

Mile Cross Primary School

Brasier Road, Norwich, Norfolk NR3 2QU

Inspection dates

14–15 November 2017

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Early years provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Highly effective leadership by the headteacher and other leaders, including governors, ensures that the school continues to improve rapidly.
- Rigorous systems and procedures underpin the school's work to raise pupils' outcomes. They are highly consistent and lead to very strong self-evaluation.
- Teaching is outstanding because leaders invest heavily in training and supporting staff. They also hold them to account for pupils' performance.
- Pupils' behaviour is extremely good. Pupils are enthusiastic about learning and want to do their best.
- The progress of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is very strong. The provision in the specialist resource base (SRB) is outstanding, as staff meet pupils' individual needs extremely well.
- Pupils greatly enjoy coming to school, where they feel safe, and this is reflected in their above-average attendance.
- The school's curriculum is vibrant and dynamic and enriched by visits and visitors. Pupils make the same very strong progress in other subjects as they do in English and mathematics.
- Children get off to an excellent start in the Nursery and Reception classes. The assessment system captures children's achievements very well and engages parents too.
- While outcomes are very high by the end of Year 6, children's very low starting points mean that they do not have time to reach and exceed national standards by the end of the Reception Year. This is especially the case in writing.
- The school's website does not capture the barriers to learning some pupils face or explain the school's strategy for overcoming them fully.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on work to improve children's writing so that the proportion of children reaching or exceeding national standards increases by the end of the Reception Year.
- Include the barriers to learning that some disadvantaged pupils face and the school's strategy for overcoming these in the pupil premium statement on the website.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The headteacher is dynamic, energetic and knows his school inside out. He has built an experienced and highly effective senior leadership team, who embrace the school's values and vision as passionately as he does.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders have worked together extremely well to improve teaching so that it is outstanding, with no weaker areas of practice. They have done this by setting up systems that are rigorous and secure, well tried and tested. Leaders have also invested heavily in high-quality professional development, ensuring that every teacher attends an extended course on becoming outstanding.
- Support for those new to teaching is excellent. Newly qualified teachers learn very quickly and soon become as effective as much more experienced teachers. They lap up the school's positive culture and 'can-do' attitudes to improving learning.
- Governors stated that the headteacher does not go in for 'quick fixes'. His systematic and strategic approach ensures that initiatives are implemented thoroughly and checked frequently to ensure that they are having maximum impact.
- A good example is the new approach to teaching mathematics in key stage 1, which is being adopted a year group at a time and is giving pupils a very secure grounding in basic concepts. The impact of this initiative is evident in the confidence of current pupils and the much higher standards among Year 1 pupils moving into Year 2.
- The school has been successful in growing its own leaders. Middle leaders speak with authority about their areas of responsibility and can demonstrate the positive impact they are having. Like all members of staff, they focus on pupils' learning to ensure that all pupils do as well as they possibly can.
- As a result of the emphasis on ensuring that no pupil falls behind, leaders have developed innovative and highly effective tracking systems that show exactly how each individual is doing in all subjects. Leaders also check the progress of key groups of pupils to ensure, for example, that disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as their peers.
- Excellent use of the pupil premium means that in most year groups, disadvantaged pupils perform as well as the others. In Year 6 last year, disadvantaged pupils did better than other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. Where the attainment of pupils is not so strong, as in Year 2 last year, this is often due to other factors such as SEN and/or disabilities. However, these pupils still make strong progress from their starting points.
- The open culture of leadership means that staff are not afraid to take risks or make mistakes. They know that they will be encouraged and supported by leaders.
- The curriculum is highly effective and tailored to pupils' needs and interests. Teaching staff monitor it very closely to ensure that it remains broad, balanced and relevant. Leaders devote much time and energy to ensuring that the curriculum is as strong as possible and equips pupils with the skills they need for a love of lifelong learning.
- The school's many disadvantaged pupils benefit from new opportunities and rich experiences enjoyed by all. For example, Year 5 pupils performed the operetta 'The

Barber of Seville' on stage at the city's Theatre Royal. Many trips and visitors, including Mayan dancing, enrich the curriculum further.

