

North Elmham Voluntary Controlled Primary School

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

Inspection dates

9–10 March 2017

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	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The school's leadership has suffered a turbulent period and a substantive leadership team is yet to be established and prove effective.
- The newly formed governing body, while highly committed and well organised, has yet to implement its plans for improvements.
- Middle leaders are only beginning to develop their roles and are yet to have significant impact on improving teaching and learning.
- Systems for assessing pupils' progress in subjects other than English and mathematics are not yet well established.
- Teaching is not securely good across all subjects and in all classes. As a result, pupils' progress is uneven.
- While progress in writing is improving, the proportion of pupils in Years 2 and 3 who are at the standard expected for their age in writing remains low.
- The progress of some groups of pupils is not rapid enough. The progress of boys in writing is slower than for girls with similar starting points. Some most able pupils are not making as much progress as they should.

The school has the following strengths

- The current headteacher has quickly and accurately identified where improvements are needed. He has worked effectively with staff to address the most urgent of these.
- Systems for keeping pupils safe are robust and underpin the work of the school. All adults, including governors, are well trained and pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe including online.
- Children in the Reception class get off to a good start. They enjoy their learning and make good progress.
- Pupils' personal development is promoted well. Pupils are provided with good support in developing their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. They are helped to develop into caring and thoughtful individuals.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - the plans to secure long-term leadership of the school are implemented
 - the newly formed governing body implements its well-formed plans for supporting and challenging leaders in relation to the use of funding and its impact on pupils' progress
 - the role of middle leaders is developed so that they have a greater impact in improving teaching and learning.
 - systems for tracking the progress of pupils in subjects other than English and mathematics are implemented and used by teachers and leaders to improve pupils' progress.
- Improve teaching and learning so that pupils' outcomes improve by ensuring that:
 - teachers provide better opportunities for writing across the curriculum
 - teachers' expectations of the quality of pupils' writing in all subjects is as high as in English
 - feedback and support provided for the most able pupils are more sharply focused so that they know how to improve the quality of their writing further
 - teaching of subjects such as history and geography meets pupils' needs and provides greater challenge for the most able pupils
 - teachers have more opportunities to develop their understanding of expectations in each year group so that they are more accurate in assessing pupils' progress
 - the best practice which exists across the school is shared more widely.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The school has suffered a period of turbulence since the resignation of the previous substantive headteacher followed by a temporary headteacher for two terms. During this period, the school suffered a decline in standards. In addition, the very recent dissolution of the long-standing federation with another school has brought further changes. The current headteacher, provided by the local authority in September 2016, has established stability and clear direction. He has rapidly addressed many of the weaknesses that developed over the previous period and secured some significant improvements, but recognises that there is more to be done.
- Subject leaders are only now beginning to develop their roles. They are beginning to develop plans to improve their subjects but these plans are at an early stage and are yet to have an impact. Systems for tracking the progress of pupils in subjects other than English and mathematics are at an early stage of development, and are yet to be used to identify where pupils make good progress and where progress is not rapid enough.
- A new position of assistant headteacher has been created to strengthen the leadership capacity of the school. However, this leader is very new in post and has yet to develop her role and have an impact on teaching and learning and pupils' progress.
- Careful plans have been made and are being implemented to establish a permanent leader, when the current temporary headteacher leaves, through a new collaboration with another school. However, the impact of this is uncertain.
- Leaders track expenditure carefully. The headteacher has reviewed the use of funding for disadvantaged pupils. He has ensured that it is better focused on the pupils for whom it is intended so that it is more effective. Funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used well to support these pupils in their learning. Funding to promote participation in sports is well used and pupils enjoy the opportunities to participate in competitions and activities with other schools as well as within school.
- Many parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and some spoken to during the inspection, are understandably concerned about the school's future and whether this next collaboration will succeed. At the time of the inspection, parents' meetings were planned to provide reassurance for parents but had not yet taken place. Nevertheless, parents are very supportive of the school. Many are full of praise for the current headteacher and for staff, and the large majority who responded to Parent View said that they would recommend the school to another parent.
- Leaders and governors have an accurate view of the school. They know its strengths and weaknesses because the headteacher has carried out rigorous checks and worked effectively with the local authority to ensure that an accurate view is presented to governors. Robust action is now being taken to address the most pressing areas for improvement, including in the quality of teaching and learning and by introducing systems for assessment in reading, writing and mathematics.

