

Colby Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	120798
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	380104
Inspection dates	26–27 January 2012
Lead inspector	Nick Butt

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	138
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Clarke
Headteacher	Christine Mead
Date of previous school inspection	26 March 2009
School address	Bridge Road Colby NR11 7EA
Telephone number	01263 733381
Fax number	01263 731300
Email address	office@colby.norfolk.sch.uk

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Nick Butt

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed eight lessons taught by five teachers; meetings were held informally with parents, carers and pupils, three members of the governing body, including the Chair, and a wide range of staff. The inspector took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation including self-evaluation documents, strategic plans and other development plans. The inspector scrutinised 99 questionnaires returned by parents and carers and those returned by staff and pupils.

Information about the school

Colby is much smaller than the average-sized primary school. Pupils are taught in mixed-age classes. Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with disabilities or special educational needs is broadly average. The school meets the current government floor standards.

Since the last inspection there has been considerable development of the grounds as a learning resource including the construction of an outdoor classroom. The school runs a breakfast club each day. It has the Green Flag for excellence in ecology.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- Colby is a good school. Pupils thrive in a happy, caring environment and love coming to school. As a governor said, 'It's not just a school it's a family.'
- The headteacher's drive and determination make her highly ambitious for the school, a vision wholeheartedly supported by staff.
- Standards are above average by the end of Key Stage 2 and pupils make good progress from starting points generally at expected levels of attainment.
- All groups of pupils achieve well because teachers make learning enjoyable and know pupils very well as individuals, planning work that matches their knowledge and understanding.
- Evaluations of the progress of pupils with special educational needs towards their individual targets vary in quality.
- Teaching is good. Children make a strong start in Reception because they find learning extremely enjoyable and are given a wide range of interesting and exciting activities to do. Elsewhere in the school teachers use questioning well to extend pupils' thinking.
- Just occasionally the pace of lessons slows if the introduction goes on too long.
- Marking is generally good, but there is some inconsistency in how frequently teachers make comments to show pupils how to improve their work.
- Behaviour and safety are outstanding. The vast majority of parents and carers and almost all pupils say that typically behaviour is very good, and any rare lapses are dealt with promptly and well by staff.
- The school is led and managed effectively. It has made good progress since its last inspection, with higher standards, better teaching and areas identified as weaknesses last time have now become strengths, such as the use of the outdoors.
- The curriculum gives pupils memorable experiences through its creative and imaginative delivery and contributes well to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make all teaching consistently good or better by:

- maintaining a brisk pace throughout each lesson
 - using evaluative comments in marking more frequently to show pupils how to improve their work.
- Strengthen the evaluation of individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs by:
- identifying significant changes in their performance, or reasons for lack of change
 - using such information to shape next steps in pupils' learning more precisely.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning, rise to a challenge and thoroughly enjoy contributing in class. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 discussed at length how they had solved a mathematical shape problem and how they knew they had exhausted all other possible solutions. The school takes every opportunity to promote pupils' learning outdoors in its spacious and well-resourced grounds, with groups often working outside to practise their numeracy or literacy skills. During the inspection pupils were collecting data about bird species they could identify. Pupils say they find these activities enjoyable and staff note the benefits in developing academic skills and in their social development too.

Standards in reading are above average by the end of Key Stage 1 because pupils receive good teaching in recognising words through a systematic approach and are encouraged to practise both at school and at home. A programme of guided reading develops more advanced reading skills in Key Stage 2 so that pupils build on their knowledge and understanding and many are at significantly above average levels by the time they leave. Parents and carers comment favourably on the good progress their children make and are justifiably proud of their achievements.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress from their starting points, particularly in developing early literacy and numeracy skills. Exciting themes such as 'dinosaurs' inspire them and motivate them. Pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs receive skilful support from teaching assistants and benefit from activities being tailored to meet their needs. While they make good progress, sometimes the analysis of their performance lacks rigour, with insufficient emphasis on adapting provision still further to help them meet challenging targets. Because all groups achieve well there are no gaps in performance.

Quality of teaching

Teachers have high expectations of pupils, and very positive relationships mean pupils aspire to meet them. This creates a purposeful and productive learning environment. Teachers carefully tailor the planned curriculum to meet pupils' interests and to challenge them. Year 3 and 4 pupils very much enjoyed making

paper darts as part of some work on giving instructions, and then had to teach a partner the steps required to replicate the model. This required a high degree of precision. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together as partners in learning, often swapping roles for particular activities, or combining together in role play. This was successfully accomplished when the teacher and teaching assistant became Harry Potter and Hermione with Year 4 and 5 pupils, answering questions about a particular monster they had encountered. This helped pupils to create some lively descriptive writing. While most lessons are conducted at a brisk pace, learning slows when the teacher spends too long briefing the whole class, because pupils do not have enough time to devote to their independent group tasks.

