

North Elmham Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Holt Road, North Elmham, Dereham, Norfolk NR20 5JS

Inspection dates

23–24 May 2019

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
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

- Since the appointment of the interim headteachers, the school has improved. However, improvements have not been rapid enough to ensure that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and pupils' outcomes are consistently good.
- Leaders have not yet developed clear systems for evaluating how they use additional funding which the school receives for disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- Not all subject leaders check the quality of teaching and the progress of pupils in their area of responsibility thoroughly enough.
- Teachers do not use the school's chosen approach to teaching mathematics consistently or to a high enough standard.
- Teachers do not consistently plan activities that closely match the needs of all groups of pupils. The most able pupils are not sufficiently challenged to think deeply about their learning.
- Leaders' and teachers' expectations of the presentation of pupils' work are not high enough.

The school has the following strengths

- The interim headteachers have established a culture of ambition and high aspiration which is now shared by the whole school community.
- Leaders, including governors, have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- Leaders ensure that pupils' welfare and personal development are priorities.
- The teaching of phonics is effective, and early reading skills are developed well.
- Parents and carers are supportive and recognise the improvements made by the interim leaders.
- The curriculum is designed well to meet the needs of mixed-year classes. A wide range of trips and activities enhance pupils' learning.
- Children make a good start to their education in Reception. This is because of the good teaching they receive.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that there are rigorous systems for checking that the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND is used effectively to accelerate their progress
 - further developing the role of subject leaders so that they are all carefully checking the quality of teaching and pupils' progress in their area of responsibility and implementing effective actions for improvement.
- Further improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - developing teachers' skills in providing challenging activities for the most able pupils in a timely way, so that their learning is maximised and their progress is accelerated
 - ensuring that all teachers implement the school's chosen approach to teaching mathematics consistently and to a high standard
 - improving standards of presentation, especially in mathematics, so that it better supports pupils' learning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since their appointment, the interim headteachers have worked tirelessly to overcome the many challenges they faced. As a result of their actions and the support provided by the local authority, the school is beginning to improve. The school community now shares a positive and ambitious ethos with a shared drive to make the school good.
- Leaders, including governors, have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They make good use of the information they gather from their regular monitoring activities to identify the correct priorities for improvement. However, they have not had the time to successfully implement all that is needed to bring about the necessary improvement.
- The sharing of good practice with colleagues in a partnership school is bringing about improvements in the quality of teaching. Staff value the development this has brought to their practice. However, teaching is not yet consistently strong across the school.
- A clear plan shows how the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils will be spent. This includes opportunities for raising their aspirations and improving their well-being. However, leaders have not yet developed clear and rigorous systems to check how effectively the funding is accelerating pupils' academic progress. The same is true of special educational needs funding.
- Leaders use the primary physical education (PE) and sport premium to provide a wide range of activities and sporting opportunities for pupils, such as dry-slope skiing, rock climbing and tri-golf, as well as the more traditional sports and competitions. Good provision ensures that pupils can swim confidently. However, leaders are not able to show how the funding has increased levels of physical activity and participation or demonstrate that staff confidence in teaching PE and sport is improving.
- The curriculum is designed well to meet the needs of mixed-age classes. There is flexibility within it to allow pupils to participate in exciting initiatives which arise. For example, pupils in the Year 5/6 class recently took part in a primary engineering programme, which involved working alongside professional engineers to design vehicles. However, leaders have not established systems to measure the progress pupils make or to check the quality of teaching and learning in all subjects of the curriculum.
- Provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is implemented well. There are strong links with the local community of North Elmham. For example, pupils spend time at the local 'T@2' events, where they sing and serve tea to visitors from the village. The Christian ethos of the school is strong, and staff promote values such as courage, compassion, hope and perseverance effectively.
- Pupils are prepared well for life in modern British society. They are taught to view all people as equals and not to judge others on their physical or other characteristics. Pupils learn about tolerance and acceptance of other faiths and cultures through assemblies and the religious education curriculum.

