

Queensway Infant School and Nursery

Queensway, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 3DR

Inspection dates

13–14 September 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Attainment was low in writing and mathematics by the end of Year 1 in 2016.
- The quality of teaching varies and is not yet consistently good across the school.
- At times the most able pupils are not given sufficient challenge to enable them to make rapid progress.
- Teachers do not carry out the school's marking and feedback policy consistently well.
- Pupils' handwriting is often untidy and the presentation of their work is not as good as it could be.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunity to write at length and so develop stamina.
- There is not enough problem-solving or reasoning in mathematics.
- Until recently, middle leaders have not had enough influence on their areas of responsibility.
- The governing body does not have a full understanding of the issues facing the school. This means that governors are not able to hold leaders to account as rigorously as they should.
- Attendance remains below average.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher has a good grasp on the school's weaknesses and has started to take effective action to remedy them.
- Provision in the early years is good. Children make good progress as a result of exciting and stimulating teaching.
- The teaching of reading is successful across the school, and this is seen in outcomes at the end of each year group.
- The pastoral care for vulnerable pupils and their families is of a high quality.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, learning and assessment to be consistently good so that teachers:
 - plan work that challenges pupils and is not too easy or too difficult for them
 - adapt learning in response to the changing needs of pupils, especially the most able.
- Raise standards in writing and mathematics to be in line with reading and at least typical for pupils' ages, by:
 - giving pupils more opportunities to write at length in order to build their stamina
 - improving pupils' handwriting and the presentation of their work
 - giving pupils more opportunities for problem-solving and reasoning in mathematics.
- Strengthen leadership and management at all levels by making sure that:
 - the new headteacher carries out her clear plans for improvement
 - middle leaders develop their role in driving improvement
 - all staff consistently follow the school's agreed marking and feedback policy so that pupils know how to improve their work
 - attendance improves at least to equal the national average
 - governors increase their knowledge and understanding of the issues facing the school so that they can ask the right questions in holding school leaders to account.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- The new headteacher has quickly grasped the issues facing the school. She has drawn up incisive plans with achievable targets to improve teaching, learning and assessment and to raise standards, especially in writing. However, she has not been in post long enough to see the impact of these measures.
- She has set a clear vision for taking the school forward that is strongly supported by the whole school community. For example, she has introduced a staff handbook that sets out high expectations of teaching staff. She has begun to ensure that these are being followed in all classrooms.
- During a time of great uncertainty, there was some slippage in how middle leaders carried out their roles. They were not held fully to account for their impact on pupils' outcomes.
- The new headteacher has introduced a more rigorous approach for middle leaders, with clearly defined roles. This means that middle leaders are now more active in checking the school's work and understand what is expected of them. It is too soon, however, for these changes to have taken full effect.
- The new headteacher is arranging training and coaching for staff to tackle the issues she has identified. For example, she has noted that pupils do not develop stamina in their writing because they do not have sufficient opportunities to write at length.
- Pupils are unclear about the next steps in their learning because staff are not following the school's marking and feedback policy consistently. This is partly because there have been many changes to the policy and it is hard for staff to keep up with it.
- Pupils know about turn-taking, showing respect to one another and being fair. They are gaining an understanding of fundamental British values such as tolerance of others and the rule of law. They vote for places on the school council as an introduction to the democratic process. Pupils were involved in the recruitment of the new headteacher. Pupils learn about the Queen and the Royal Family; they marked her 90th birthday and sent her cards.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness effectively, and celebrates pupils' different backgrounds and cultures. They learn about different faiths. Pupils who attend the 'Around the World' club focus on life in different countries. This helps to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain.
- The school's curriculum is varied and makes links across subjects, which enable pupils to apply their skills in different contexts. For example, pupils in Year 2 wrote about the lifecycle of the butterfly in their science work.
- The school keeps the curriculum under review and makes changes where appropriate. For example, the new headteacher has changed the approach to teaching phonics (letters and the sounds that they represent) to enable less-able pupils to have access to a broader range of sounds. The breadth of clubs has widened recently, so that pupils have more opportunities to try new experiences.
- The school spends the pupil premium effectively and over time has reduced the differences in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and others in the school in reading and mathematics in particular. The school has worked hard to ensure that the most able disadvantaged pupils also benefit from the funding in order to reach the standards they should.
- The sports premium has been used to train teaching staff so that they are confident in developing pupils' skills in a range of sports. Pupils have benefited from additional after-school clubs run by sports coaches.
- The local authority moved swiftly when it became clear that the school was struggling and has been instrumental in helping to boost the rate of improvement over the past year. It provided support to the governing body, especially in recruiting a new headteacher.
- Parents and carers are positive about the school and the appointment of the new headteacher. They said their children were happy and safe. The school is effective in engaging parents through running workshops and sessions where they can support their children, such as through making apple crumble.
- **The governance of the school**
 - There have been many changes to the governing body, including a recently appointed chair.
 - Governors made a success of recruiting their new headteacher with local authority support. However, the governing body has not held leaders to account with sufficient rigour because governors do not have enough knowledge and understanding about the workings of the school. For example, they are unclear about the new assessment system.
 - Governors realise the importance of visiting the school to see for themselves what is going on. More of them are taking steps to visit during the school day so that they become better informed.

