

Blundeston Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Church Road, Blundeston, Lowestoft NR32 5AX

Inspection dates	10–11 March 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
Early years provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Blundeston Primary has improved since the previous inspection. Any and all weaknesses are tackled quickly and effectively.
- Decisive action by the headteacher, supported by the deputy headteacher, has effectively improved teaching and is raising pupils' achievement.
- The governing body is very well led. Governors have an accurate view of the school. They successfully challenge and support school leaders.
- Teaching is good. Previous weaknesses, such as the teaching of mathematics, have been rigorously eradicated.
- Staff form an effective team, well supported by skilled teaching assistants.
- Pupils make good progress in their academic and personal development. They are well prepared for secondary school.
- Classrooms are a hive of purposeful activity because pupils behave well and listen attentively.
- Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning, try their best and work together harmoniously.
- Many opportunities are given to pupils to have a real and relevant role in school life. As a result, pupils develop a strong sense of responsibility.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and happy at school, and that they are well cared for by staff. Pupils, too, look out for one another in the school family.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong.
- Early years provision is outstanding because all children, including the most able, thrive. They make rapid progress and enter Year 1 with above-average achievement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some teachers do not recognise when pupils understand and are ready to move on with their learning.
- Work is not consistently pitched at the correct level of difficulty for the most-able pupils.
- A few parents feel that the school does not communicate sufficiently with them.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further raise the attainment of pupils, especially the most able, by ensuring that:
 - the activities they are given are always suitably challenging
 - teachers regularly check and adjust their teaching during lessons according to how well pupils are doing, so all make good or better progress

- Strive to improve communication further with parents so that they feel that:
 - their concerns are listened to
 - they receive all the information they need about their children's progress.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Blundeston Primary is much improved since the previous inspection. In particular, improvement is rapid because school leaders embrace good-quality advice and suggestions, and act upon these immediately.
- Good-quality teaching is key to many improvements. All but one class teacher are new since the previous inspection. As teachers left, school leaders' uncompromising determination to appoint only the best ensured high-quality teaching so that pupils' progress is good. For example, a key area for improvement highlighted by the previous inspection was mathematics. A very skilled subject leader was appointed. She has led many improvements, for example a clearer approach to teaching calculation.
- Strategic planning is clear. Everyone understands the school's goals and consequently focuses their efforts in the same areas. All governors and staff meet together annually to evaluate the previous school year and to shape the school's direction for the next.
- Staff form a strong team. All staff responding to the questionnaire agree that the school's culture encourages calm and orderly conduct, and that it is aspirational for all pupils.
- The school successfully meets its aim of 'working together to achieve more' because it is practised in the daily life of the school. During the inspection, a high level of teamwork was seen and is typical of the school's approach. In a Year 6 mathematics lesson, for example, an innovative activity challenged pupils to work together in silence, and find other ways to communicate and help one another.
- Senior leaders and governors regularly monitor the work of the school so that planned improvements take place as intended.
- Clear arrangements for checking on the quality of teaching accurately identify how teachers and teaching assistants can improve. Training is matched to each individual's needs, and rigorous performance management drives further improvements in teaching and learning. Staff responding to the questionnaire feel that school leaders use training to encourage, challenge and support them.
- Subject leaders carefully check on the quality and range of activities in their subjects throughout the school. Together they are looking at how subjects can be linked more so that skills taught in one subject can be practised in another.
- The curriculum is imaginatively presented to enthuse all pupils and promote their personal and academic development. For example, new topics are carefully chosen to enthuse boys, perceived in the past as sometimes reluctant learners, without losing the interest of girls. Pupils' understanding is deepened by astute choice of visits and visitors. Pupil participation in the wide range of clubs is high.
- Pupils' preparation for life in modern Britain is good. Pupils' self-confidence is strong because they have many roles in the school. The eldest learn responsibility because of the regular opportunities to help those younger than themselves. They understand the importance of democracy, and can discuss the dangers when historical figures abused power, and contrast them with others such as Mandela who 'was a just man who stopped apartheid'.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. For example, in class they experience art from many cultures. In assemblies, they recognise and celebrate one another's achievements. They take the lead in organising and running charitable events. While many have a clear sense of faith, pupils recognise and respect that others might think differently.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs or disability is good. In particular, the needs of each pupil are carefully analysed and the right support is given.
- Leaders effectively target the use of pupil premium funding. Any pupils struggling academically receive good-quality extra help, tailored closely to their needs. Those who struggle socially are nurtured and taught these skills. Help is available with the cost of activities linked to the wider curriculum.
- Primary schools sports funding is used well. Good-quality training in aspects such as gymnastics and rugby enhances staff knowledge and understanding, so teaching improves. Pupils understand the importance of exercise to healthy living, and participate enthusiastically in the wide range of activities.
- Since the previous inspection, the local authority has supported the school well, particularly to improve the quality of teaching and education provided.
- The school works closely with other local schools and has good links that support improvements, for example in subject leadership.