- The school spends its sports premium wisely, investing in coaches to train teachers to teach physical education (PE) and linking up with a local sports association of schools. Pupils have a wider range of opportunities to participate in sport and are becoming fitter as a result.
- There is strong management of provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, including in the SRB. Leaders ensure that support staff are trained very well.
- In this school, leaders want the very best for their pupils and will fight for it. They ensure that SEN funding is spent well and that pupils receive all the support they need, which contributes to the rapid progress made by those who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- Parents who spoke to the lead inspector were very positive about the work of the school and the progress their children make. Most of those who posted comments were also positive. One, speaking for many, said, 'The opportunities open to children here are fantastic.'
- One of the school's many strengths is the way that staff engage parents and involve them in a wide range of activities, including the reading, mathematics and story cafés and the 'Friday mile', when parents and pupils cover a mile circuit around the school grounds.

Governance of the school

- Governance is very strong. Governors think ahead and understand the issues facing the school. They keep themselves well informed through regular visits and hold leaders to account well.
- Governors consider the best use of staff and evaluate the impact of actions to drive improvement carefully. They rightly decided that it would be more efficient to take the assistant headteachers out of class so that they could share best practice and have more time to monitor the work of the school rigorously.
- Governors ensure that additional funding, such as the pupil premium, is spent wisely and makes the most impact on outcomes for pupils. They appreciate that this very thorough work is not fully reflected in the statement on the school's website.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a strong culture running through the school that ensures that all pupils are safe. Senior leaders give it their highest priority. The school has invested in a versatile electronic system that stores confidentially all relevant information and enables staff to add concerns, records of meetings and any incidents as they arise. This means that everybody contributes to keeping pupils safe and that leaders can respond immediately to new information. It also enables leaders to look for trends and to build up a complete picture of any pupil who may be vulnerable.
- The deputy headteacher represents schools on safeguarding boards with other

agencies and has assisted the local authority in making its systems tighter. School leaders hold other agencies as vigorously to account as their own staff to ensure that vulnerable pupils and their families receive all the support they need.

- Staff receive high-quality training in all aspects of safeguarding, including the 'Prevent' strategy to combat radicalisation. They know what to do if they have a concern about a child's welfare or safety. The register for recording checks on all adults who work in the school is complete and up to date. Pupils said that they feel safe in school and that they would turn to adults if they had any worries. They expressed great confidence in adults being able to sort out any problems. Parents, equally, expressed their full confidence in the way that the school keeps their children safe and responds to any concerns they may have.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- The quality of teaching is consistently very strong across the school. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and work with great enthusiasm and skill. They bring learning alive for pupils. Through probing questioning and activities designed to challenge them, teachers ensure that pupils think deeply.
- Teachers know very well what pupils can do. This enables them to plan work that moves pupils on in their understanding at a brisk pace in all subjects. Every subject leader has an excellent understanding of pupils' attainment and progress and uses this to check that pupils build the skills they need over time.
- Pupils find learning stimulating and are very engaged in lessons. Teaching assistants make a significant contribution to pupils' excellent progress because they know when to support and when to step back. They are very clear about what pupils need to learn.
- Teaching staff have high expectations of homework from the Nursery onwards. They encourage pupils to build on what they have learned in school and involve the whole family in finding out about a topic.
- The introduction of a new approach to teaching mathematics has been a success. Its greater emphasis on using practical apparatus before moving on to other ways of representing knowledge has given younger pupils a good grounding. This has built their confidence and enabled them to apply their skills to a range of problems. The same principles are now being applied in older year groups to good effect.
- Teachers make sure that the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, are given work that is difficult enough to make them really think. This ensures that they make the progress they should to reach higher standards. In one class, for example, a group of most-able pupils were multiplying fractions, a challenging task for them, while the teacher was explaining the process to other members of the class.
- Teaching is very strong in the SRB. Pupils were keen to retell a story about 'The very hungry caterpillar' with their own twist to the lead inspector and did so with great enthusiasm. Pupils receive work tailored very much to their individual needs, which enables them to excel.
- Across the school, teachers make learning enjoyable. In Year 5, for example, pupils solved division problems involving glove puppets of the school's senior leaders.
- Pupils benefit from a vibrant outdoor curriculum, including 'forest schools' and growing

their own produce to sell at a farmers' market. Regular visits to a nearby Victorian workhouse and the historic buildings of Norwich, such as the castle and Strangers' Hall, enhance their learning.