- Leaders have ensured that a broad curriculum is in place. Pupils benefit from interesting opportunities for learning in class – for example, learning about how chocolate is made as part of topic work linked to a book, and through after-school clubs and sporting competitions. They enjoy visits, for example residential visits and visits to local landmarks and museums.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. Pupils are enabled to develop into thoughtful and sensible young people by the time they leave the school.
- Leaders ensure that professional development is used well to improve the skills of teachers and others in school. For example, training is provided within school, opportunities are provided to visit other schools with high-quality practice, and teachers take part in cluster-school events such as to discuss teachers' assessments. These activities are having a positive impact on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- The local authority has supported the school well since September 2016 by providing the county headteacher with an improvement board to support governors and, more recently, by working with subject leaders to develop their expertise.

Governance

- The current governing body had only been in place for around a month at the time of the inspection. This was because there had been a joint governing body from both schools in the federation prior to this, which ceased after the end of the federation. As a result, governors have yet to have sufficient impact on ensuring that the school improves.
- Despite their recent formation, governors have already formulated very clear plans for improvement. They have set up a new governing board and allocated responsibilities to individuals linked to the school improvement plan. Governors have attended training to ensure that they understand fully their roles. They have worked closely with the current headteacher and the local authority to establish a careful transition plan for the school as it moves into another collaboration.
- Governors are supportive of leaders but are now providing greater challenge also. For example, governors challenged leaders about the achievement of boys in writing because they identified that this was a weaker area.
- Governors are aware that in the past they had not been sufficiently rigorous in holding leaders to account for standards achieved or for the use of funding, such as for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities or funding for disadvantaged pupils. They are now ensuring that they are provided with accurate information about how funding is used and what impact this is having.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have ensured that keeping pupils safe has a high priority. All necessary checks on staff are carried out rigorously and recorded accurately. The headteacher checks

the administration of this on a regular basis. Staff training is carried out regularly so that all staff know what to look for that indicates a child may be at risk. Concerns recorded by adults in school demonstrate that this training is effective. Pupils' files are well maintained and organised where there are concerns about a pupil. Leaders follow up concerns rigorously and ensure that action is taken when needed by external agencies. Regular reports are provided to governors so that they know that school policies and procedures are implemented in practice.

- Leaders ensure that pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe. During the inspection, Year 6 pupils were taking part in personal safety training. Pupils spoke knowledgeably about how to keep themselves safe online and when playing games. This is because leaders have ensured that such safe practice is taught regularly and reinforced during lessons by teachers.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not consistently good across classes and subjects.
- Teachers' expectations of pupils' writing, while generally high in English, are not equally high when pupils write in other subjects. As a result, pupils do use and develop their skills in different contexts. Opportunities for writing in some subjects, such as history and geography, are too limited in some classes. As a result, boys in particular are not engaged in applying their writing skills in different contexts.
- The most able pupils are not making as much progress as they should in writing because the advice and support provided by teachers are not sufficiently well focused. As a result, these pupils are not shown how they can further improve their good writing to greater depth.
- Teachers provide feedback regularly in line with the school's policy. However, sometimes feedback provided has little impact on pupils' subsequent work.
- Some teachers' assessments of the standard of pupils' work are not accurate because teachers are not all equally secure in their understanding of what is expected of pupils in each year group. As a result, sometimes teachers are not aware of where pupils have gaps in their knowledge that need to be addressed.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is sometimes not sufficient to ensure that work is planned appropriately. For example, in mathematics, pupils were practising column addition but doing so for inappropriate calculations such as to add one to a three-digit number, or to add two single-digit numbers. However, in some classes and subjects, teachers have strong subject knowledge and so work is well planned.
- Sometimes, teachers provide work which is repetitive and does not provide sufficient challenge for pupils. For example in mathematics, some pupils explored inverse by completing large numbers of practice questions but were not able to apply this knowledge to subsequent tasks. In contrast, in some classes, pupils were regularly given mathematics tasks which included a high level of challenge and pupils grappled with tricky problems.

