

Bure Valley School

Hungate Street, Aylsham, Norwich NR11 6JZ

Inspection dates 3–4 February 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

- Strong leadership, especially under the new partnership arrangements with the high school, has helped the school to improve rapidly.
- Leaders, managers and governors are focused on driving improvement and have effective systems to hold staff to account for pupils' performance.
- Teaching is now consistently good because of leaders' and governors' high expectations.
- Standards in writing are consistently above average. Standards in reading and mathematics have been rising this year. Pupils make good progress from their different starting points.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare are outstanding. Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning and get on very well with one another and with staff.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. This has improved considerably because staff apply the school's behaviour policy consistently.
- Attendance is above average and pupils' punctuality is good.
- Governors provide effective leadership to the school and hold senior leaders to account well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There are some inconsistencies in how teachers apply the school's marking and feedback policy.
- Some improvement measures are fairly recent and have not had time to bring about a full benefit to pupils' outcomes.
- The roles of some leaders of foundation subjects are not fully developed in improving provision.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Widen the impact of leadership and management on raising standards and improving teaching, by:
 - ensuring all teachers consistently follow the school's marking and feedback policy, for example, through making clear to pupils how they can improve their work and strengthen their spelling
 - developing the roles of subject leaders in improving the quality of provision, especially in the foundation subjects
 - securing the improvements brought about by recent changes, for example to the teaching of mathematics, so that the full benefit is evident in pupils' outcomes.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Leaders, managers and governors have been successful in improving the school despite a period of some turbulence 18 months ago.
- The executive headteacher and the head of school have worked together extremely well since the formation of the partnership with Aylsham High School.
- Together, they have set out a clear vision for driving improvement and developed a strong culture of collaboration between pupils, staff, parents and governors.
- An emphasis on improving teaching means that it is now consistently good. Leaders have developed very effective systems that make all staff accountable. High-quality training has improved teachers' subject knowledge and the range of teaching strategies and resources they use.
- Leaders have also supported teaching assistants in becoming more effective in the classroom; communication has improved and they have received specific training to hone their skills.
- Teaching assistants have taken on increased responsibilities, such as coordinating the library, supporting anti-bullying ambassadors, and monitoring pupils' participation in the 'children's university', an initiative to raise pupils' aspirations.
- Leaders and governors use the management of teachers' performance to set rigorous targets linked to the national teachers' standards. As a result, teachers are held to account for improving their practice and outcomes for pupils.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness well. All pupils in the school learn a wide range of musical instruments and older pupils join together to form a community orchestra of 130 players. Classes are named after foreign countries and pupils learn about them. The school council has a strong voice and pupils are trained as anti-bullying ambassadors. Pupils feel they are listened to and their opinions count. Pupils have a good understanding of British values, including democracy, the rule of law and respect for one another. They are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The school teaches a broad and balanced range of subjects that takes into account the needs and aspirations of all pupils. Subject leadership has been a focus for school improvement; subject leaders are taking on additional responsibilities and checking the quality of provision in their areas. It is too early to see the full impact of this work on some foundation subjects. Pupils enjoy a good range of clubs and other activities that enrich the curriculum. Some run their own clubs, such as drama, reading and chess. This gives them confidence and enhances their learning.
- Not all teachers are following the school's marking and feedback policy consistently. In particular, some pupils are not clear about what they have to do to improve their work or given enough guidance to spell accurately most of the time.
- The pupil premium is spent effectively on academic and pastoral support. This is helping pupils to close gaps in their attainment with other pupils and is assisting them in becoming better learners.
- The effective spending of the primary physical education and sport premium has a positive impact on keeping pupils healthy, increasing their participation in sport, and giving them opportunities to take part in different sports. Pupils compete in a wide range of tournaments with other schools, including hockey, cross-country and swimming.
- Close collaboration with the Aylsham Cluster Trust and the local authority has paved the way for the continued improvements made by the partnership with the high school. They provided strong leadership and accountability before the partnership was set up, and have continued to support since.
- Parents are mainly in favour of the school's work. Some parents have been disappointed by the school's performance in the past; it has not yet regained its former reputation as being a good school in the eyes of some parents. However, many parents recognise the positive impact of recent changes.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The effectiveness of governance has improved considerably since the previous inspection. Under the new Chair, governors are very active. Minutes of their meetings show that they ask numerous probing questions and hold leaders to account well.
 - Governors have a good understanding of performance information. They visit the school regularly to find out for themselves how things are going.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are good. Staff keep detailed records of any concerns, and are thorough in following through any matters that arise. Training is good and keeps all staff up to date. The school works well with parents to keep pupils safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teachers have high expectations of pupils and plan work that is suitably challenging for them. This enables pupils to make good progress from their different starting points.
- Teachers work well with teaching assistants and use them effectively to support groups and individuals.
- The school is an attractive learning environment, which celebrates pupils' work and motivates them to learn.
- The quality of questioning is challenging and extends pupils' thinking. For example, Year 6 pupils were able to refine their mathematical calculations following probing questioning by the teacher.
- Pupils have the opportunity to extend their learning across different subjects. For example, Year 6 pupils were interpreting graphs that showed the numbers of people put to death by murderous monarchs in Tudor times. Pupils applied their understanding of setting and atmosphere to write a diary entry for a Roman legionary newly posted to Hadrian's Wall.
- There are positive relationships between all staff and pupils – these create an atmosphere where pupils want to learn.
- Homework builds on what pupils have been learning at school in interesting ways. For example, pupils made models of Roman buildings.
- The teaching of reading is good. Pupils are enthusiastic and keen readers. They are offered a wide variety of books. The central library area is at the very heart of the school (all classes lead off it) and pupils make excellent use of it.
- Reading has a high profile across the school. Year 6 pupils enjoy a reading challenge which encourages them to read widely, find new vocabulary and write sentences.
- New approaches to teaching mathematics are proving successful. Pupils are benefiting from being able to use practical apparatus routinely to support their understanding of new concepts. They are also able to apply their mathematical skills to solving a range of different real-life problems, thus deepening their knowledge. As these changes are fairly recent, their impact on pupils' outcomes is not fully evident.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils are very confident about their learning and willing to 'have a go'. They are happy to express their views. They have excellent attitudes to learning and are keen to learn.
- Pupils are proud of their school and say how much they enjoy their lessons.
- Almost one hundred of the pupils are involved in the 'children's university', which is a local initiative with the University of East Anglia to raise aspirations through independent learning.
- Recent surveys show that pupils have high levels of satisfaction with the school.
- Outstanding pastoral support means that pupils facing difficulties are very well prepared for learning. The pastoral leader works extremely effectively with families to help them overcome issues affecting them which could have an impact on their children's schooling.
- Pupils say that bullying is not a concern to them. Pupils have been trained as anti-bullying ambassadors to provide a listening ear and resolve minor disputes. They ran training workshops for their peers.
- Parents and pupils agree that pupils are safe at school. Pupils learn to stay safe when cycling and how to keep safe when using the internet. They learn about keeping safe in different situations they may encounter at home or at school, such as what to do in the event of a fire.
- The breakfast club and tea club are popular and run well. They provide pupils with a nourishing start and end to the school day, with plenty of interesting activities for them to enjoy.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. There has been a marked improvement in behaviour as a result of rigorous and consistent approaches by all staff to implementing the new behaviour policy. The number of recorded incidents has been falling over time.
- Pupils are confident to raise issues with staff and know that they will be taken seriously and acted on.
- In class, most pupils are attentive and work hard. Just occasionally, a few become distracted.
- Around the school, behaviour is generally very good. It is not yet outstanding because pupils are not fully able to regulate their own behaviour without adult support.
- Attendance is consistently above average, reflecting pupils' enjoyment of school, parents' commitment to the school and the excellent systems the school uses to promote attendance. Punctuality is also very strong.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Current pupils are making good progress because of the improvements in teaching and careful tracking of their performance by school staff. This means that if any pupils are at risk of falling behind they are picked up quickly and support is provided to help them improve. Pupils are well prepared for secondary school, particularly so because of the close partnership with the high school.
- The great improvement in pupils' behaviour has also meant that pupils are ready to learn and this has had a positive impact on their standards.
- Historically, there was some underachievement because of weaknesses in teaching and leadership, and this was especially the case in mathematics. However, as a result of training and support, the teaching of mathematics is now as good as that of English.
- Attainment in mathematics for current pupils has risen and is now in line with what is expected for pupils of their age. Increasing proportions of pupils are attaining above what is usually expected.
- Writing has been a strength of the school for some time. Standards have been consistently above average. Pupils have good opportunities to extend their writing in different subjects.
- Pupils read with fluency and enjoyment. They can explain what they like about certain authors and infer what is going to happen from reading a piece of text.
- The most-able pupils achieve well because they are given challenging work to do and much is expected of them. They have always done well in writing and are now also reaching high standards in reading and mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils benefit from the pupil premium and current pupils are closing gaps with other pupils. In the 2015 published information, gaps seemed to be very wide between the school's disadvantaged pupils and others nationally. However, much of this was explained by the fact that it was a small group of pupils and several of them also had considerable special needs and lower attainment than other pupils nationally.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress from their different starting points because staff know their needs well and provide tailored support for them. They are identified as soon as they join the school and quickly helped to catch up their peers.