Governance of the school

- Since the previous inspection, there have been changes to the governing body. Along with other leaders, governors are determined to improve the school. They are well organised in their approach and provide the right balance of support and challenge.
- Governors are committed to their roles and responsibilities. They choose to visit regularly to carry out checks on aspects of the school's performance. However, they do not yet have a thorough understanding of the effective use of additional funding because systems for evaluating this are not fully developed.
- Governors meet their statutory duties, including their responsibility for ensuring that the school keeps pupils safe.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have established a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Staff receive regular training to make sure that they know how to deal with any concerns or incidents. Leaders respond in an appropriate and timely manner to concerns raised, and record-keeping of any incidents is thorough. They ensure that vulnerable pupils and families get extra help, including from outside agencies, when this is required.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and that they are confident to talk to any adult if they are concerned about something. They are regularly taught about the risks of the misuse of technology. Older pupils attend 'Crucial Crew' – a workshop event teaching pupils about various aspects of personal safety.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teachers mostly plan interesting lessons using their good subject knowledge. They provide clear explanations so that pupils know what they have to do and can settle to their work quickly. However, this is not yet consistent across the school.
- Although teachers take previous learning into account when planning lessons, they are not always aware of the different starting points of pupils. This means that the more able pupils are often carrying out routine tasks which are too easy for them and do not stretch their thinking.
- There are positive relationships between adults and pupils. Pupils say that they are well supported in their learning and encouraged by teachers to do the best they can. Pupils discuss their ideas together confidently, and this allows them to learn from each other.
- Teachers ask effective questions to move pupils' learning on. For example, in one mathematics lesson, pupils were asked to explain the pattern they had identified while carrying out an investigation involving symmetry. Questions are also used well to consolidate pupils' knowledge and understanding of mathematical vocabulary, for example 'clockwise' and 'anti-clockwise'.
- Teachers do not have high enough expectations of how pupils will present their work. This is especially so in mathematics, where poor presentation means that errors are hard to identify and correct. This does not support pupils' learning.

- Although the teaching of mathematics has improved, there is some inconsistency in the way teachers implement the school's chosen approach. In some classes, pupils are not given opportunities to develop their reasoning skills because they are required to complete simpler tasks too frequently.
- The teaching of early reading and phonics is effective. Pupils use their phonics skills to blend sounds together and break down words into separate sounds. Pupils apply their phonics knowledge to read new words confidently.
- Teachers are now beginning to provide more opportunities for pupils to write at length in subjects other than English. For example, in one class, pupils had written a story set in an Iron Age fort as part of their learning in history. Activities like these are allowing pupils to practise and develop their writing skills in different contexts.
- In some classes, teaching assistants are deployed carefully so that pupils who find it hard to concentrate are supported in their learning. This enables other pupils to remain focused so that their learning is not interrupted.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Leaders have worked hard to make sure that all pupils are well cared for. Staff know pupils very well, and this is recognised and appreciated by parents. For example, one parent commented that the school is a 'family-friendly and nurturing environment'.
- There are many opportunities for pupils to enjoy and learn from experiences beyond the local area. For example, the older pupils went on a trip to London where they visited the Houses of Parliament, observed Prime Minister's questions and met their local MP. Residential trips provide opportunities for pupils to develop independence away from home.
- Pupils are happy to talk about their experiences at school in a reflective and mature way. They understand that the values taught through assemblies and lessons, such as compassion and perseverance, enable them to develop their individual characters as well as their learning skills.
- Pupils show respect and kindness to each other and towards adults. Pupils learn about bullying in all of its forms and understand the harm it can cause. They say that bullying is rare and that when it does happen, adults act quickly to resolve problems. Pupils are aware of cyber bullying and know how to keep themselves safe online.
- Pupils understand and respect the fact that people have different beliefs, appearances and lifestyles. The curriculum teaches them about different religions and cultures. Their strong understanding of equality and the need for tolerance and respect prepares them well for life in a diverse modern British society.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Behaviour during lessons is good. Almost all pupils settle quickly to their work and concentrate well during their learning. A small number of pupils can lose focus and the

standard of their behaviour falls. However, they are usually well supported by additional adults who help them regain their concentration.

