

Inspection of a good school: Blundeston Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Church Road, Blundeston, Lowestoft, Suffolk NR32 5AX

Inspection dates:

11–12 December 2019

Outcome

Blundeston Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils say the school is 'flourishing', 'caring' and 'fun'. They learn well. Teachers expect them to do their best. They make sure that the work stretches pupils. Pupils' excellent behaviour makes the school a happy and friendly place. They are polite and look after one another. They say that they feel safe. Bullying is not a problem.

The amazing new hall mural of the church in a field of flowers says two important things. Christian values mean a lot to pupils and the environment matters. For example, pupils want the school to be plastic free. They all worked on the mural. It brought the whole school together. Pupils enjoyed showing it to the Bishop of Norwich.

The new headteacher and deputy have made a real difference. They have improved the teaching of phonics. They have provided high-quality training to staff. They have made sure that the school meets the needs of every pupil.

Pupils enjoy a rich diet of visits. This gives them memorable experiences. Year 6 pupils visited an aviation museum to learn about the Second World War. Year 1 pupils visited the Tide and Time Museum in Yarmouth to find out about the history of the seaside.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders are ambitious for pupils. They have adopted a curriculum that works. It is planned over a two-year cycle. This means pairs of teachers work together on the same topic. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 are learning about the rainforest. Their shared area is like a jungle.

The planning sets out what pupils will learn over the year in each subject. It also makes clear how they will gain the skills they need to be successful. For example, Year 2 pupils looked at historical maps to understand the extent of the Great Fire of London. They used what they had learned to suggest how the rebuilt London could be less at risk from fire. They considered using brick and stone to build houses rather than wood and straw.

The new curriculum is working well in all subjects. Some teachers have more confidence teaching some subjects than other teachers. Leaders have plans to share this expertise so that all teaching is equally strong. The curriculum includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities well. Staff know these pupils' needs and ensure that they receive all necessary support. The new nurture group helps pupils facing difficulties to become more confident.

Leaders have responded well to the drop in reading results at the end of Year 6 in 2019. They have bought a new online tool that builds pupils' understanding. They have moved to whole-class reading in key stage 2. This enables teachers to focus on one aspect of reading at a time. Some pupils do not yet have the vocabulary skills they need to answer a wide range of questions. Staff have opened up the revamped library so that pupils can use it at breaktimes. Pupils say they enjoy reading and spend more time doing it.

Teachers help younger pupils to become fluent and confident readers. Pupils use their phonic knowledge to sound out new words.

Children in the early years get off to an excellent start. They pick up early reading and numeracy skills from the start. The classroom is stimulating and fires their curiosity. Children enjoyed acting out the nativity scene in their role-play stable. This prepared them well for their Christmas performance, which delighted parents. Outdoors, children enjoy an exciting wildwood. Here they can build dens and make all sorts of potions in their mud kitchen.

Pupils behave very well. They are keen to learn. They take on jobs such as road safety officers and digital leaders. They enjoy filling their Blundeston Passports. These contain evidence of their courage, independence, resilience and teamwork. A Year 6 pupil said how he had shown courage in 'holding mouldy bread'.

Pupils enjoy a variety of experiences beyond the classroom. These include residential visits to outdoor activity centres and theatre trips. The older pupils receive free brass lessons. An engineer visited to discuss proposals for a new bridge in Lowestoft. Pupils visit different places of worship. They have been to a mosque and a temple. Pupils also have links with a township in South Africa. They have studied churches around the world, as well as the one next door. This has a distinctive circular tower.

On General Election day, pupils were able to talk about what democracy means. They get on well together and raise money for various charities.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All checks on staff are complete and up to date. Staff use a secure electronic portal to store confidential information. This helps them to identify trends. This approach is efficient. The portal generates emails to relevant staff when anything changes. Leaders deal with both Norfolk and Suffolk social care services. The school has a prominent safeguarding culture. There are posters up on the walls and information for pupils and parents. Training is thorough and covers local issues such as county lines. Staff know what to do when there is a problem. Safeguarding leads wear different coloured lanyards to make themselves easy to identify.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In 2019, reading standards dropped at the end of key stage 2. Some pupils were not able to express themselves clearly enough. Leaders should build on their work to improve reading, especially in helping pupils to develop their vocabulary and respond to questions in a variety of ways.
- The school's changes to the wider curriculum are relatively new. Leaders need to ensure that the existing good practice is embedded across all subjects. They should ensure that this process deepens pupils' experiences within and across subjects.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards

may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in March 2016.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	124751
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10110304
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	197
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Jane Liddell
Headteacher	Helen Laflin
Website	www.blundestoncevcp.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	10–11 March 2016

Information about this school

- The school is a Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary.
- It draws pupils from the village of Blundeston and from the nearby towns of Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth.
- It straddles the borders of Norfolk and Suffolk and works with both local authorities.

Information about this inspection

I carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

- I met with senior leaders, subject leaders, members of the governing body, teachers and teaching assistants to discuss aspects of the school's curriculum and provision.
- I spoke with a representative of the local authority and with a representative of the diocese by telephone.
- I did deep dives in reading, mathematics and history. This entailed meeting with

leaders to discuss these areas of the curriculum, visiting lessons, talking to teachers to find out how they teach these subjects, looking at pupils' workbooks and speaking to pupils about their learning.

- I met with the designated safeguarding leader to check that safeguarding procedures and processes were effective. I also checked the single central record to ensure that recruitment checks on staff have taken place.
- I observed pupils' behaviour at playtime and lunchtime and as they moved around the school.
- I took account of the 65 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, and 64 comments on the free-text service.
- I spoke to staff and pupils informally during the school day.

Inspection team

Nick Butt, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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