

West Earlham Junior School

Scarnell Road, Norwich NR5 8HT

Inspection dates 26–27 January 2016

Overall effectiveness **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Pupils at West Earlham Junior School are extremely well cared for, very effectively taught, and achieving increasingly good outcomes.
- The headteacher has very high expectations of what pupils can achieve. School leaders, governors, teachers and support staff have worked tirelessly to deliver significant improvements over the last two years.
- Teachers plan engaging and effective lessons, demonstrating a strong understanding of the range of needs among their pupils. They expect all pupils to achieve well and be inquisitive, while ensuring that their learning is consistently challenging.
- The school maintains high expectations for effective and polite communication. Pupils are taught explicitly to apply important 'learner values' such as aspiration and resilience. As a result, pupils demonstrate kind, polite and diligent attitudes, both in lessons and around the school.
- In mathematics and writing, pupils make much better progress from their starting points than the national average.
- Disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and pupils with special educational needs make good progress as a result of the effective teaching and close support they receive.
- The school is a happy and safe environment. School leaders and governors ensure that all pupils and families receive excellent support and communication. As a result, attendance to school has significantly improved, and pupils are greatly enjoying their time at school,
- Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is very effectively nurtured through a varied curriculum and wide range of enrichment activities. Enquiry-based learning projects, extra-curricular clubs, and regular trips, visits and speakers add a rich blend of experiences to pupils' learning.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils' achievement in reading, although improving, is not yet as consistently strong as it is in mathematics and writing.
- Although school leaders and teachers manage behaviour very effectively, occasionally the attitudes to learning of a small minority do not match that of the large majority.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that pupils' achievement in reading consistently matches that in mathematics and writing by:
 - developing and refining the wide range of actions in place to raise pupils' reading skills and the profile of reading
 - drawing together all assessment information to closely monitor and evaluate the impact of teaching and support strategies in place to improve pupils' reading.
- Eliminate the remaining rare examples of poor behaviour by:
 - consolidating the emphasis placed on good behaviour and learning values in lessons
 - developing the range of strategies used to promote effective independent learning behaviours in all pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher has led significant improvements to the school since her appointment in 2012. She and her senior team provide a very clear and caring vision for the school that is rooted in securing excellent outcomes and developing self-confident, inquisitive pupils. They communicate very clear expectations to teachers, pupils and parents and, as a consequence, have won their overwhelming support.
- School leaders at all levels have a clear understanding of their roles and the priorities for improvement as a result of rigorous strategic planning. For example, a new assessment system was very effectively introduced this year because careful research, planning and training time was undertaken to give teachers the skills and confidence to implement it. This is giving teachers and leaders good information to help them plan improvements to the weaker outcomes in reading secured in 2015.
- Leaders monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching closely. Significant improvements have been secured as a result of an excellent range of training and collaboration opportunities that are valued by staff. For example, teachers have worked in small groups to develop innovative approaches to improving the teaching of spelling. Pay progression for leaders and teachers is closely linked to securing the objectives for improved teaching and pupil outcomes that are set out in the school development plan.
- Leaders have established very clear systems and expectations for behaviour that are matched with extensive opportunities to celebrate and reward pupils' work and conduct. Pupils earn 'smileys' for exceptional effort, and are given the opportunity to earn various trophies and awards for demonstrating good conduct. As a result, attendance to school has improved greatly, and parents are more frequently able to come into school to celebrate and share in the pupils' achievements.
- The curriculum is planned very carefully to ensure that it is broad and coherent. A strong focus upon the core skills of English and mathematics is enriched and complemented through enquiry projects such as the Ancient Greeks and Medieval life. An extensive range of practical activities, educational visits and speakers or storytellers work to excite and engage the pupils and extend learning beyond the classroom.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is nurtured very well, both through the curriculum and the very wide range of popular extra-curricular activities. A strong emphasis upon effective communication is reflected in the enthusiasm pupils show in French and Spanish lessons, while religious education lessons give pupils a good knowledge of other faiths and traditions. The 'global voices' programme brings regular visitors from overseas into the school, and pupils develop a good understanding of the democratic process when they elect circle leaders to lead whole-school, pupil-circle discussions.
- The support provided to disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is very effective. Teachers plan well to meet their needs, and a wide range of one-to-one or small-group activities are run to boost their basic skills. Outcomes for these pupils have improved strongly because their needs are being closely tracked and leaders use associated funding, resources and strategies effectively.
- Leaders have applied a range of strategies and additional resources to ensure that disadvantaged pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding make progress that is similar to that of other pupils. The use of this funding is tracked carefully and additional support is directed to where it is found to be needed, for example to support improvements in reading.
- The primary sports premium funding is used effectively to increase participation in clubs and team sports, provide training for staff, and improve the range of equipment available to pupils. Its impact is measured annually and it is leading to sustained high rates of participation.
- Leaders seek a range of external support and partnerships to improve provision. The local authority provides a significant range of training and development opportunities. Staff have collaborated with a wide range of schools to inform improvements to teaching and the curriculum.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors have played a central role in shaping the school's ambitious development plans, and have a deep understanding of the school's strengths and areas of weakness. As a result, they share the headteacher's clear vision for the further improvement of the school. They have undertaken an evaluation of their own skills and areas of expertise, and have secured training where needs have been identified. They also work closely with local schools to ensure expertise and planning are shared and coordinated effectively.