- The overwhelming majority of parents responding to the online survey, Parent View, would recommend the school to another parent. In discussions with inspectors, parents highlighted the many improvements. For example, they like the way that technology is used to keep them up to date with activities in their child's class. The school's website is also a valuable tool for parents. However, a small number of parents feel that the school does not respond well to concerns they raise, nor provide them with sufficient useful information they need to support their children's progress.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors are led by a highly efficient and effective Chair of the Governing Body. Governors have begun to recognise that they have relied too much on her in the past, and to take more responsibility themselves, for example to organise the running of committees and their meetings.
 - Governors oversee the strategic development of the school well. They meet with staff collectively to reshape the school's direction, and individually to discuss each subject.
 - Governors are building a good understanding of what it is like to be a pupil at Blundeston because each governor is linked to a class and will follow that class throughout their time in school. These visits to the school help governors form an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement.
 - Governors closely analyse the progress of pupils to ensure that they continue to do well, and to question and challenge leaders if they do not.
 - Governors rigorously manage the performance of staff, including teachers. They ensure that decisions about pay increases are well informed by a good range of evidence. When justified, they are not afraid to refuse an increase.
 - Oversight of the school's finances, including the use of additional funding, is good. Governors help to ensure that good value for money is achieved.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All staff know and understand the policy and procedures. Training in how to keep pupils safe is up to date. The school is a safe place for pupils and staff. Pupils, too, are involved. Digital leaders, once trained, visit other classes and talk to other pupils about staying safe, particularly when using the internet. They will shortly present on e-safety to parents.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching is good. Information such as the school's own regular and rigorous checks on teaching shows that teaching has improved since the previous inspection. Every parent responding to the online survey agrees that teaching is good.
- Staff form a strong team. Pupils' learning benefits because staff share ideas, are always willing to help one another, and are never afraid to ask for advice.
- Staff are excellent role models, consistently demonstrating to pupils the behaviour they expect. Clear rules and routines, implemented fairly by all staff, ensure that the school is orderly. Classrooms are safe and stimulating. Positive relationships encourage pupils to be confident they can 'have a go' without fear of being wrong.
- Staff make productive use of their accurate assessments of pupils' written work to recognise what has been achieved, set targets and encourage pupils to respond. As a result, pupils see themselves more clearly as learners. For example, one Year 4 boy said, 'I understand what orange means, I need to do better. Look, I'm really proud of this page because there is less orange than before'. During some lessons, however, teachers do not identify when pupils understand and are ready to move on, and do not reshape their lessons accordingly.
- In lessons, teachers encourage pupils to be reflective learners, and to take some responsibility for their own learning by making choices from several tasks of increasing difficulty. This generally works well and pupils make sensible choices. However, some of the activities designed for the most able do not sufficiently challenge them.
- Teachers deploy their skilled teaching assistants productively. These staff make a very positive contribution to pupils' learning, particularly when giving extra help to those who struggle.
- Reading is taught well. Phonics (the link between letters and the sounds they make) is taught accurately and practised regularly. Guided reading sessions are much improved since the previous inspection because teachers plan more useful and relevant activities for pupils.

