

Review: Northwold Primary School

Reviewer: Joan Fye

Review Date	3 – 5 June 2013
Achievement of pupils	Outstanding
Quality of teaching	Outstanding
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding

This school is outstanding

- The headteacher has a clear and relentless vision that all children will achieve the best they possibly can while at Northwold. This drive, ambition and determination is shared by the senior leadership team and other teachers in the school.
- Pupils make exceptional progress. They start school at three below average and leave with standards that are above average in English and mathematics.
- Excellent support for pupils with special educational needs and pupils not attaining the national expectations for their age ensures that 'no child is left behind.'
- Teaching is outstanding: this judgement was arrived at following three days of rigorous lesson observations, scrutiny of books and analysis of performance data.
- Northwold is a vibrant, high performing, multicultural school with the celebration of diversity at its heart. The school's staff reflect the cultural diversity of the pupils, providing excellent role models for both the pupils and the community.
- Inclusion at Northwold is a 'non-negotiable' – a value which is whole heartedly embraced by the school community. All pupils are fully accepted and valued - pupils thrive on this ethos and show each other respect and care.
- Pupils feel safe and secure; they love and value their school. One pupil stated: 'my school is perfect.'
- Behaviour is excellent. Pupils are polite, co-operative and considerate.
- The headteacher places great emphasis on the well being of staff. As a result staff feel valued and give of their best – there is a real sense of pride in being part of Northwold from staff and pupils alike.
- The attention to detail in every facet of the school's work is evident: the marking in pupils' books, tracking of pupils' progress and the environment are all analysed closely and underpinned by a relentless drive to improve.

Information about this review

- I observed 16 lessons - eight of which were joint observations carried out with the headteacher. A series of short visits to other lessons across the school was also conducted. A singing assembly was observed and I listened to pupils read, spoke with them about their learning and looked at the work in their books.
- Meetings were held with staff, pupils and the School's Council.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised including nationally published data and the school's own data, the school's self-evaluation and school improvement plans

Information about this school

- The school is larger than most primary schools with 457 pupils on roll. 31 different minority groups are represented with the largest groups being Indian and Black Caribbean
- The majority of pupils have English as an additional language – 82%
- The most common languages Gujarati, Yoruba and Turkish
- Over 50% of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium – well above the national average
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and supported through school action is well above average - 36.6%. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is 7%.
- The school offers a plethora of after school activities
- The school follows the International Primary Curriculum – and will shortly be undergoing accreditation for the mastery level

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Having achieved a sharp upturn in all aspects of the school's performance, the time is right for the headteacher to consider how to further devolve leadership roles and responsibilities
- Improve the quality of pupils' handwriting and presentation throughout the school so that it is of a consistently high standard
- Reduce the amount of worksheets in the maths books of some classes

Review Judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Pupils' attainment has improved significantly in the last two years; last year attainment was above the national average in both English and mathematics. School data shows that the current Year 2 pupils are on track to achieve 83% in reading and mathematics. At Key Stage 2 pupils are on track to achieve 100% in English and mathematics at Level 4; 31% at Level 5 in English and mathematics; and 28% at Level 6 in English and 25% at Level 6 in mathematics.
- Most children join the school with skills that are below that expected for their age. The school has provided all pupils in the nursery with full-time places to guarantee that all children receive consistently high quality provision. The children make outstanding progress in both their personal and academic development in the Foundation Stage due to skilled teaching which caters exceptionally well for their needs.
- Practice in the Early Years is led by one of the assistant heads who has a long and expert background in the early years, having previously been the adviser for early years in the local authority. This expertise has been deployed successfully to ensure children make outstanding progress.
- This rapid progress continues throughout Key Stage 1, so that by the end of Year 2, pupils are working at levels which are in line with national expectations in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards in writing have particularly improved since the previous inspection for pupils of all abilities.
- Outstanding provision continues across Key Stage 2 so that by the end of Year 6, overall, pupils are working at levels above others their age in English and mathematics. Teaching of high quality has ensured that all pupils make at least the good progress expected and many make excellent gains. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels in English and mathematics has increased significantly.
- Pupils make very good progress in reading. Younger pupils have a good knowledge of their letters and phonics and use this to tackle unfamiliar words. Older pupils read for pleasure and are able to infer and deduce. Pupils talk enthusiastically and knowledgably about books and enjoy both fiction and non-fiction books
- Pupils with special educational needs make excellent progress. This is due to the very structured analysis of needs programme implemented by the school and the rigorous matching of intervention to pupils' needs. The staff - teachers and teacher assistants - who support students with special educational needs receive regular and high quality training.