- School leaders are challenged robustly by governors to provide detailed information to help them monitor improvements to areas such as behaviour and teaching. Governors also receive regular information about the arrangements for keeping pupils safe, ensuring the procedures are rigorous and well managed.
- Governors actively check the quality of provision in the school by visiting the school and holding regular meetings with school leaders. For example, a recent governor visit to monitor the implementation of improvement plans for reading resulted in a detailed progress report. Governors are a regular presence in the school, and share in many of the events and celebrations enjoyed by the pupils.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Policies and procedures are regularly reviewed, clear and given high prominence around the school and through the website. Staff are all well trained and knowledgeable about the risks to pupils and how to report and act upon concerns. Risk assessments are maintained and appropriate, and the arrangements for checking the suitability of staff are thorough.
- Procedures and actions to support vulnerable pupils are coordinated and administered well, with effective liaison with other agencies and professionals in place. The school has fully implemented the government's latest guidance on the Prevent strategy (government advice to schools to have due regard to the need to identify signs of extremism and radicalisation).

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teachers at West Earlham are highly reflective, eager to continually improve their practice, and take great pleasure in their work with the pupils. Lessons are typically challenging and well planned, drawing upon a range of exciting and well-chosen resources. As a result, pupils make good progress and are interested and engaged in their learning.
- Developing effective communication skills is central to the approach that is taken to teaching. Pupils are encouraged and taught to speak clearly, and to frame and respond to searching questions. Teachers model their high expectations by correcting poor uses of language and by regularly building paired, small-group and whole-class discussion into every lesson. In assembly, for example, the hall buzzed with animated and focused discussion when the pupils were asked to reflect in pairs on a short clip they had watched about preventing bullying.
- Pupils and parents receive regular and useful feedback from teachers about pupils' progress. A new system for assessing pupils over time against a 'ladder' scale of building knowledge and skills is developing well, helping teachers to spot gaps in knowledge and understanding and plan accordingly. The ladder system is also giving pupils an increasingly well-developed understanding of their strengths and areas for development. Pupils' books are regularly marked with helpful comments that usually work to direct pupils towards clear improvement or corrections.
- The teaching of mathematics is particularly impressive in the school. Teachers plan a wide range of challenging, problem-solving activities, and use a range of imaginative and exciting apparatus and methods to help pupils apply their mathematical skills and develop fluency. For example, one class in Year 4 had been learning about fractions and area by planning and designing a fence for the Anglo-Saxon long house that has been erected on the field as part of their enquiry-based learning project.
- Teachers develop pupils' writing using a wide range of strategies and resources. Pupils are guided effectively in how to talk about their writing while planning, and also how to draft, edit and improve their spelling, punctuation and grammar. For example, Year 6 pupils produced accurate and imaginative original creative stories following careful planning and discussion. As they wrote, the teacher and teaching assistants provided helpful guidance, conducting 'punctuation walks' to spot errors and prompt correction.
- The teaching of reading is improving to address the weaker outcomes secured by some less-able pupils in 2015. Teachers and teaching assistants use a range of methods to develop pupils' understanding and comprehension. The majority of pupils read at home each day, recording their reading in their journals. Regular reading sessions, both in class and in the beautiful school library, supplement this. Many pupils also benefit from effective one-to-one and small-group support for their reading.
- Classrooms are attractive and innovative spaces, featuring a wide array of practical equipment, helpful displays, and celebrations of pupils' work and achievements. Technology is also used to impressive effect in many classes. For example, in one Year 3 mathematics lesson, pupils fluently explained their calculation methods while the teacher projected their work onto the board using a tablet computer.