- The quality of teaching and learning in science varies. In some, but not all, classes pupils are given good opportunities to carry out scientific experiments. Pupils are encouraged to consider how they would modify the experiment if they did it again, but often are not given opportunities to reflect on what they have concluded from their experiments.
- In some classes, teachers' expectations of pupils in history and geography are not consistently high. Pupils' work in these subjects is sometimes not of a good enough standard. Often in these subjects, teachers do not provide the most able pupils with sufficient challenge. Instead all pupils complete the same tasks.
- In some classes, teachers provide clear explanations for pupils and ask questions which extend their learning. For example, in the Years 5/6 class, the teacher had identified pupils' misconception around area and perimeter, and addressed this through questioning and explanation. As a result, pupils completed the next task with confidence.
- In Years 4, 5 and 6, reasoning about numbers and problem solving is being well used to develop pupils' mathematical understanding. In these classes, pupils are asked to explain their thinking and to apply their skills to problems on a regular basis.
- Phonics is taught well so that pupils gain a secure understanding of letters and the sounds they make. Adults model sounds accurately and provide a good balance of opportunities for pupils to read sounds and to write them in words and sentences.
- Pupils present their work well because teachers' expectations are high. Recent work to improve pupils' handwriting is having a positive impact and handwriting is improving rapidly.
- Additional adults support pupils well, ensuring that they know what they need to do in lessons and asking questions to develop their understanding further.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are confident and enjoy talking with adults about their work. Pupils spoken to during the inspection knew what they were learning about and were able to explain tasks clearly. They said that they enjoy their lessons because teachers make learning fun.
- Most pupils concentrate and try hard with their work. Leaders are aware that some pupils still find it difficult to concentrate on their work and lack independence in tackling tasks. This is being addressed, for example through the 'three before me' approach encouraging pupils to 1) think for themselves, 2) use resources and 3) ask a friend to help, before asking an adult for assistance.
- Pupils are sociable and work well with each other in pairs and groups in lessons. They listen to each other sensibly and take turns. In the playground, older and younger pupils play together, and boys with girls. During the inspection, older pupils were organising a game with younger ones, and showed great patience. Pupils are given

opportunities to take on responsibility, for example as part of the school council, and are given real responsibility. During the inspection, the school council announced that it had been successful in its bid to get mirrors installed in the pupils' toilets, as had been requested by pupils.

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. Assemblies are well used to promote values, including British values such as tolerance and respect. Pupils' achievements are acknowledged and pupils warmly celebrate each other's successes. Pupils learn about other cultures and faiths, and are welcoming of difference. Pupils are given opportunities to take part in drama and art, reflecting on how this makes them feel.
- Good support is provided for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Additional adults work well with individuals or with pupils within groups.
- Adults know pupils well and take care of them. Pupils spoken to during the inspection said that 'there is always an adult to talk to'. Pupils said that bullying is rare in school and that any incidents are dealt with effectively. Most parents who responded to Parent View agreed that the school deals with bullying effectively.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- In classes and around the school, there is an orderly atmosphere. Pupils behave well in lessons. They listen to their teachers and respond sensibly to directions. Pupils said that behaviour in school is good. Despite this, some parents who responded to Parent View expressed concerns about behaviour and how leaders manage the behaviour of some pupils. However, inspectors found that the school's behaviour records demonstrate that pupils who have difficulty with their behaviour are managed well and incidents are followed up rigorously.
- Teachers encourage good behaviour, for example giving points which pupils collect towards earning award badges in assembly. Pupils respond well and are eager to collect their points.
- Attendance at the school is good including the attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils. This is because leaders track attendance carefully and follow up on absences rigorously.
- Occasionally, some pupils do not behave as well as they could when working with additional adults because some adults are less skilled in managing pupils' behaviour than others.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- In 2016, the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard in Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics was below that found nationally. Leaders recognised that teaching in Year 2 was insufficiently challenging and have addressed this so that teaching has improved. These pupils, now in Year 3, are making better progress. However, some are hindered by gaps in their learning and less positive attitudes to learning than is the case elsewhere in the school. Pupils currently in Year 2 made slow

progress at the beginning of the academic year but are beginning to make better progress now, helped by the additional teaching support provided by leaders. Despite this, many remain below the standard expected for their age, particularly in writing and mathematics.