- Pupils conduct themselves well at other times of the school day, such as at playtime and lunchtime. They are provided with a wide range of equipment and apparatus. They use this to play together sensibly and in a friendly and caring manner.
- Current attendance is above the national average. Attendance is also high for all groups of pupils, including those with SEND and disadvantaged pupils. A very small number of pupils have lower attendance. Leaders are taking appropriate action, including working with families, to ensure that attendance improves for these pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Leaders acknowledge that pupils' attainment and progress over time have been inconsistent due to staff changes and some weaker teaching. Despite evidence of improvement, the progress of current pupils across the school remains variable.
- Progress is weaker where year groups have been affected by changes in teaching. However, work in books and observations of lessons show that progress is now being accelerated for these pupils, even though some are still behind where they should be, given their starting points.
- In 2018, pupils' progress at the end of key stage 2 was average in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was below the national average. This was because pupils did not attain well in mathematics.
- In key stage 1, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard was below the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. No pupils were working at greater depth in writing and mathematics.
- While the number of disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND in each year is small, historically, they have not made sufficient progress over time. This is partly due to leaders not checking the effectiveness of their actions to address the barriers to learning for these pupils. Although the progress of these groups of pupils currently at the school shows some improvement, it still remains variable.
- The proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check is similar to the national average, taking the number of pupils into account. This reflects the good phonics teaching seen in the younger classes.
- Pupils' progress in subjects other than English and mathematics, as seen in their work, is variable. Leaders' monitoring of the wider curriculum is less frequent than in mathematics, reading and writing. This means that they cannot demonstrate that pupils are making good progress in all subjects.

Early years provision

Good

- The majority of children start Reception with skills that are typical for their age. They make good progress, so that by the end of the year, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development is above national levels.

- The early years leader is both passionate and knowledgeable. She has an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision and has identified appropriate actions to improve the provision further. For example, she has recently changed the way the provision is planned so that staff can react and respond very rapidly to the children's interests.
- The learning environment is well organised and attractive. It provides a wide range of interesting activities which motivate and appeal to the children. As a result, children show high levels of focus and concentration on the activities they choose. The spacious outdoor environment allows children to develop their physical skills, for example through the use of trikes.
- Adults support children well and use questioning effectively to enhance their learning and play. For example, a group of children were exploring the best way to fill a water tray using hosepipes and guttering. The teacher prompted them with questions such as 'How far do you need to move it?' and 'What difference will that make?' This helped them think more carefully about what they were doing and also encouraged them to talk to each other about what to do next.
- Adults make regular assessments of children's learning, development and interests. They use these to plan what the children need to do next in order to make progress.
- The partnership with parents has been developed well and is effective. They are invited to attend 'Discovery Cafes' within the setting, and these are well attended. At these events, parents join in activities with their children and can see how learning is modelled by the teacher. The development of home visits has enabled staff to focus personalised provision for children at the start of the year. Parents regularly contribute to the learning journeys when children achieve things at home.
- Children's behaviour is good and they have an understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Staff discuss indoor and outdoor safety regularly with children, who are involved in making decisions about how to manage risk. Leaders ensure that the statutory requirements for safeguarding and the welfare of children are met.

School details

Unique reference number	121049
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10088660

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	88
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rosemary Kett
Headteacher	Sue Tobin and Craig Isherwood (Joint Acting Headteachers)
Telephone number	01362 668318
Website	http://northelmhamschool.com
Email address	head@northelmham.norfolk.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	9–10 March 2017

Information about this school

- North Elmham Voluntary Controlled Primary School is a Church of England school in the Diocese of Norwich. The most recent inspection of the school's religious character under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 was carried out on 23 March 2018.
- The school is smaller than the average primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium is lower than average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is higher than average. The proportion of pupils supported by an education, health and care plan is lower than average.
- Almost all pupils speak English as their first language.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching and learning over time. She observed lessons across the school, some jointly with the acting headteachers.
- The inspector looked closely at work in pupils' books across all year groups and in a range of subjects and talked to pupils about their work. She also looked at a range of documentation, including assessment information, records of monitoring, records of pupils' attendance and behaviour, minutes of governors' meetings and the school's evaluation of its own performance.
- The inspector checked documentation concerning safeguarding arrangements, including the single central record.
- Meetings were held with the acting headteachers, governors, other staff and a representative from the local authority. The inspector also met with groups of pupils and talked to pupils at various times throughout the inspection.
- The inspector took account of 23 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 21 free-text responses; information from four responses to the staff survey was also considered.

Inspection team

Ali Pepper, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Manchester
M1 2WD

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