

Duchy of Lancaster Methwold CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121046
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	358912
Inspection dates	27–28 January 2011
Reporting 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	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	94
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ann Aunins
Headteacher	Lynne Stabler
Date of previous school inspection	26 February 2008
School address	Hythe Road Methwold, Thetford IP26 4PP
Telephone number	01366 728280
Fax number	01366 728280
Email address	office@methwold-pri.norfolk.sch.uk

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M2 7LA

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspection team visited 12 lessons and observed four teachers and a sports' coach. Inspectors held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at a selection of documentation including planning, evidence of monitoring, such as lesson observations, and analyses of pupils' work and other assessment information. The inspection team scrutinised inspection questionnaires returned by 30 parents and carers, and by staff and pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Whether the school sufficiently challenges all pupils to make good progress.
- To what extent pupils in this small rural school are aware of the diversity of cultures and traditions that exist in the United Kingdom and globally.
- The impact of the headteacher's heavy teaching commitment on the pace of school improvement.

Information about the school

Duchy of Lancaster Methwold CofE Primary is a small school. All pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The school has National Healthy Schools status and the Activemark award. For the past three years the school has worked collaboratively with Creative Partnerships to enrich pupils' learning experiences.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

This is a satisfactory school. The headteacher has built an enthusiastic staff team who are growing in confidence and beginning to use data effectively to measure pupils' progress. Standards of attainment are broadly average. Pupils make satisfactory progress, although there are variations between classes. The match of tasks to pupils' abilities is not always precise enough to give sufficient challenge. Parents and carers are generally positive about the school, and pupils enjoy coming, with consistently good attendance. A parent commented, 'My daughter has settled in very easily and skips into school every day and is really happy. Thank you to the school for making her feel so welcome.'

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. The classrooms are attractive, with good quality informative displays of learning points and pupils' work. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and respond well when the teaching challenges them. At times the pace of lessons can wane, especially if the teacher spends too much time talking. Pupils' work is neatly presented and they take pride in their progress. The quality of marking and target-setting is inconsistent, so that not all pupils are clear about what they have to do to succeed in their learning. Pupils have taken part in some innovative curriculum development with Creative Partnerships, and this has contributed well to their enjoyment of school. The school provides good pastoral care, working especially well with pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable.

Pupils say they feel safe at school, a view backed by all parents and carers who returned questionnaires. Safeguarding arrangements are also good. Pupils have a good understanding of how to manage risk, including keeping safe when using the internet. The award of Activemark and National Healthy Schools status point towards pupils' good appreciation of living healthily. Pupils run their own healthy tuck shop in break times and tend an allotment and keep chickens. They take part in village events and attend local church services. Pupils take responsibility as playground leaders and as members of the school council. Pupils learn about other faiths and traditions through the curriculum, but have limited experience of the diversity of other cultures, nationally and globally. They leave the school with the expected basic skills and are prepared satisfactorily for the next stage of their education.

The impact of leadership and management on driving forward improvement is satisfactory. This year it has slowed somewhat because of the headteacher's heavy teaching responsibility. The school's self-evaluation is generally accurate, although there is unevenness in how thoroughly monitoring is carried out by school leaders. It has not been possible to maintain the level of robust monitoring required to accelerate progress. A programme of peer observations is creating opportunities for professional discussion around aspects of teaching and learning. The school's systems for tracking pupils' progress have been updated and are producing more accessible data, although there have

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been issues with the reliability of assessments in the past. The governing body has improved its monitoring procedures to make them systematic and rigorous and this is enabling governors to offer a good level of challenge. Members of the governing body are less confident in using data to check on the school's performance and to hold the staff to account for pupils' progress. Steady improvement since the last inspection, with a staff willing to embrace change, gives the school a satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure all pupils make consistently good progress by:
 - matching tasks to suit pupils' abilities more closely
 - maintaining a brisk pace in lessons
 - using marking and target-setting effectively to show all pupils how to improve and succeed in learning.
- Increase the rate of school improvement by:
 - ensuring the headteacher has enough time to carry out her leadership and management responsibilities with sufficient rigour
 - making the monitoring of provision more robust, especially through analysing data to hold all staff accountable for pupils' progress.
- Build on work to promote community cohesion at a national and global level.
- Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Children join the Reception class with skills and abilities generally in line, although they are sometimes below expectations for their age in language development. All pupils achieve satisfactorily, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. There is appropriate support for pupils who find learning difficult. In Key Stages 1 and 2, there are no significant differences in the performance of groups of pupils. Pupils enjoy their learning. For example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 relished designing posters warning about the threat of Mr Wolf to little pigs everywhere. They were delighted to receive letters of thanks from Mrs Pig the next morning. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 took care in writing stories that they could tell the younger children during a forthcoming storytelling week and observed the conventions of fairy tales assiduously. Pupils in Key Stage 2 say they occasionally find learning boring when it is too easy. For example, pupils are sometimes all asked to work on the same page in a mathematics text book, irrespective of their level of ability, with more-able pupils being asked to do an extra page when they have finished.

Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory. It is often good, although pupils can be distracted if the pace of learning slows and teaching does not engage them sufficiently. Pupils have contributed to Methwold in Bloom and displayed their own produce at the Royal Norfolk Show. The range of clubs open to pupils is fairly limited. Pupils learn about values, such as

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peace, through assemblies and have a strong sense of right and wrong. Most pupils are sympathetic to those who have particular difficulties, although a few show immaturity by not responding sensitively when others struggle in class.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Teachers usually share the lesson objective with pupils and sometimes set criteria by which they will know if they have met it successfully. While there are some good elements to the teaching, much is satisfactory. When learning slows, this is often due to a lack of pace, with teachers spending too much time talking and not giving pupils sufficient time to engage in independent activities. During the most successful lessons, the classroom is well organised and pupils engage in a variety of interesting tasks, working independently at an appropriate level of challenge. The quality of assessment varies. While there are often helpful comments to show pupils the next steps in their writing, this good practice is not consistent in every class. Targets are not always linked to pupils' levels of attainment and can be quite narrow, focusing only on handwriting, for example. The curriculum provides a satisfactory range of learning experiences for pupils, although these are enhanced when projects are undertaken with Creative Partnerships. Pupils have made their own films and presented puppet shows, and have made improvements to the environment outside. They go on a good range of trips to places of interest such as Ely Cathedral. Pupils have the opportunity to practise their literacy skills across a range of subjects. For example, they

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recorded themselves reading their accounts of their lives as Victorian children. However, there are fewer opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum.

The school works hard to raise pupils' aspirations through the good pastoral care and guidance it provides. It contributes well to pupils' personal and social development, working especially successfully with those pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. The school promotes above average attendance well. The provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is satisfactory. Staff are at an early stage of measuring the impact of some of their interventions on pupils' progress.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

There is a clear vision for school development that is shared by staff, and they are keen to drive forward improvements. Staffing issues have meant that the headteacher has taken on a heavy teaching commitment which reduces the amount of time available for the kind of rigorous monitoring necessary to keep up the pace of change. Part of this role is taken by the governing body, whose monitoring activity is very thorough but governors' inexperience in handling data limits the level of challenge they can provide around pupils' attainment and progress. Their overall impact is satisfactory. The school has well written strategic plans which set out what needs to be done and how.

Good partnerships with a range of agencies contribute to the good pastoral care, the good curriculum enrichment and pupils' enjoyment of school. The local cluster of schools runs a readers' group for gifted and talented pupils, which challenges them and enables them to meet pupils from other schools. The local sports partnership gives pupils opportunities to try out a range of sports. The collaboration with Creative Partnerships has given pupils memorable experiences working with artists and designers. The school promotes equality satisfactorily, ensuring pupils are free from harassment and that all groups and individuals are included well. However, there remains some inconsistency in aspects of the provision. Safeguarding arrangements are good, with all policies and procedures in place, training up to date, and meticulous records kept. Staff are ever-vigilant about ensuring all pupils are safe, and this is reflected in pupils' views and the confidence expressed by parents and carers. The school promotes community cohesion satisfactorily, reaching out well to its local community, and establishing a link with a school in Malawi. However, pupils' appreciation of the full range of traditions and cultures represented in the United Kingdom and globally is at an early stage.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children settle quickly into the Reception class because they are well cared for and routines are clearly established. The quality of provision is satisfactory, enabling children to make satisfactory progress. There is some variation between how boys and girls perform, particularly in language development, with girls doing better. Children have an interesting range of activities to choose from, such as making their own hot air balloons. They have free access to a spacious and well-equipped outside area. Occasionally, opportunities are missed to develop children's language through sensitive adult intervention. There is good leadership and management, which has brought about improvements to the provision, particularly outside, and built a strong team who work well together. Through careful self-evaluation, staff know the strengths and weaknesses of the provision, and are working hard to secure further improvement.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account: Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

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Views of parents and carers

An average proportion of parents and carers returned questionnaires. Parents and carers are generally supportive of the school's work. All those who responded said they felt their children were safe at school, that the school helped them to support their children's education, and that the school promoted healthy lifestyles well. Some parents and carers queried how well the school took care of their children's particular needs, and how much their views were taken into account. Inspectors found some inconsistencies in the extent to which the school catered for pupils' differing academic needs. The inspection found that the school takes sufficient account of parents' and carers' views, and offers parents and carers many opportunities to become involved in the life of the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Duchy of Lancaster Methwold CoFE Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 30 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 94 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	14	47	14	47	2	7	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	13	43	17	57	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	8	27	17	57	2	7	2	7
My child is making enough progress at this school	9	30	18	60	3	10	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	11	37	15	50	2	7	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	6	20	22	73	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	8	27	21	70	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	7	23	12	40	3	10	2	7
The school meets my child's particular needs	9	30	15	50	6	20	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	6	20	15	50	3	10	2	7
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	5	17	13	43	4	13	2	7
The school is led and managed effectively	8	27	17	57	3	10	1	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	10	33	17	57	3	10	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



31 January 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Duchy of Lancaster Methwold CofE Primary School, Thetford, IP26 4PP

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited your school, and for sharing your views. Your school gives you a satisfactory education. You said you feel safe at school and enjoy your learning, although sometimes the work can be too easy. These are some of the school's strengths.

The school looks after you well and makes sure you are safe.

You have a good understanding of how to keep healthy.

Your attendance is good.

You go on plenty of visits, although you told us you would like a few more clubs.

You enjoyed working with the adults from Creative Partnerships in making films and putting on puppet shows.

For your school to get even better we have recommended the following things.

We have asked your teachers to make sure the work challenges you and is not too easy.

We have asked your teachers to make sure you all know how to improve your work and know what your targets are.

We have asked the governing body to make sure that your headteacher has enough time to check how things are getting on in the school.

We have asked the school to give you more experience of what life is like for people from different cultures and traditions to yours.

You all can help by telling your teachers what you enjoy about learning and continuing to do your best.

Yours sincerely

Nick Butt

Lead Inspector

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