- The proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard in Year 6 in 2016 was lower than that found nationally, particularly in mathematics. Leaders have looked in detail at the reasons for this and have put in place changes to ensure that weaknesses have been addressed. Pupils currently in Year 6 are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. However, the progress of some most able pupils in writing is not as rapid as it should be because teachers do not provide sharp enough guidance to pupils on how to improve their writing further.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make generally good progress in reading because the support provided is well matched to their needs. In writing and mathematics, most of these pupils make good progress relative to their starting points, as shown by their individual targets. For a few pupils, progress is slower because the support provided is not well enough targeted to their needs.
- Pupils who are disadvantaged make similar progress to others in the school, which is generally stronger in reading and mathematics than in writing, especially for boys. Leaders' plans for better targeting of funding for disadvantaged pupils are beginning to improve their progress.
- The progress of boys in writing has been slower than that of girls across the school. While pupils' work and school assessment information show that pupils are generally making better progress in writing now than in the past, the progress of some boys still lags behind that of girls from similar starting points. This is because some teachers are not making enough use of different contexts to engage boys in writing and develop their skills.
- Pupils in some classes are not making sufficiently good progress in subjects such as history and geography because expectations by teachers are not high enough and all pupils are expected to do work of a similar undemanding standard.
- Pupils develop good skills in art in some classes because the adult teaching has a high level of subject expertise and plans work which develops pupils' skills over time.
- Pupils achieve well in phonics. The proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard in the government's Year 1 phonics screening check in 2016 was higher than that found nationally. School assessment information indicates that this is also likely to be the case this year.

Early years provision

Good

- Reception children in the mixed-aged Reception/Year1 class benefit from an attractive, safe and well-organised learning environment. Adults ensure that the classroom allows for children in Reception to work independently and with adults, both indoors and outdoors.
- A good range of interesting activities are provided for children, which they undertake with enthusiasm. For example, children during the inspection hunted for three-

dimensional shapes in the outside area, gleefully announcing when they had found a sphere or a cube.

- Children in the Reception Year make good progress from their starting points. The proportion of children who reached a good level of development in 2016 was around that found nationally, and higher than in previous years. This was because leaders had identified that children in Reception were not previously being given sufficient opportunities to develop their skills in early writing and mark making. This was addressed and children currently in the Reception Year are making good progress in developing their writing skills.
- Children in the early years are sociable and well behaved because adults regularly remind them of their expectations. They praise children for positive behaviour and attitudes, and remind those who call out, for example, to put their hands up. Children share resources and play together sensibly, talking and listening to one another.
- Parents are encouraged to contribute to their child's learning. They are able to come into class at the start of the day to speak to adults. They also have access to their child's online learning journey so that they can keep up to date with their child's progress and add information about learning at home. Parents spoken to during the inspection, and those who provided comments through Parent View, are highly positive about the way their child has settled into the Reception Year and for the support provided by all adults.
- Adults support learning well. Teachers and teaching assistants work together well so that they are equally knowledgeable about children's achievements and next steps. Some adults are less skilled in managing children's behaviour and so occasionally adult-led activities are less successful in promoting learning.

School details

Unique reference number	121049
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10023415

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	Maintained
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	93
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Robert Warner
Headteacher	Doug Dale
Telephone number	01362 668 318
Website	www.northelmham.norfolk.sch.uk
Email address	head@northelmham.norfolk.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	14–15 May 2013

Information about this school

- The school has suffered a period of turbulence since the previous inspection with temporary headteachers in post since the resignation of the previous headteacher. The school's long-standing federation with another school has ceased and plans are in place to enter a new partnership with a different local school.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school is a smaller school than is found nationally.
- The majority of pupils are of a White British background.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than is found nationally.

- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities or are supported by an education, health and care plan, or statement of special educational needs, is above average.
- The school is organised into four classes, all of which contain two year groups.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed lessons in all classes. The majority of observations were carried out with the headteacher.
- The inspector looked at pupils' books, school assessment information, the headteacher's evaluation of teaching and learning, and a range of school documents.
- The inspector spoke with a small number of parents, took account of 42 responses to Parent View, and met with some pupils from Years 3, 4 and 5.
- The inspector listened to a small number of pupils read.
- The inspector spoke with a representative from the local authority and two members of the governing body.
- Policies and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils were examined, including mandatory checks made during the recruitment of new staff.

Inspection team

Maria Curry, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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