- Pupils eligible for pupil premium make excellent progress. This funding is used effectively to provide additional teachers in Year 6, full-time nursery places and a range of enrichment activities. These narrowing the gap initiatives ensure that the attainment gap is minimised.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teaching has improved significantly over the years and is consistently good and often outstanding. Teachers are passionate about their craft and demonstrated a genuine desire to gain feedback and improve their performance
- Planning is very good. Teachers plan each lesson according to a whole school format which is structured and detailed. Teachers highlight lesson objectives, success criteria, key questions and appropriate activities for different ability groups. Planning builds on pupils' prior knowledge and understanding enabling pupils to make excellent progress.
- The best teaching is characterised by excellent subject knowledge, high expectations, pace, energy and presence, and a care for every child in the class. Although there is a whole school handwriting scheme, teachers need to ensure that it is implemented consistently and pupils present their work well at all times. In some classes there is an over reliance on worksheets in teaching maths. More emphasis should be placed on pupils setting out their work well.
- Children in the Foundation Stage thrive on lively teaching which is well structured and fun. Teachers have an excellent knowledge of how to teach phonics and great attention is paid to planning and tracking pupils' progress in all areas of the early years curriculum. Displays and activities are designed to capture pupils' imagination, for example, pupils were eagerly awaiting the hatching of eggs. The outdoor play area is carefully and creatively structured to maximise learning opportunities.
- Relationships in the school are outstanding - this is a strong feature of the school. There is a genuine sense of care for the well being of every child. This care was demonstrated by all adults in the school: the administrative staff, teaching assistants, kitchen staff, caretaker and teachers.
- The use of specialists teachers ensures very high standards in subjects such as ICT, PE, music and art. Teachers liaise about their planning to ensure that the skills acquired in specialist lessons are embedded in other areas of pupils' work, for example, a Year 1 class looked at how devices could be controlled in ICT and at the same time explored directions and shapes in mathematics. Pupils are taught to animate and produce short films. The current project involves work with the Barbican Centre in London.
- External links are utilised by the school to create a rich and stimulating curriculum for pupils. The school has established international links with schools in Spain and the Netherlands. More locally the school makes good use the range of places of worship to widen pupils' understanding of different religions. Links with banks and local business, through the Enabling Enterprise

project, has enabled pupils to develop enterprise skills in a creative and fun way.

- Additional staff are highly trained and fully engaged in lessons. They are used flexibly and creatively across the school to ensure that their input is where it is most needed. An example of this is the reading session held each day in the Reception classes: children are grouped according to their reading ability and each group then works with a range of teachers and teaching assistants to develop their reading skills.
- Teachers mark pupils work regularly and there are examples of outstanding feedback, particularly in the literacy books of Year 6 pupils. Teachers have started to encourage pupils to reflect and comment on the feedback provided - there is scope for further development in this area.
- The range of additional activities provided for pupils is extensive and adds to the school's culture of creativity and diversity. From Year 2, every child is entitled to play a musical instrument which includes the guitar, ukulele, saxophone, piano, steel pans and violin. Pupils receive this tuition free of charge as long as they practice regularly. In addition to the before school club, the after school programme includes tennis, football, basketball, cricket, science, steel pans, design and art, street dance, drama - a production of A Midsummer Night's Dream is imminent - and Yoga conducted in Spanish.
- The information provided for parents on their child's attainment, progress and well-being is excellent

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Relationships are extremely positive and all staff and pupils work well together inside and outside lessons to achieve the best results possible. High standards of behaviour and good manners are strongly re-enforced through the school's commitment to valuing everyone in the school community.
- Behaviour is excellent. Pupils are polite, welcoming and a pleasure to be with. Their attitudes to learning are very good: they want to learn and achieve, making a valuable contribution to their own learning. They work hard and show high levels of concentration and perseverance in all classes.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of types of bullying. They state that bullying is rare but that when it is reported, it is dealt with quickly and effectively.
- The pupils adhere to the school's behaviour policy which is rooted in managing behaviour positively. Pupils talked enthusiastically about the rewards system for good behaviour and effort. Each week one member of the class is chosen to have afternoon tea with the headteacher - a prize much coveted.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher is an outstanding leader who is totally supported by a highly professional senior leadership team. Together they have successfully developed a whole staff team who are keen to achieve the highest standards in every area of the school's work.
- A key strength of the headteacher is the ability to empower staff. There are a number of examples of staff that have been judged 'satisfactory' in another context but with the training and support they have received at Northwold they are flourishing and teaching at a very high standard. Much effort is put into ensuring the well-being of staff, an approach fully supported by the governing body. As a result staff are motivated, committed and absence levels are low.
- There is an unrelenting focus on tracking pupils' progress. This system is rigorously monitored by an efficient assistant headteacher with great attention to detail. Careful tracking ensures targeted interventions at every stage of pupils' development, for example, if pupils do not achieve the national average in national reading tests in Year 2, they undergo an intensive, daily ten week programme to improve their reading ability.
- The middle leadership team are knowledgeable, enthusiastic and keen to develop their leadership skills.
- The headteacher makes excellent use of the expertise in the school and community to raise standards, extend provision and opportunities and create a stimulating learning environment.
- The school's finances have been managed effectively to establish imaginative and innovative spaces for children to play and be inventive. It is clear to parents that the school's finances are being spent to provide high quality resources for their children.
- The school's senior leadership team has worked hard to drive forward improvement. They have put in place robust systems and processes and monitor the school's work with great vigilance. This approach was exactly right for the stage the school was at on the appointment of the current headteacher and has undoubtedly resulted in its outstanding achievements. In the next stage of the school's development the headteacher should consider devolving some of the leadership roles and responsibilities to a wider group and sharing her skills and expertise - and that of the two assistant heads - with other schools.