

Alburgh with Denton Church of England Primary School

School Road, Alburgh, Harleston, Norfolk IP20 0BW

Inspection dates 9–10 March 2016

Overall effectiveness **Outstanding**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- 'I feel incredibly lucky that my child has the opportunity to attend the school as it is an aspirational and inspirational school.' Parents speak with almost one voice about the outstanding qualities of this school.
- The headteacher has inspired the staff to work together to create a caring environment where every child is valued and all achieve their best. Exceptional teamwork is at the heart of why this school is outstanding.
- Senior and middle leaders take risks. They try out new ideas to improve the school. They evaluate them thoroughly and only continue with them if pupil achievement and well-being are improved.
- Governors are a force to be reckoned with. They know the school exceptionally well and have high aspirations. They make sure pupils are safe, well cared for and achieve high standards.
- Safeguarding processes meet requirements and show an outstanding attention to detail. Staff and pupils alike know what being safe means. As one pupil said, 'People help people here.'
- Pupils' handwriting and the presentation of their work are not always neat and careful as the teaching of these skills lacks consistency.
- Teaching is always good and often outstanding. As a result, pupils make outstanding progress from Year 1 to Year 6. For the last two years pupils' achievement has been significantly better than that of all pupils nationally. This trend is set to continue in 2016.
- There is no gap between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally. Pupils who have special educational needs or disability also make outstanding progress from their starting points.
- The most-able pupils achieve extraordinarily well in all subjects because of teachers' high expectations and the opportunities they get in every lesson to show what they are capable of.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding because they understand and live the Christian values promoted by the school. These values strongly contribute to pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Children in the early years make good progress from their starting points but do not have enough opportunities to write about their ideas and experiences.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' handwriting and presentation of their work by putting in place a systematic approach to teaching letter and number formation.
- Ensure that there are lots of opportunities for children to write about their ideas and experiences in the early years.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- When he was appointed six years ago, the headteacher set his sights on making Alburgh with Denton an outstanding school. He has achieved this by bringing staff and pupils with him on an exciting and challenging journey.
- Teachers are totally in tune with the headteacher's vision of excellence and say, 'It's a team right from the top. We're all in it together, from the caretaker to the headteacher.' They have received highly focused professional development that is targeted at improving and honing their teaching skills. 'We are all developed really well. There are excellent training opportunities here.' As a result pupils' achievement has improved over time and is now outstanding.
- Senior leaders have implemented rigorous and challenging monitoring systems. These are sharply focused on analysing any barriers to learning pupils might have and overcoming these. 'Target time' has had a huge impact on this process. This is where the headteacher has successfully freed up teachers to deliver individual or group sessions that enable pupils to practise and improve specific skills in reading, writing and mathematics. This highly successful approach is funded by the school's pupil premium allocation (additional funding from the government to support disadvantaged pupils and looked after children) and is why there is no gap between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally.
- In this small school every teacher is a subject leader of at least two subjects. They have worked together highly effectively, creating excellent systems to check the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects. They research new teaching approaches, always testing these out carefully to see if they will make a difference or not. For example, the new approach to teaching mathematics was introduced last year. To help the introduction, the mathematics leader gives effective support to all the teachers. As a result, pupils' reasoning and problem-solving skills are improving.
- The curriculum is vibrant and exciting. The school makes excellent use of specialist teachers in science and computing to ensure that pupils get the best teaching and learn effectively. 'Forest schools' activity provides amazing opportunities for pupils to gain confidence in themselves and their abilities by facing real outdoor challenges. They also have the opportunity of working safely with tools like bow-saws and axes. The forest area, created with the help of the local community, enables pupils to learn a wide range of skills and have fun at the same time. The skills they learn such as risk taking, independence and cooperation are applied to their learning back in school.
- There are a huge number of extra-curricular activities with many after-school clubs run by teachers or parents. The school uses its sports premium to make sure pupils get the opportunity to enjoy out-of-the-ordinary sports like canoeing. It also employs specialist sports coaches to train teachers and run after-school sports clubs. Teachers are now more confident in teaching a wide range of sports and all pupils attend at least one sports club a week. Some pupils have gone on to play their favourite sport for local clubs. For example, one boy plays for the under-eights football team in a nearby town.
- Pupils have a very mature understanding of British values and are extremely well prepared for life in modern Britain. Their excellent cultural awareness is developed through the well-established links with schools in Haringey, Luton and Malawi and pupils grasp what it is like to live in areas with many different cultures and faith communities. In a recent project about migrants, Year 6 pupils demonstrated their understanding and sympathy for the plight of all the children stranded in very difficult circumstances.
- Pupils' spiritual understanding is developed exceptionally well. There are excellent links with the local church and the vicar leads assemblies where pupils can share their own prayers with the school community. In philosophy lessons pupils discuss issues like being yourself and understand how important it is to value everyone, whatever their faith, colour or background. 'If everybody's the same it wouldn't be fun. The world wouldn't be as joyful!'
- Parents recognise the excellent work the staff team have done. 'I have had three children at this school over a number of years and I can honestly say that the school is the best it's ever been.' The overwhelming majority of parents who posted their views and text comments on Parent View are thrilled with the school. 'We have no concerns with the school and couldn't recommend it more. It's such a shame more children can't benefit from what the school can offer which makes us even more privileged that our child can attend here.' One or two parents expressed concerns either about too much academic challenge or the school not doing its best to meet a child's special needs. The inspection found no cause for concern.