- Safeguarding arrangements are effective. The school's pastoral staff work with a large number of families and have built up trust and positive relationships. Staff have received the training they require to keep pupils safe. The school keeps careful records of any incidents and the actions taken by members of staff. There are good links with outside agencies such as social services.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Teaching is not yet good because work is sometimes too easy or too difficult for pupils. This slows their progress. At times, teachers do not move pupils on in their learning quickly enough when they are ready. At other times, they do not pick up where pupils are struggling in a lesson to ensure that they receive the support they need promptly.
- Teachers' expectations of the most able pupils vary. While they can be given challenging work that extends their thinking, too often they receive similar work to other pupils. This does not make sufficient demands on them and they do not then make the progress they should. For example, pupils were all asked to calculate within ten when some of them were capable of using larger numbers.
- The teaching of writing is not so strong. This is because teachers do not give pupils enough opportunities to write at length and so develop stamina. They do not insist upon neat handwriting. This means that the presentation of pupils' work is sometimes careless and untidy.
- There have been improvements in the teaching of mathematics over the past year and standards rose in Year 2. Teachers have focused on helping pupils to think in greater depth about mathematics, for example through conducting investigations. However, some pupils have not had enough opportunities for problem-solving or reasoning, especially in Year 1.
- The teaching of phonics is more effective and this has contributed to improvements in reading standards. For example, the most able disadvantaged pupils who read to inspectors were confident and used their skills well.
- Support for pupils who need to catch up with their reading has been good and the school has evidence to show that some of these pupils made significant gains in their reading age over a relatively short period of time.
- Teaching in the early years is good. Teachers plan interesting work that captures children's imagination and enables them to make good progress in developing early skills.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- In key stage 1 some pupils are not yet confident about how to be a successful learner. They lack resilience and are too easily distracted. This is partly because, at times, the teaching does not engage them sufficiently.
- Pupils said that bullying was not an issue and that they felt safe in school. They said that they knew who to turn to if they had any concerns.
- Pupils understand how to stay safe and what to do in an emergency, for example on discovering a fire.
- Pastoral support for vulnerable families is very strong. The pastoral support leader arranges activities for parents and their children and draws on additional services where necessary to help them overcome particular difficulties.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- While behaviour is improving, there are times when some pupils do not follow classroom routines. Sometimes they talk among themselves instead of working or shout out instead of listening.
- Mostly pupils have positive attitudes to learning, especially when they find the teaching interesting. This is particularly true of children in the early years.
- The school environment is attractive, with colourful displays and useful information for pupils.
- Attendance remains below average. Leaders have not been rigorous enough in bringing home to parents the consequences of persistent absence.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Until last year, attainment was low in writing and mathematics and broadly average in reading. This was still the case in Year 1, with barely half the pupils reaching the expected attainment for their age in mathematics.
- Many pupils did not make the progress they should in writing and mathematics in Year 1 in 2016 because of inconsistencies in teaching. Books showed that expectations of what pupils could achieve varied too much.
- The teaching of phonics was more consistent and this meant that Year 1 pupils did better in reading and especially in the national phonics check. Their outcomes were broadly average.
- In 2016 standards improved by the end of Year 2 in mathematics and writing to broadly average. They were above average in reading. The school developed an approach to encourage pupils to read at home that proved successful.
- There was some good support for pupils who needed to catch up in Year 2 last year, and this contributed to the improved outcomes for this year group.
- Children in the early years make good progress from their different starting points. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development has increased and is now broadly average.
- Outcomes for the most able pupils vary. Higher expectations in Year 2 last year meant that this group of pupils worked at greater depth and achieved their potential. However, in Year 1 this was not the case. Pupils were not being sufficiently challenged, especially in mathematics.
- Across key stage 1, the most able pupils are sometimes given work that is too easy for them. Too often, they are expected to do the same work as other pupils. This does not stretch them and slows their progress.
- Differences between disadvantaged pupils and others in the school have diminished in reading and mathematics to the extent that these pupils did better than the others in 2016. There remains a difference between the attainment of the two groups in writing.
- In 2015, the gaps between disadvantaged pupils and others nationally were smaller than the national picture in reading and writing, and similar to the national picture in mathematics.
- The progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities varies. There is some good support for individual pupils, but in class teachers sometimes give them work to do that is too difficult for them and they struggle.
- Pupils from minority ethnic groups who speak English as an additional language settle quickly into the school. Their progress is similar to other pupils and depends largely on the effectiveness of the teaching they receive.

