

North Town Primary School

Staplegrove Road, Taunton, TA1 1DF

Inspection dates

30 April–1 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Not previously inspected	
This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils achieve well and are improving rapidly because of the outstanding leadership of the headteacher, supported by a committed team who passionately believe that learning always starts with the child.
- The teaching of phonics (linking sounds with letters) has helped pupils improve the pupils' writing skills. Pupils are also supported well in lessons to improve their reading skills.
- Teaching is good and improving because teachers use questioning well to develop the pupils' learning.
- The pupils behave well and feel safe in the school.
- Leaders are particularly good at knowing what needs to be improved and providing the right training for all adults working in the school. They also make sure that teachers support each other to share good teaching skills.
- The governors work closely and effectively with the school to make sure that all groups of pupils get the right support to help them achieve well.
- The curriculum is well designed and provides the pupils with work that matches their needs and interests, helping them to make accelerated progress. Pupils have a wide range of activities to take part in, especially in physical education and sport.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching is outstanding.
- Marking does not always clearly show pupils what they need to do next to improve their work and this hinders the progress they make.
- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to have more independent control of their own learning in order to accelerate their achievement.
- Some teachers do not always demonstrate clearly what pupils need to do in lessons to get the best learning from the activities.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching in all classes; in total, they visited 25 lessons and carried out a learning walk. Joint observations were carried out with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Some pupils were heard reading. Pupils' work was also scrutinised.
- Inspectors had discussions with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, teachers, teaching assistants, governors and pupils.
- They took account of the 71 responses to Ofsted's Parent View on-line survey. They also took account of the views of parents and carers that they spoke to during the inspection.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentary evidence, including those relating to safeguarding, pupil progress, special educational needs and staff professional development.

Inspection team

Huw Evans, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Linda Rafferty	Additional Inspector
David Beddard	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- North Town Primary School converted to become an academy on 1 August 2011. When its predecessor school was last inspected by Ofsted in June 2008, it was judged to be outstanding.
- Several new leadership appointments were made as part of the academy conversion.
- The school is a much larger than average-sized primary school, where most of the pupils are from White backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and for whom the school receives additional income (pupil premium) is average but has slowly increased over the last three years.
- The school has a below average number of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported by school action. The proportion supported by school action plus or a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- A pre-school and breakfast club, run by other providers, is on the school site and was not part of the inspection.
- The school works closely with the other Taunton primary schools. It also has links with local college as part of the physical education provision and links with a university in a research programme.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the number of pupils making better than expected progress by:
 - making sure that all marking and feedback make clear to pupils what they need to do to improve their work
 - giving more opportunities for pupils to use the feedback to be more self-reflective and take control of their learning through more independent work.
- Improve the consistency of teaching so that more is outstanding by:
 - making sure that all teachers clearly and consistently demonstrate to the pupils what learning is expected of them in the lesson activities.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' achievement is good over time. At end of Year 6 in 2012, the pupils achieved well, especially in writing, where their achievement was high when compared to that found in other schools. The progress made by the pupils in English as a whole was good, with lower ability pupils doing particularly well.
- The current progress of pupils in reading, writing and mathematics is good, with some pupils making outstanding progress. This continual improving picture is as a result of careful checking of pupils' progress through regular meetings between teachers and leaders.
- Children are keen learners in the Early Years Foundation Stage and are happy to investigate and 'have a go'. They start school with skills below those usually found, especially in mathematics. Through good and better teaching, they make good progress, though some are still below average at the end of the year.
- Improvements have been made in the achievement of pupils in Years 1 and 2 in reading, writing and mathematics, with the academy's first year of results being better than those seen in recent years, a trend which is being continued in the present academic year.
- Pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding achieve well by the time they leave the school, with the teaching being effective in improving their achievement year by year, especially in English and mathematics. The majority of these pupils are now making better than expected progress and the gap between this group and the others in school as measured by average point score is narrowing.
- Pupils who have disabilities and/or special educational needs progress well. Some are making outstanding progress as a result of effective planned extra support, including the weekly visits from the speech and language therapist.
- The good progress of pupils across the school and the focus of the leadership team on the importance of each child being at the centre of learning confirm that all pupils are provided with equal opportunities to learn and that there is no discrimination. However, the progress pupils make is sometimes limited by the lack of opportunity to work independently and make choices and decide on methods to use and to reflect on teachers' comments and support.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is typically good or better throughout the school. The teaching of guided reading and phonics is a particular strength. The improvement in the teaching of writing resulted in the pupils doing well last year and this improvement is seen now across the school.
- Teaching is well planned, resulting in learning activities that engage the pupils and are at the right level for them to achieve well. The improvement in planning is as a result of careful and regular checking by the leaders followed by appropriate training to develop all the teachers' skills. Teachers are using these skills in helping pupils learn. The use of questions is especially effective in challenging pupils to think more about their answers, resulting in pupils' improved achievement. In some classes, in a few lessons pupils do not always get enough support to help them understand what they need to do.
- Other adults are used well in the lessons. They have received appropriate training that has helped them support pupils well, especially those with disabilities and/or special educational needs and those who are eligible for pupil premium funding. Along with the teachers, the other adults have a positive relationship with the pupils and help them to feel comfortable about 'having a go'.
- The quality of marking has improved with pupils given good suggestions as to how they can improve their work but this is not always sufficiently effective in making sure all pupils make outstanding progress. Where it does happen, pupils are more confident about knowing what

they need to do to check their own work, and achievement for these pupils is accelerated.

