opportunities to use and apply this knowledge in solving problems and do not deepen their understanding of the subject enough.
- Both pupils and parents say that homework, their 'learning log', is excellent. One pupil summed it up: 'The learning objective is broad so you can explore it in whatever way you like that motivates you more. It's up to you. I like it because it's fun; my parents like it because it gets me off the sofa.'

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching has not been good enough over time to promote good achievement. The journey through the school of some year groups, such as Year 4, has been uneven because the quality of teaching has varied, and this has adversely affected their progress.

- Not enough pupils make good progress in writing and mathematics. The present Year 6, for example, reached higher standards overall than pupils nationally in the tests at the end of Year 2 and are on track to reach similar standards in this year's national tests, too, so this able group will have progressed at only the expected pace and should have done better.
- In writing, too few activities enthuse and engage pupils to produce work of high quality. There are exceptions. In Year 6, for example, pupils studied flooding and gained real insight which they used to illustrate their writing. Over time, pupils' workbooks show little improvement in handwriting and presentation, particularly in the older classes.
- In mathematics, pupils have too few opportunities to use and apply their knowledge in practical and relevant tasks, and so deepen and strengthen their understanding. As a result, few pupils reach standards above nationally expected levels.
- The school's current assessment of pupils' progress and evidence from books, talking to pupils and observing learning in lessons suggest that the majority of pupils are currently making faster progress than in the past. This is because teaching is improving and pupils' progress is tracked very closely, so any falling behind are quickly recognised and given extra help.
- Throughout the school, pupils currently read well because the improvements made in teaching have had longer to become embedded. The proportion of Year 1 pupils achieving the nationally expected standard in the phonics check has risen in the recent past, but remains below average. The school's predictions, based on reliable data, show it is likely to increase further this year.
- There were no disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 in 2014. The small proportion currently in the school make similar progress to their peers. It is not possible to comment on their attainment without risk of identifying individuals.
- The vast majority of the most-able pupils make progress in writing and mathematics at the rate expected of all pupils nationally, rather than at the faster rate of which many are capable.
- The small proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress from a range of different starting points. Staff know their needs in minute detail and ensure they are fully catered for. Extra help is beneficial.

The early years provision

requires improvement

- The local authority has supported the early years for a longer period of time than other year groups, so the improvements to provision are better established. Even so, over time, some children, particularly boys, have made limited progress because learning activities were not well matched to their abilities. Overall, teaching and achievement require improvement.
- This year the activities are being tailored more closely to each child's interests and level of development, so they are making better progress. Parents have noticed this and say their children are much happier in their lessons.
- Children enter Reception with knowledge, skills and understanding broadly typical for their age. Last year, the proportion reaching a good level of development was similar to the national average. This year, the proportion expected to reach a good level of development is much higher. As a result, they are on track to be well prepared for Year 1.
- Children have positive attitudes to learning, partly because activities are interesting and presented in a way that makes it easy for them to understand. They are eager and inquisitive, with a real enthusiasm for learning. As a result, they persevere and take pride in completing tasks.

- Children behave well. They cooperate fully with staff and generally share and take turns. They listen attentively, for example in assembly.
- Teaching is now increasingly effective because staff have had extra training and guidance over a longer period than those in the rest of the school. They challenge children to work out ways to answer mathematical questions, such as 'How much less than 10 is seven?'
- While more remains to be done, leadership is developing well under the local authority's guidance so that the quality of teaching and children's achievement have both improved since last year. The arrangements for keeping children safe are good.

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	120855
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	462051

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	77
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Evelyn Hicks
Headteacher	Rosemary Kett (Interim Executive Headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	22 May 2013
Telephone number	01508 538214
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