■ The governance of the school

- Governors have a highly developed overview of the school. They understand the local community well and the constraints of small-school budgets. As a result, they have worked hard to create the Sancroft Church Schools Trust, putting on events like a careers fair where local businesses introduced pupils, from all five schools that make up the trust, to life beyond the possible limits of rural village life.
 - Since the last inspection, the governors have built a highly experienced and committed team. Governors visit the school regularly and carry out learning walks with the headteacher to check how, for example, new initiatives are working.
 - ‘High expectations is our watchword’ and governors make sure they have the information they need to check the quality of education the school provides. For example the ‘Governor Postcard’, devised by the Chair of Governors and headteacher, provides a half-termly snapshot of standards and the impact of school improvement activities. This, combined with the headteacher’s report, standards and resources committee meetings and the Chair of Governor’s weekly meetings with the headteacher, provide vital information about how well the school is doing. As a result, governors give pinpointed challenge as well as support to senior leaders.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All staff are crystal clear about how to handle any concerns that arise. The headteacher is tenacious in his pursuit of children’s social care if they do not contact the school quickly enough about a referral. Record keeping is meticulous and reflects the high priority the school gives to pupils’ safety.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

- Teachers have an excellent understanding of what ‘outstanding’ teaching and learning look like in their school. Their ‘Reflective Handbook’ sets out their ideas clearly and concisely and the impact of these ideas is evident in the outstanding progress pupils make over time.
- Teachers have very high expectations for what all pupils can achieve. Pupils really like the three-challenge approach that teachers use in lessons, ‘You choose which challenge works for you – not too easy so you finish too quickly, or too hard so you can’t do it. Teachers always encourage you to go for the higher challenge!’
- Teachers make sure lessons are interesting and pupils say they enjoy learning new things every week, ‘If you don’t finish something or you’re stuck the teacher has a one-to-one with you so you get to understand more quickly.’
- Teachers use their excellent knowledge of what pupils know, understand and can do to set accurate targets for reading, writing and mathematics. ‘That way you build up your skills. To complete a target you have to achieve it three times then you get a new one.’ Teachers write useful comments in pupils’ books which help them understand what they have done well and what they must do next to improve their work.
- Teachers select the teaching approaches that best suit the topics they are teaching. For example, in a mathematics lesson about measuring angles, the teacher gave a detailed demonstration of how to use a protractor using the interactive whiteboard and this helped pupils to get started.
- Teaching assistants are deployed well in all lessons. They ask searching questions and do not answer them for the pupils. They expect pupils to think for themselves and encourage them to do so. They are proactive and rapidly spot when a pupil needs help or encouragement to get started with their work.
- Higher-level teaching assistants (HLTA) are used exceptionally well in delivering high-quality physical education lessons and in the ‘Forest school’ sessions. They are trained in these subjects to a very high standard.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school’s work to promote pupils’ personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils say there is no bullying of any kind in the school and everyone is nice to each other.
- Pupils are highly reflective learners because staff have shown them how to look at their own and others’ work and say what is good about it and what could be better. They recognise that the presentation of their work is not always neat enough and that they could improve their handwriting.

- The peer-tutor programme to improve reading for some Year 3 and 4 pupils has had a very positive impact on raising achievement and on the attitudes of the Year 5 and 6 pupils who are peer tutors. They have learnt how to encourage and support other pupils and are keen to do more of this.
- Pupils say they feel safe and cared for in school because 'if you're upset everyone is there to help you.' Pupils new to the school describe how welcoming other pupils and staff are. 'Everyone feels supported and it's a really nice school.'

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Behaviour in class and around the school is exemplary as a result of pupils' excellent moral and social development. Pupils are polite to each other and to adults and routinely thank those children who collect their books or do other jobs in the classroom.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of what good learning behaviour means and put this into practice in every lesson. Every classroom has a wall of positive statements that celebrate different learning behaviours that teachers and teaching assistants have observed. 'One of our learning behaviours is cooperation – working together – and this happens in every lesson.'
- Pupils love coming to school so attendance is above average and there is no persistent absence. There have been no exclusions of any kind for the last six years.