School details

Unique reference number	120911
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10001888

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	259
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Samantha Dangerfield
Headteacher	Duncan Spalding (executive headteacher) Kathryn Burgess (head of school)
Telephone number	01263 733393
Website	www.burevalleyschool.org.uk
Email address	office@burevalley.norfolk.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	23–24 October 2013

Information about this school

- The school is average in size compared with most primary schools.
- Most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or looked after by the local authority) is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average.
- In 2015 the school met current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The governing body runs a breakfast club every morning and a tea club after school.
- In June 2015 the school formed a partnership with Aylsham High School. The headteacher of that school became executive headteacher of Bure Valley School and a head of school was appointed.
- The school is part of a cluster of foundation schools in the Aylsham area known as the Aylsham Cluster Trust.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed learning in 24 lessons or parts of lessons, nine of them jointly with the executive headteacher or head of school.
- The inspectors heard pupils read and, with the executive headteacher and head of school, looked closely at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspection team looked at a wide range of the school's documents including development plans, policies, self-evaluation reports and safeguarding records. They considered evidence of the school's partnership work and the information provided for families.
- A meeting was held with a group of older pupils chosen at random and with anti-bullying ambassadors and members of the school council. Discussions were held with senior leaders, subject leaders, teachers and other staff on a wide range of subjects, including safeguarding arrangements and their professional development. The lead inspector talked to the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors considered the 75 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. The inspection team also considered electronic comments about the school and spoke informally to some parents before an assembly.
- The views of 20 members of staff who completed questionnaires were also taken into account.

Inspection team

Nick Butt, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Judith Oliver	Ofsted Inspector
Jeremy Rowe	Ofsted Inspector

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