- Homework is used effectively to consolidate learning, support research for enquiry projects, and to promote independent reading. Pupils find the homework set manageable and enjoy the challenge of many of the extended tasks they undertake.
- Many teachers use excellent classroom blogs to record the work and achievements of their class, as well as to provide parents with an insight into their child's learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Teachers and support staff demonstrate a very strong understanding of pupils' individual needs and welfare, resulting in strong, caring relationships in evidence throughout the school. A wide range of professionals are employed to offer targeted support to both pupils and families when the need for help is identified.
- Pupils are highly knowledgeable about how to stay safe online because they are taught about it explicitly in lessons as well as through presentations by external agencies. In each class, pupils have signed and displayed an 'e-safety charter' reminding them of the key messages.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of the different forms of abuse and bullying, and the school ensures that they are knowledgeable about how to report concerns and keep themselves safe. One highly effective assembly that inspectors observed saw pupils being taught about the importance of not allowing unkind behaviours to go unchallenged or unreported.
- Close supervision and strategies such as assigning older pupils as 'buddies' and the school's friendship club contribute to a supportive climate at break- and lunchtimes. As a result, examples of unkind or bullying behaviours are rare, and the school deals with them systematically and effectively.
- Healthy lifestyles are promoted in a number of effective ways. For example, the school has recently introduced a healthy snacks policy at breaktime, and has opened a breakfast café to enable pupils and their parents to enjoy a nutritious breakfast together in the school. In addition to this, the pupils learn about how to prepare healthy foods, and have the opportunity to enjoy a wide range of sports clubs and activities.
- Pupils are listened to in the school and given numerous effective opportunities to take on leadership roles. All pupils take part in 'pupil circles', in which they discuss ways to improve the school, led by a democratically elected 'circle leader'. Pupil circles recently initiated the purchase of additional games equipment for the playground. Other pupils have benefited from the opportunity to be sports leaders, librarians or class helpers.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils, parents and staff overwhelmingly agree that good behaviour is a strong feature of the school. In lessons, pupils are almost always extremely well behaved, working hard independently, and working cooperatively in their learning pairs, or in small groups.
- Each class has a 'learner value' of the week that is given high prominence and promotes very effective learning behaviours. For example, in one class, a pupil was very proud of the trophy he had been awarded that week for demonstrating 'independence' by attempting more work unaided. Pupils are able to explain clearly what these values mean, and model them effectively in lessons as a result.
- Occasionally, teachers have to apply the school's behaviour management system to respond to a small minority of pupils. However, pupils respond well to reminders and understand clearly the consequences for disrupting lessons.
- Pupils' conduct around the school is excellent. All pupils follow the simple 'Magic 5' rules for moving around the school, contributing to an atmosphere that is calm and friendly. The playground is well supervised, and pupils play cooperatively across year groups. Entry into classrooms is orderly and polite, with teachers and pupils modelling good manners and greeting each other cheerfully.

- The attendance of pupils to school has improved significantly in recent years and is now higher than the national average. Similarly, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school is lower than the national average. A strong emphasis is placed upon the importance of good attendance, with weekly competitions and rewards working alongside support for families successfully to reduce absence.
- The school uses fixed-term exclusions infrequently, and much less than the national average, to address the rare examples of more serious misbehaviour.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils' attainment across subjects improved significantly in 2015 and is now good. From starting points that are lower than average, overall attainment rose to around the national average, and was much higher than average in mathematics.
- Pupils across year groups are making good progress overall as a result of effective teaching and support. In 2015, a higher proportion of pupils than average made or exceeded the expected rates of progress from their various starting points in mathematics and writing. These strong rates of progress in mathematics and writing are securely in place among current year groups.
- In 2015, progress in reading was not as strong for some less-able pupils. All pupils, including the high proportion who are disadvantaged, are currently receiving a range of reading support and assistance, such as regular small-group or one-to-one tuition sessions. As a result of these actions and improved teaching, progress in reading is now improving across year groups.
- In 2015, disadvantaged pupils in the school made better rates of progress from their starting points in mathematics and writing than non-disadvantaged pupils nationally. Their overall attainment was better than that of other pupils nationally in mathematics, and similar in writing; it was lower than average in reading.
- In current year groups, disadvantaged pupils are making similarly strong progress. In Year 4, there is evidence that they are beginning to make stronger progress than their non-disadvantaged peers.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs made good progress from their different starting points in 2015 as a result of rigorous support and effective teaching. This pattern of good progress is securely in place in current year groups and across subjects.
- The most-able pupils achieve very well in the school. In 2015, the proportion of pupils achieving Level 5 in mathematics and writing at the end of Key Stage 2 was much higher than the national average. It was close to the national average in reading. The overall progress the most-able pupils make from their higher starting points is better than similar pupils nationally.
- A full programme of visits and taster sessions gives all pupils good preparation for the transition to secondary school. Pupils are knowledgeable about the next stage of their education, and well prepared because effective teaching approaches are equipping them with the knowledge and skills they will need to succeed.

School details

Unique reference number	120958
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10001895

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	238
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anne Gibson
Headteacher	Catrin Parry-Jones
Telephone number	01603 454569
Website	www.westearlhamjunior.norfolk.sch.uk
Email address	office@westearlhamjunior.norfolk.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	28–29 November 2013

Information about this school

- West Earlham Junior School is slightly smaller than the average sized junior school and is located in Norwich. The current headteacher has been in post since 2012.
- The majority of pupils are White British, with a smaller proportion than average coming from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is low.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding (additional government funding to support pupils who are looked after or who are known to be eligible for free school meals) is more than double the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities or an education, health and care plan is above the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in 19 lessons in order to contribute to their evaluation of the quality of teaching, learning, and assessment. Many of these observations were conducted jointly with members of the school's leadership team. Inspectors also observed small-group sessions and assemblies.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, school leaders, teachers, support staff, a representative of the local authority, governors and various groups of pupils.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of school documentation, including that relating to: policies; minutes of governing body meetings; annual review; self-evaluation; pupils' achievement, behaviour and attendance data; and a wide range of pupils' work.
- Inspectors considered the views expressed in responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and 29 questionnaires returned by school staff.
- Inspectors scrutinised the various forms of communication the school uses, including the website and information sent to parents and other stakeholders.

Inspection team

Richard Spencer, lead inspector

Seconded Inspector

Sally Garrett

Ofsted Inspector

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