- Pupils who read to inspectors did so with verve and confidence. Less-able pupils were willing to 'have a go' using their strong knowledge of phonics. One pupil said of the author, Roald Dahl, 'He writes so clearly I can see it in my head.' Another, summing up an adventure story, said, '*The battle had truly begun*: there were ten pages in the chapter and these five words summed it up.'
- Pupils produce high-quality work in all subjects. They take pride in their 'creative learning journals', whether studying the Aztecs in Year 6 or the Stone Age in Year 3. They apply their writing skills in other subjects. For example, pupils wrote a diary entry for a person who discovered Mayan ruins. They wrote top tips for surviving in the Stone Age – these seemed to involve liberal use of spears.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils are a delight. They are friendly and extremely enthusiastic about learning. While many have faced challenges of various kinds, they are successful in overcoming the barriers they have encountered.
- Pupils who spoke to inspectors from all year groups and abilities were confident, polite and responded in full sentences (a school priority).
- In class, pupils are highly engaged, work purposefully and are self-motivated to do as well as they can.
- The school council is very active. Members have designed a reading hut outside in the playground and raised the funds to build it. Pupils also make their views known through regular year-group assemblies.
- The school has a well-established rewards system that pupils like. This promotes the values of the school and builds pupils' self-esteem.
- Pupils' excellent personal development contributes to their very strong progress and high outcomes by the time they leave the school.
- Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in school. They know that adults will sort out any problems quickly. Bullying is not considered an issue.
- The SRB rebuilds pupils' confidence and gives them the ability to learn. It prepares them very well to return to their mainstream schools. Pupils develop the academic and social skills they need to be successful.
- Close links with the local university raise pupils' aspirations and make them aware of possible future careers. They are involved in enterprise initiatives and projects with students from the university. Pupils have learned about science, including rocket science.
- Pupils keep healthy through daily exercise and participating in 29 sports clubs. These include archery, fencing, curling and climbing.

- Around the school, individual pupils' achievements are celebrated, both from their classes and from home. The library area is a vibrant place and promotes reading extremely well. Pupils make good use of it.
- Pupils know about British values and how these link to the school's values. They held hustings and voted for house captains. The school council does not shy away from its responsibilities, coming up with top tips for improving toilets, for example.
- The school celebrates its diversity, with parents sharing information about their faiths and cultures. Pupils visit places of worship, although some are rather hazy about what different faiths believe.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils show respect for one another and support each other in class. One boy spontaneously pointed out to a girl how she could improve her work as they were discussing the rules around writing speech.
- Pupils respond positively to the school's behaviour policy and mainly regulate their excellent behaviour themselves. At playtimes and lunchtimes they play sensibly. Attractions such as the bubble machine and the outdoor gym provide endless fun. Older pupils make a point of supporting the younger ones.
- The behaviour of pupils in the SRB is excellent because they are so interested in learning and benefit from the high levels of support from highly skilled adults.
- Lunch is very well organised, with many more pupils enjoying a school dinner now that the school has taken on new caterers. It makes for a calm and sociable occasion.
- Attendance has been consistently well above average for the past three years, with persistent absence at half the national levels. Compelling rewards, such as golden tickets and a trip to the pantomime, encourage pupils to attend very well. They also just enjoy coming to school.
- The breakfast club is well run and gives pupils a healthy start to the day. This also promotes good attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- From very low starting points, often with little grasp of language, children make rapid progress in the early years and continue to achieve exceptionally well as they grow older. By the time pupils leave the school, standards are very high. In 2017, the combined score for Year 6 pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was well above average.
- Pupils have benefited from stable and high-quality teaching, which has meant that they achieve well year after year, with no setbacks to put them at a disadvantage. Where there are fluctuations in the performance of different year groups, these are invariably down to particular circumstances among the pupils or as a result of high mobility. For example, several most able pupils in Year 2 left during the year and were replaced by pupils with considerable needs. Consequently, the results were not as high as in the previous year, but these pupils had, nonetheless, made considerable progress from their starting points when they joined the school. The large proportion of pupils in Year

2 last year who had SEN and/or disabilities made strong progress from their starting points.