- Writing is taught effectively. Clear training for all teachers and teaching assistants means that the school's approach is used consistently by all staff. As a result, pupils know what to expect, and what is expected of them.
- The teaching of mathematics is much improved since the previous inspection, when it was particularly weak. The subject leader's excellent subject knowledge and understanding have benefited all staff through high-quality support and guidance.
- Pupils' pride in their work and teachers' high expectations ensure that workbooks are neat, tidy and well presented.
- Homework effectively practises, consolidates and extends learning in school. For example, pupils say that they enjoyed a summer holiday project to prepare a presentation about themselves for their class. One said, 'It was quite difficult but interesting as well'.
- Staff make a strong contribution to the wider life of the school. Clubs and other enrichment opportunities are offered to pupils. These are popular and well attended.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. The overwhelming majority of parents responding to the online survey feel that their children are happy at school.
- Pupils embrace the notion of personal challenge enthusiastically. In lessons, they almost always choose harder work and aspire to do their very best. Over time, they develop the attributes to be successful learners, such as 'being ready to learn' and 'keeping going'.
- Pupils know that they have individual liberty, and that with rights also comes responsibility. They have a number of opportunities to give their opinions, and know they must listen to those of others. Sometimes they can choose how they present their work so that it best matches what they are trying to say.
- Pupils develop a strong sense of reflection. In class, they have regular opportunities to reflect on their learning. In school generally, they reflect on how they, and others, are feeling. Pupils often write the assembly prayer.
- Pupils thrive on the many opportunities to play a part in their school. On 'maths day', for example, they decided to organise a lunchtime fun activity to practise multiplication.
- Pupils have a strong sense of community. For example, they are proud to be play leaders. One pupil said, 'When I was young, older children helped me. Now it's my turn to help'.
- In a range of situations, pupils have a clear understanding of how to stay safe. They take on the role of road-safety officers and work with the community police officer. A visit from the fire service is linked to a topic. E-safety is strong, and regularly reinforced in lessons by teachers and digital leaders.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school, and the vast majority of parents responding to the online survey agreed. Pupils are very confident that adults in the school will listen and help if they are worried. They say that there is very little bullying, and that it is always dealt with quickly.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is generally good. In lessons, they pay attention to staff and follow instructions closely. They are very orderly when moving around the school. Sometimes, largely because the playground is relatively small and consequently crowded, there are minor disagreements at playtime. The school does what it can, so for example pupils start and end lunchtime at different times.
- Pupils' pride in their work is strong. They strive to do their best in lessons, and take great care in the presentation of their work books.
- Attendance overall is a little above average. The school monitors attendance closely, encouraging and rewarding good attendance, and taking appropriate action if that falls. As a result, persistent or regular absence is falling.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils' achievement has improved since the previous inspection, particularly in mathematics. Better teaching means that pupils now make good or better progress in all year groups.
- The school's checks on progress and the quality of work in pupils' books show that pupils currently in the school are making good progress overall in English and mathematics, and standards in these subjects are consequently rising. However, while the quality of teaching is now good, it has not been consistent over time, and this means some pupils having to make up lost ground.
- School leaders, including governors, and staff share a determination to see all pupils do well. They check pupils' progress regularly, analyse results, and take action immediately if anyone is falling behind. As a result, relative weaknesses are eradicated quickly, for example in grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- Progress and achievement in Years 1 and 2, previously disappointing, are now good and these pupils achieve well. Two significant improvements largely explain this: first, pupils' better preparation in Reception for when they enter Year 1, so they get off to a good start, and second, knowledgeable Years 1 and 2 teachers are able to explain clearly to pupils, quickly clearing up any misunderstandings that arise.
- Progress in reading has improved since the previous inspection and is good. Teachers make better use of reading sessions, and texts are carefully chosen to grab pupils' interest, particularly boys. The whole-school reading challenge gives pupils the incentive to earn interesting and innovative rewards for reading.
- Phonics is taught well and pupils consequently make good progress. In 2015, the proportion of Year 1 pupils reaching or exceeding the expected standard was above average. School information and inspection evidence suggest that results this year will be similar.
- Progress in mathematics is much improved since the previous inspection. Key skills are taught well, and pupils clearly enjoy the many opportunities to reason, think for themselves and apply what they know to solve problems. Parents talk of their children, previously with 'maths phobia', now enjoying mathematics and being confident learners.
- The small proportion of disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to their peers. Those currently in the school are reaching the standard expected for their age. This is an improvement brought about largely by better teaching, including that of the well-trained teaching assistants.
- Pupils with special educational needs or disability also do well. School leaders ensure that provision for each individual is carefully planned in advance, so their progression through the school is smooth and they make good progress from their differing starting points.
- The most-able pupils are not always set work that fully meets their needs because some of the activities they are given are not sufficiently difficult to challenge their ability.
- Pupils' learning benefits because opportunities are increasingly taken to link subjects in interesting ways, so they use and apply what they already know in a new context. For example, each class studied a book on World Book Day, which also had a mathematical problem to solve. On these occasions, pupils say that they enjoy the opportunities to work with pupils from other classes, including Reception.
- In their personal development, attitudes to learning and improving academic standards, pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their learning.