Outcomes for pupils

are outstanding

- All pupils make outstanding progress from their starting points in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 in English, mathematics and science. The school has worked hard to make sure literacy and mathematics skills are used to good effect in other subjects. For example, in a recent science project about inheritance and evolution pupils wrote detailed accounts of the different influences on human development.
- The most-able pupils did exceptionally well in mathematics in 2015 but did not attain the highest levels in reading and writing. The literacy leader recognised that this was an improvement point for the school and as a result of actions she has taken the current group are on track to achieve much better in 2016. The most-able readers in Year 6 talk with great enthusiasm about their favourite authors. One girl likes tragedy because 'you need a bit of tragedy to make it a bit more page-turning.' The most able are mature and insightful writers. They are able to express their thoughts and feelings exceptionally well, for example in their recent accounts, imagining life as a migrant.
- Disadvantaged pupils do as well and sometimes better than other pupils of their age. The school makes excellent provision for pupils who have special educational needs or disability. As a result, they make good and often outstanding progress from their starting points. Lower-ability pupils are rapidly catching up with their reading skills. The school's systematic approach to teaching phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) enables these pupils to use their phonic knowledge to read new words. They also use the context of the story successfully to work out words that do not follow phonic rules.
- The school has outstanding provision for the most-vulnerable pupils. 'Communication is super! I get emails every day or I can come in and chat with the teacher,' said a carer. These pupils settle in very quickly and as a result make good progress with their learning, often from very low starting points.
- Most pupils move on to the nearest high school, which is part of the Sancroft Church Schools Trust. They receive an outstanding education at Alburgh with Denton and are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Early years provision

is good

- The majority of children attend the nearby private nursery and start in Reception with skills, knowledge and understanding that is typical for their age. They make good progress as a result of the good provision and most achieve a good level of development, with some achieving better than this. Most are ready to start Year 1.
- Assessment is accurate. There are robust and effective checks between schools of the new baseline assessment and a good level of development judgements. These are carried out within the Sancroft Church Schools Trust cluster of schools and by the local authority. The new online recording system provides a very detailed and colourful record of each child's small steps of learning. Parents love this and all add photographs and observations, sharing their children's learning experiences and achievements with their teacher.

- The curriculum is rich and varied and based on children's interests. This works well, but because the early years leader does not keep a systematic record of the key skills children must learn in addition, there are gaps, particularly in the opportunities pupils are given to write about their ideas and experiences.
- Phonics is taught every day. Children are learning their letter sounds and some are reading simple books. However, they do not learn to form their letters and numbers carefully and so do not develop secure writing skills by the time they enter Year 1.
- Children are very happy and exceptionally safe and well cared for in the early years. Their working areas are secure and excellent use is made of the well-resourced outside area. For example, children love the 'mud kitchen' where they mix, 'bake' and decorate the most delicious mud pancakes and buns with great enthusiasm. Language development is excellent because adults who work with the children are highly skilled at entering into interesting conversations that make children think and explain their ideas carefully.
- Leadership of the early years is good. The early years leader and HLTA know the children and their families exceptionally well. They visit the children in the nursery and at home before they start in Reception so children settle down quickly and happily. The HLTA has had excellent training and her questioning skills are very effective in helping children to express their ideas clearly.

School details

Unique reference number	121025
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10003505

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	97
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gill Hipwell
Headteacher	Joel Crawley
Telephone number	01986 788678
Website	www.awdps.co.uk
Email address	office@alburgh-with-denton.norfolk.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	26–27 May 2011

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- Most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is above average, as is the proportion of those who have an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school is part of the Sancroft Church Schools Trust. This is a charitable trust set up by five church schools in the local area.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed a range of teaching and learning and parts of lessons. All observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspector spoke with a group of pupils about their learning in lessons and their safety in the school. In addition the inspector spoke with pupils about learning and safety throughout the two days of the inspection.
- The inspector listened to pupils read from Year 2 and Year 6.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, subject leaders for pupils with special educational needs, literacy and numeracy and the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body.
- The inspector looked at the school's review of its own performance, its development and improvement plan, school policies, curriculum planning and minutes of governing body meetings. The inspector considered a range of documentation in relation to child protection, safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.
- The inspector reviewed pupils' work in lessons and analysed samples of pupils' books.
- The inspector evaluated 42 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View) and 20 free text messages. The inspector spoke to parents at the start of the school day. In addition the inspector spoke to foster carers and adoptive parents.

Inspection team

Julie Winyard, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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