Early years provision

is good

- The early years is well led and managed. The early years leader has made many positive changes, including improving the quality of pupils' learning experiences outside. Now the outside spaces cater for all areas of learning and include, for example, a 'mud kitchen' and a 'sensory garden'.
- Children settle quickly into daily routines. Although in school only a matter of days at the time of the inspection, children were able to help tidy up. They were beginning to sustain concentration because the activities were well planned to capture their interest.
- Adults make the most of opportunities to develop children's learning and promote their independence. For example, in the Nursery, children counted out the correct number of bowls and spoons for snack time. They exhibited good table manners and were engaged in discussing texture and taste and the difference adding milk to cereal makes.
- Progress in the early years is good. From starting points often below what is typical for their age, especially in speech and language, children gain confidence quickly and learn to listen to one another and take turns. Adults encourage children in speaking and use questioning skilfully and sensitively in order to draw out their ideas.
- Good level of development has improved year on year and was in line with the national average in 2016. Teachers make learning exciting and enjoyable. Children loved being the 'five little speckled frogs' as they acted out a counting song.
- Teaching staff keep careful records of children's achievements through 'learning journeys' and make

electronic summaries that parents can access at home. They work effectively with parents, who told inspectors how pleased they were with the early years.

- The early years leader ensures that all safeguarding requirements are met and that children's welfare is paramount. As a result, children are happy in the early years and well prepared for learning in Year 1.
- Teaching staff manage children's behaviour effectively. They know the children as individuals and adapt their approach to suit children's needs. For example, they give children who join speaking no English the space to become accustomed to nursery routines and make sure they are exposed to good-quality language as much as possible.
- On rare occasions, teaching staff do not move on the most able children in their learning as soon as they become ready and this delays their progress somewhat.

School details

Unique reference number	120897
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10019607

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	183
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Wade
Headteacher	Jayne Wilding
Telephone number	01842 753163
Website	www.queensway-inf.norfolk.sch.uk
Email address	office@queensway-inf.norfolk.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	15–16 October 2014

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- There are two classes for each year group and a mornings-only nursery.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds who speak English as an additional language is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or children looked after by the local authority) is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average, although none have statements of special educational needs or education, health and care plans.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- There have been two changes of headteacher since the previous inspection. The current post holder had been in school a week at the time of the inspection.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed learning in 19 parts of lessons, many of them jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors heard pupils read. They looked closely at samples of pupils' work saved from last year with the headteacher.
- The inspectors 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 pupils chosen at random. 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 had a telephone conversation with the former vice chair of governors. He also met with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspection team considered one response to the online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors also spoke informally to some parents in the playground.

Inspection team

Nick Butt, lead inspector
Deborah Flowerdew

Ofsted Inspector
Ofsted Inspector

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