Early years provision

is outstanding

- Overall, the range of what children already know and can do when they start their Reception Year is broadly typical of what might be expected for their ages.
- All children make equally rapid progress because the school caters for their needs exceptionally well, so they enter Year 1 fully prepared and ready for the next stage in their learning. Over the last few years, the proportion reaching a good level of development has increased year on year, and in 2015 was above the national average. The school's checks and inspection evidence suggest that this will be maintained this year.
- Key to the progress all children make is the accurate assessment of their achievements. Adults are highly skilled in talking to children to assess their learning and recognise which children are ready for harder challenge, and which still need extra help or practice.
- Children learn in a caring and nurturing setting. Their learning closely mirrors that of older pupils in the school. For example, Reception children too are taught the attributes of successful learners, such as trying new activities with a positive attitude.

- Children often follow up an activity done with an adult by practising and trying it out for themselves, so they deepen and consolidate their learning. Each session ends with the class coming together and sharing their achievements. Children are taught to use words such as 'because' to explain their reasoning. Adults encourage them to adopt a 'can-do' attitude. Children are praised for their achievements and as a result want to achieve more.
- Children's behaviour is outstanding. They work cooperatively, and share and play together exceptionally well. They look out for one another and see that no one is left out. They are generous with their praise for one another's achievements.
- School leaders and staff quickly identify those that are behind their peers and target precisely the next steps that each child needs to take in order to start to catch up. High-quality training means staff give very good extra support, for example with speech and language difficulties.
- The most able are sufficiently challenged because staff plan interesting problems that require them to apply what they already know to come up with solutions. One girl, for example, sorting shoes into those worn by boys and those worn by girls, came across a pair that she felt could be worn by both sexes. After a few moments' thought, she solved her dilemma by creating a Venn diagram.
- Good-quality support, tailored to each child, means that the very small number of disadvantaged pupils are equally well supported. Even where their low starting points mean that they cannot reach a good level of development or catch up completely with other children in one year, they finish closer than they started.
- Staff take every opportunity to promote children's learning of basic skills. For example, early reading skills such as phonics are taught well and then practised throughout the day's other activities.
- Learning activities excite, interest and stimulate children to have a go. Tasks are cleverly designed to give children opportunities to pursue their interests.
- Transition from the local nursery is smooth. Throughout the preceding year, opportunities are taken to bring these children to the school so they get used to their new surroundings. Parents, too, are fully involved. Children coming from settings further afield are also invited.
- Transition to Year 1 is seamless. The most-able Reception children join the older class for subjects they are particularly strong in. The small number of children yet to reach a good level of development when they join Year 1 are equally well catered for, with activities designed to help them catch up.
- The school encourages parents to be fully involved in the learning and development of their children. Parents respond enthusiastically, for example by contributing to their child's online learning journey. The relationship between home and school is positive.
- Staff form a highly effective team. They share expertise and know the children extremely well. The teaching methods and approaches they use are highly suitable for these children. Staff are vigilant; Reception children are safe and well cared for in this superbly designed and well-resourced setting.
- Leadership is very strong. School leaders and staff are very ambitious for these children. No ceiling is placed on their achievement. They participate in all the events that the older pupils do, often learning by working alongside them.

School details

Unique reference number	124751
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10009148

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

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	190
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jane Liddell
Headteacher	Kate Schonhut
Telephone number	01502 730488
Website	www.blundestoncevcp.co.uk
Email address	admin@blundeston.suffolk.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	18–19 March 2014

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Each year group is taught in one class.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium funding is well below average. The pupil premium is additional funding provided by the government to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs or disability is broadly average.
- In 2015, the school met the government's floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Since the previous inspection, all but one of the class teachers are new to the school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed pupils' learning in all classrooms, sometimes with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. In addition, inspectors observed small groups of pupils being taught.
- The inspectors looked at work in pupils' books and listened to pupils read.
- The inspectors attended assemblies and observed pupils as they moved around the school.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other leaders, teachers, and governors. The inspectors also spoke to a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors met with pupils to discuss their experiences at school.
- The views of 31 parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into account. The inspectors also held informal discussions with parents. The inspectors also took account of the questionnaire responses from 18 members of staff.
- The inspectors looked at a range of school documents and information, including the school development plan, checks on the quality of teaching, curriculum plans, minutes of meetings of the governing body, and pupils' behaviour and attendance records. The inspectors also looked at arrangements and records for safeguarding procedures.

Inspection team

Robert Greatrex, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Joanna Rand

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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