Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Dereham, Toftwood Community Junior School

38 Westfield Road, Dereham, Norfolk NR19 1JB

Inspection dates: 20 and 21 May 2025

Outcome

Dereham, Toftwood Community Junior School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending this calm and welcoming school. They speak proudly about their learning and the way staff help them to succeed. Familiar routines support pupils to settle quickly and make the most of each day. Clear expectations help pupils to focus, behave and show kindness to one another. Pupils can share their thoughts, knowing that staff will listen, support and provide help when they need it.

Teachers make lessons interesting. They challenge and support pupils, providing opportunities for practice so that pupils are more likely to remember. As a result, pupils' fluency in a range of subjects builds over time, preparing them well for the next stage of learning. Pupils enjoy choosing books, reading with friends and talking about stories. Pupils know that teachers want the best for them. This gives them the confidence to try hard and keep going.

A range of clubs and trips augment the curriculum and are available to pupils. These include gardening, computing and ukulele. These support pupils to develop new talents and interests. Through assemblies, curriculum topics and thoughtful discussion, pupils learn about different perspectives and beliefs. This develops their understanding of the wider world and each other.

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

The school has built a well-sequenced curriculum that gives pupils the knowledge they need to succeed. Lessons ensure that pupils revisit and build on key concepts. Pupils develop secure knowledge and practical skills over time. Curriculum leaders work well

together across the different subjects. However, in a small number of subjects, tasks occasionally lack depth or clarity. As a result, older pupils do not always produce work that reflects their growing understanding or enables them to explain their thinking in detail.

Teaching is clear and focused. Teachers explain ideas well and use questioning effectively to check pupils' understanding. They plan activities that help pupils to apply what they know. As a result, pupils become proficient in a range of important skills. Their artwork, for example, is detailed, colourful and creative. The school has reintroduced a focus on writing, with an emphasis on sentence structure and spelling. While this is beginning to be effective, the approach is not yet embedded. As a result, some pupils' written work varies in accuracy.

Reading is prioritised throughout the school. Pupils who need to catch up receive targeted support to develop fluency, confidence and comprehension. Staff model reading aloud with fluency and expression. Classrooms celebrate books and adults encourage pupils to read for pleasure. As a result, pupils read with increasing confidence and understanding.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is thoughtful and effective. Pupils' individual education plans link closely to pupils' everyday classroom experiences. Therefore, staff know what to focus on and how best to support each pupil. Staff have received training in how to meet a range of pupils' needs and adjust their approach seamlessly. As a result, pupils with SEND feel and are included, valued and able to achieve well.

Pupils behave well and understand what is expected of them. Staff apply routines consistently, and pupils respond with maturity and respect. Regular training helps staff to manage behaviour fairly and with care. Staff model positive relationships. As a result, pupils are settled and able to learn. Attendance is a priority. The school works closely with families to overcome barriers to pupils' regular attendance.

The school's personal development offer is rich, varied and thoughtful. Pupils access a range of activities that develop their confidence, resilience and sense of belonging. They learn about British values, healthy relationships, different beliefs and diverse families. They take pride in helping others. Pupils appreciate the school's carefully planned support that builds emotional literacy and confidence.

Governors understand the school's context and, with leaders, have a clear focus on what pupils need. They ensure that staff feel supported. Leaders' decisions reflect the needs of the community and lead to positive experiences for pupils. Leaders also work closely with families, offering practical support and guidance through the school's wider pastoral systems. This approach helps build trust and ensures that families feel part of their children's journey through school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Occasionally, older pupils' written work lacks accuracy and consistency. This means the quality of older pupils' writing does not always reflect their understanding. The school should embed its renewed approach to writing so that pupils write with greater confidence, accuracy and control.
- In a small number of subjects, some tasks lack depth or clarity. As a result, some pupils do not produce work that reflects their growing understanding or enables them to explain their thinking in detail. The school should raise its expectations for task design in these subjects to support pupils in producing more deeper, developed and purposeful responses.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in January 2020.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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.

Further information

You can search for published performance information about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the definition of children in need of help and protection; pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's pupil premium funding (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	120987
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10366650
Type of school	Junior
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	330
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Jill Willson
Headteacher	Joanna Pedlow (Executive headteacher)
Website	www.toftwoodfederation.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	21 and 22 January 2020, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Dereham, Toftwood Junior School is federated with Toftwood Infant School and shares a governing body. The executive headteacher leads both the junior and infant schools.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- The inspector discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held a discussion with members of the local governing body, including the chair of governors.
- The inspector visited a sample of lessons in a range of subjects; spoke with pupils about their learning experiences and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour during breaktimes and in lessons.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspector reviewed a wide range of documents, including leaders' plans for improvement.
- The inspector met with staff and considered their views expressed through Ofsted's staff survey. The inspector also considered the views shared through Ofsted Parent View and Ofsted's pupil survey, including the free-text responses.

Inspection team

Hannah Stoten, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector

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