- The curriculum provides a range of experiences for pupils and, as one teacher reported, gives teachers the opportunity to be innovative in their teaching and more effective in engaging all pupils. The curriculum also provides more opportunities for pupils to develop their reading, writing and mathematical skills across many subjects. The provision for sport and physical exercise is especially strong in the school. The appointment of a specialist teacher has improved the quality of teaching and experience for the pupils.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour across the school is typically good. Pupils show positive attitudes towards each other and accept responsibilities, such as being playground leaders.
- Pupils feel safe and secure. They feel well cared for and supported to learn, helping them to achieve well in a safe environment. Most parents and carers who responded to Parent View agree. Pupils say learning is usually fun and that they enjoy school. This is reflected in the high levels of attendance – the pupils want to be at school.
- Pupils are well aware of the different types of bullying but report that they do not feel that any bullying takes place. They feel confident that they can approach any of the staff if there was a problem.
- The school has recently adopted a behaviour policy, which includes pupils thinking about their rights and responsibilities. This has helped them to understand how they all contribute to a safe and caring school and they have worked on this to determine their own class rules.
- Pupils organise regular events such as 'Mufti Mondays', where donations made by pupils have been used to improve the playground. The school council have been active in deciding how money raised is spent.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is usually good or better but on some occasions, as a result of teachers not making the learning activities clear enough, some pupils lose focus and the standard of behaviour drops.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The outstanding leadership of the headteacher, ably supported by the whole staff and the governors, has been at the centre of improvements in the school. One teacher described him as 'a strong leader who has a great vision for the school and the children'. He has, over the last two years, developed a very strong team of leaders who are passionate in their belief in helping every child do their best. Their drive and the policies they have quickly put in place in the lead-up to academy conversion have resulted in pupils achieving well, with a growing proportion of pupils making accelerated progress.
- Subject leaders are also fully involved in checking how well pupils are achieving and how good the teaching is. This helps them to know the school exceptionally well and appreciate how they can make things even better. Leaders have provided training for teachers and other adults, which is already having a dramatic effect on speeding up the progress of some pupils. Leaders have an accurate view how to ensure all pupils make this accelerated progress. They are supporting teachers to focus on these areas, such as helping pupils develop their skills in mental mathematics and considering how talking can improve pupils' writing.
- Early Years leadership is strong and the leader has worked with the headteacher to develop the 'Stage not Age' approach, which covers all children in the first two years at school. This has helped children achieve well by making sure that they receive the teaching that matches their needs.
- Teachers were all very positive about how the management of their performance is helping them to become even better teachers. They feel that the regular training the school provides helps

them to develop their skills in teaching and leadership. There are many opportunities where teachers support each other through sharing good practice.

- The curriculum is an excellent feature of the school. The role of the senior leaders in developing the curriculum demonstrates an outstanding capacity to improve, as seen in the rapidly improving rates of pupil progress. It also contributes to the very strong and very effective promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are given opportunities for residential visits, including one to Spain, and can participate in a large number of artistic, cultural and sporting activities. This can be summed up in a comment from one of the staff who said, 'The opportunities that are given to the children are amazing.' The appointment of a leader specifically to focus on the well-being of the pupils has meant that this aspect is very well led and is a key factor in pupils' very positive attitudes to school.
- Communication with parents and carers happens in a range of ways, including a regular newsletter, parent forum meetings, questionnaires, 'Meet the head' events and Twitter. They are also invited to attend workshops to show them how they can support their children's learning. They appreciate the 'open door' policy.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governors have an excellent understanding of the strengths of the school and what needs to be improved. They keep up to date with what is happening and interrogate school and national performance data. They have a very good awareness of the quality of teaching and a clear vision for how it can be even better. Because they receive good quality information, they are in a very good position to ask challenging questions to make sure that the senior leaders keep up the pace of improvement. They regularly visit school and have been trained to improve their skills as governors. They oversee the budget and make sure that the funding is used to support pupils to achieve well and to make sure that every child is included in school activities through keeping costs to a minimum. A good example of this is how they have used the pupil premium money. Spending has been carefully targeted to support the whole child, so includes additional support for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills and help for pupils to access extra-curricular activities. They share the strong vision of the school and state that 'children are at the heart of every decision we make'. They oversee the management of the performance of all staff and understand the importance of encouraging good practice. They value the views of the parents and carers and two governors lead the parents' forum. The governing body ensures that all statutory requirements are met regarding safeguarding.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	137126
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	413290

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	431
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Clare Greenslade
Headteacher	Michael Snowden
Telephone number	01823284676
Fax number	01823354975
Email address	office@northtown.somerset.sch.uk

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