- In 2017, Year 6 pupils made very strong progress in reading and writing, building on the success of their predecessors in 2016. Progress in mathematics, while good, was not quite so strong because eight pupils missed the higher standard by one mark. Leaders have taken steps to increase pupils' stamina this year. They have also traced back where weaker areas were first taught and ensured that these are given particular prominence when pupils first encounter them. For example, pupils did not do so well in fractions last year, and this is a focus when it is taught earlier in key stage 2.
- The school's own performance information shows that all current year groups make at least good progress and often better. They are set challenging targets that would place them among the top 5% of pupils for attainment. In all year groups, pupils are on track to meet these ambitious targets.
- Leaders analyse the progress of different groups of pupils closely. There are no significant differences. In particular, disadvantaged pupils do very well.
- Most-able pupils make the progress they should because teachers make sure that they receive work that is sufficiently challenging. Robust systems show the progress and attainment of these and all groups of pupils very clearly. Teachers are quick to identify any pupils at risk of falling behind so that they can be supported to catch up.
- Books show that pupils make very strong progress over time. Their work is neatly presented and of high quality in all subjects. Skills are taught across the curriculum. For example, in PE pupils learn about muscle groups and the impact of exercise.
- Writing has improved considerably with the introduction of an approach that focuses on high-quality texts and retelling stories before adapting them. A clear sequence of work enables pupils to see the progress they make from their original attempt to their final version, which builds their confidence.
- Outcomes for pupils in the SRB are high as a result of very strong teaching and the fact that the provision meets pupils' individual needs very well. Pupils make excellent progress over the two terms they spend in the base and are prepared very well to return to their home schools.
- The progress of other pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is equally strong. The leader of the SRB manages their support as well.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- Children learn rapidly in a stimulating environment where activities are purposeful and enjoyable. They settle quickly into the Nursery and Reception classes and cooperate well. Their behaviour is excellent.
- Highly skilled teaching staff ensure that they give children a wide range of opportunities to develop in all areas of learning from their very low starting points. Starting points in Reception do not reflect the very good progress children make in the Nursery, because half of them come from elsewhere.
- Teaching staff use the outdoors well to reinforce children's learning.
- As many children join the Nursery and Reception classes with weak skills in speech and

language, teaching staff take every opportunity to extend their vocabulary through conversation to develop their basic understanding.

- Teaching staff use the school's approaches to teaching phonics and mathematics to ensure that children are well equipped for learning in Year 1. Children make excellent progress from their different starting points in Reception, but because these are so low for a significant proportion, they do not all reach national standards, especially in writing, by the end of the year.
- Leaders are adapting the provision to extend children even more, with a particular emphasis on developing their writing skills. This is having a positive impact for the current year group, where boys, for example, were observed spontaneously making marks and showing an interest in writing because of the many opportunities they have to practise their skills. Leaders have rightly identified that more work is needed to develop children's writing skills so that their performance improves to equal that in reading and mathematics.
- Children are taking on board the different approaches staff adopt to promote their learning. Indeed, some children were observed role playing a class introduction and using the whiteboard to teach the days of the week to their friends!
- Early years staff use the early years pupil premium very well to ensure that disadvantaged children achieve as well as their peers.
- Children enjoy the stimulating role-play areas that are based on class themes. For example, in the Nursery, children played out the story of 'Goldilocks' in the three bears' house. In Reception, children retold the story of 'The owl babies' in the comfort of the owls' nest.
- Visits and visitors fire children's imaginations. Reception children were inspired to write sentences by the visit of an enormous great grey owl.
- Teaching staff use the early years' electronic assessment system extremely effectively to record children's achievements, including videoing them at work and play. Parents enjoy accessing their child's record at home and often contribute their own examples to complete the picture of children's progress.
- Parents are very positive about the work of the early years. They said that their children were taught very well and found staff accessible. Parents, rightly, have every confidence that their children are kept safe and cared for very well.

School details

Unique reference number	134958
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10036146

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	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	465
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jessica Wing
Headteacher	Stuart Allen
Telephone number	01603 425186
Website	www.milecrossprimary.co.uk
Email address	office@milecrossprimary.norfolk.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	5–6 February 2014

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about the barriers to learning for disadvantaged pupils on its website.
- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average.
- Almost two thirds of pupils are supported by the pupil premium, which is very high.
- The proportion of children who receive support for their SEN and/or disabilities is broadly average.
- The school has specially resourced provision for up to eight pupils aged five to seven who have cognitive difficulties.
- The school runs a breakfast club.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum

expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited all classrooms. Many visits were conducted jointly with the headteacher, deputy headteacher or other senior leaders.
- Inspectors looked in detail at work in pupils' books and listened to pupils read.
- The inspectors observed pupils in the breakfast club, at breaktime and at lunchtime, and as they moved around the school.
- The inspection team held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, other leaders, teachers, other staff and governors. The lead inspector also held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- The views of 26 parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into account, as well as 25 free-text responses. The lead inspector also held informal discussions with parents in the playground at the start of the inspection.
- The inspectors looked at a range of school documents and information. These included the school's development plan, checks on the quality of teaching, curriculum plans, minutes of meetings of the governing body and children's behaviour and attendance records. The inspectors also looked at arrangements for safeguarding procedures, including relevant records.

Inspection team

Nick Butt, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Andrew Maher	Ofsted Inspector
Robert Greatrex	Ofsted Inspector
Richard Hopkins	Ofsted Inspector
David Milligan	Ofsted Inspector

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