Children in the Reception class cheer when it is time to undertake learning activities; they are so keen to participate. Their disco-dancing dictation left everybody in a happy exhausted heap, but with correctly spelt well-formed lettering on their whiteboards pointing to the good learning that was going on alongside all the excitement. Parents and carers are rightly delighted with the good quality of the teaching, and their children's enjoyment of it. One, speaking for many, said, 'My children look forward to going to school every day and are thoroughly happy with their teachers.' Their view is shared by the pupils themselves, who say that teachers 'try to make lessons fun and suit your needs'. Teaching has a positive impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Memorable moments, like when a 'getaway car' was found abandoned in the school grounds, or when an empty dinosaur egg was found in the Reception class, cause pupils to wonder and inspire them to make new links in their learning.

Assessment is good, and teachers pitch their planning at the right level for pupils' prior attainment. However, their marking of books does not always explain to pupils what they have done well and how they can improve.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils say there is no bullying but feel extremely well-equipped to oppose it, should it arise, because of the thorough training they have received. A very few parents and carers recalled incidents of disruptive behaviour that had affected their children, but the overwhelming majority speak highly of pupils' conduct. They overwhelmingly believe that the school is a safe and nurturing environment for their children, a view again supported by pupils. Staff are extremely consistent in how they apply the school's behaviour policy, and manage pupils who have difficulties very well indeed. Older pupils help the younger ones, and they all enjoy looking after the school's menagerie of pets, including guinea pigs, hens and an aviary of show birds, for which they frequently win rosettes. Pupils in the breakfast club socialise well together and have an enjoyable and healthy start to their day. Pupils have an excellent understanding of safety, and look out for one another, telling adults if they have any concerns. They have an immense enjoyment of school; this is reflected in their above average attendance.

Leadership and management

The school challenges more-able pupils well, something that was an issue at the time of the last inspection. Where any group is considered at possible risk of falling behind

something is done about it swiftly. For example, a group of higher-attaining girls was challenged to produce a school newspaper to enable them to practise the skills required for Level 5 writing. In this way the school ensures it promotes equality of opportunity well. It tackles discrimination successfully, ensuring that all pupils are valued equally, and giving them all opportunities to take on leadership roles within their classes and the school as a whole. The school's eco-committee organised a very successful eco-week at the time of the inspection, with recycling competitions and waste-free lunches.

Regular monitoring by senior leaders and middle managers ensures that they gather an accurate picture of the school's performance, which is reflected in well-written strategic plans. All staff contribute to school self-evaluation. The school's motto that 'everyone learns, everyone leads' applies to staff as well as pupils, and teaching assistants in particular take on a wide range of responsibilities and the lead in certain curriculum areas, such as computing, art and design and religious education. Staff speak with enthusiasm about their contribution to the school and value the opportunities for professional development that leaders make available. This, combined with clear guidance for improvement, has led to an increase in the proportion of good or better teaching, and rising standards, strengthening the school's capacity for sustaining further improvement. The governing body knows the school well and provides a good level of support and challenge. Members of the governing body attend school council meetings and keep in close touch with parents and carers and local organisations. They ensure that safeguarding arrangements are secure, contributing to pupils' and parents' and carers' confidence in the school as a safe environment. The school is particularly successful at engaging with parents and carers, who support their children's learning well and raise large sums for their benefit, such as to build raised beds in the garden and refurbish the library. Parents and carers feel well-informed and are excellent ambassadors for the school.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and has outstanding elements that make a distinctive contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In particular, outdoor learning inspires pupils and provides a wide range of opportunities they could not experience indoors. For example, pupils decided to build a pizza oven, which they designed themselves as a giant's face, with his gaping mouth forming the aperture for the pizzas. They dug the clay themselves and then used traditional techniques to create a cob finish. As part of their studies on Jewish culture, pupils built 'sukkahs' outside, and ate a meal in them, experiencing the tradition for themselves. Pupils benefit from regular visits by overseas teachers and learn about their countries and cultures prior to their arrival, so that they are well-informed and can ask them questions. Recent delegations have come from Spain and Hong Kong.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



30 January 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Colby Primary School, Colby, NR11 7EA

Thank you for making me welcome when I visited your school recently and for sharing your views with me, both in person and by filling in questionnaires. I agree with you that Colby is a good school and enables you to achieve well. Here are some of its strengths.

- Teaching is good and helps you to reach standards that are above average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Your behaviour is excellent, and you are caring towards one another.
- The children in Reception get off to a good start.
- You have an outstanding understanding of how to keep safe.
- You told me how much you enjoy school and this is reflected in your good attendance.
- You have plenty of opportunities to learn outside and do a wide range of interesting activities.
- The headteacher and staff do all they can to make school a happy and exciting place for you to learn.

In order for the school to get even better I have asked your teachers to:

- make sure you have enough time to complete your independent tasks in lessons
- explain more often what you are doing well and how you can improve when marking your work
- check carefully how those of you who find work difficult are doing and set targets which are going to help you to improve at an even faster rate.

Thank you once again for your help. You can all help by reading your teachers' comments in your books and responding to them.

Yours sincerely

Nick Butt
Lead inspector

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