

Exning Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124544
Local Authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	359696
Inspection dates	3–4 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Nick Butt

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	101
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Whitelaw
Headteacher	James Clark
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2007
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Age group	4–9
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspection team visited 12 lessons and observed four class teachers and other members of staff. 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 72 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.

- The extent to which marking sets high expectations of pupils' work and shows them how to improve.
- How consistently good teaching is in driving forward pupils' learning.
- The impact of the new headteacher in building an effective staff team.

Information about the school

Exning is small compared to other primary schools. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. They are taught in single year classes in Reception and Key Stage 1 and in a mixed year class in Key Stage 2. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average, including those with a statement of special educational needs. The school has the Activemark award and National Healthy Schools status. A daily breakfast club and an after-school club are run by the school. The headteacher has been in post since September 2010, but was acting headteacher for a period of time before that.

The school is set to keep its present Year 4 pupils until they leave Year 6 as part of the reorganisation of Suffolk schools into a two tier education system. There is a pre-school on the site that is privately run and subject to a separate inspection.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Exning is a good school. The headteacher has brought together a strong and committed staff team and provided clear leadership. This has resulted in standards of attainment rising to above average in reading, writing and mathematics, and teaching improving to become consistently good. Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding; children enjoy a rich diet of stimulating activities that fire their natural curiosity and ensure they make accelerated progress in their learning. Extremely thorough assessment means that staff build on their knowledge of the Reception children to plan tasks that excite and interest them, providing a degree of fine tuning not always evident in other year groups. Parents and carers are very positive about the school, and value its family ethos. One, reflecting the views of many, said, 'The teachers are so approachable and nothing is too much trouble.'

Pupils' behaviour is outstanding in and around the school. This is due to the interesting and engaging curriculum that makes them want to learn, and to the consistent application of the school's behaviour policy. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle, reflected in the award of Activemark and National Healthy Schools status. There is high participation in the wide range of sports clubs available, and pupils have helped to influence the menus for school meals. Their great enjoyment of school is evidenced by their outstanding attendance, which has been improving rapidly over time. Pupils talk with enthusiasm about the many different subjects they enjoy, and of taking part in practical activities and working in teams. One said, 'I absolutely love the art activities', another 'I'm very into the Ancient Greeks.'

Teaching and learning are good with tasks matched well to pupils' abilities and a high level of challenge. Teachers use resources well and keep pupils actively engaged. Target setting has improved since the last inspection and is now good, with almost all pupils aware of their targets and able to talk about the steps they should take to reach them. Marking in books shows pupils how to improve but they do not always respond to questions or suggestions. Pupils take pride in the work that is produced for the high quality displays in classrooms and the public areas of the school, but work in books is often untidy, particularly that relating to topics. The pastoral care of pupils is outstanding, especially for those pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Pupils are known as individuals and the school meets their needs extremely well.

Self-evaluation is effective, giving leaders and managers an accurate view of the school's strengths and what needs to improve. The headteacher ensures that rigorous systems of monitoring are carried out, and drives forward improvement well. He is supported well by the governing body which monitors specific aspects of the school development plan. As a result of these initiatives, the school has made good progress since its last inspection and is well-placed to continue to improve at a rapid pace.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop the effectiveness of marking by:
 - ensuring all pupils take a pride in the presentation of their written work, especially in topic books
 - giving opportunities for pupils to respond to questions and suggestions posed by their teacher.
- Share aspects of the outstanding practice in the Early Years Foundation Stage with other year groups so that:
 - the quality of teaching moves from consistently good to outstanding throughout the school
 - the use of data and assessment gives teachers greater insight into pupils' progress and enables them to plan tasks that accelerate learning further.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils love coming to school and enter into learning with real commitment. They achieve well because the pace of lessons is brisk, and teachers explain clearly what they need to learn. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 were engrossed in weighing different objects, working cooperatively, some adding weights to scales and others reading dials. In assembly, Year 1 pupils proudly displayed their enormous dragon by marching around the hall. Back in class, they took great pleasure in painting Chinese letters, making lanterns and sampling Chinese food. All groups of pupils achieve well. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because support is targeted well. Last year, girls did not do so well in mathematics, but this gap has closed and now they are performing as well as the boys.

Almost all pupils say in surveys that they feel safe at school, and the vast majority of parents and carers agree. The junior road safety officers plan an annual safety day, assigning tasks to the adults and organising everybody in a very safe way. The school council fulfils its role well, and pupils comment on how learning can be improved, as well as the school environment. The school newspaper group produces a termly newsletter of news and views. Pupils help the younger children, and get out and about in the community, visiting businesses and supporting the elderly. Grandparent lunches are held every term, for which there is a great demand. Singing is a strength of the school, culminating each year in a summer singing spectacular, to which families bring picnics. Pupils get on very well together and show consideration for one another. Their cultural development is promoted well through the curriculum, through a range of visitors from different faith backgrounds, and through sharing a residential visit with pupils from different cultures and traditions to their own.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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 make good use of the extensive school grounds for a wide range of sporting, cultural, scientific and environmental purposes. Year 1 pupils took great interest in watching the cars speed past the school gates and the occasional race horse canter by. Learning objectives are always shared with pupils, and they are given guidance as to how they can succeed in lessons. Increasingly, they are playing a role in shaping these criteria themselves. There are good opportunities for pupils to learn independently and show initiative, although they have little experience of developing business enterprise skills. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and move learning on at a good pace. However, pupils' work is not neatly presented, in books. There are many opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy, numeracy and computer skills across a range of subjects, for example in writing myths as ancient Greeks. The curriculum is creative and relevant, and contributes well to pupils' good personal development and their great enjoyment of school. A recent topic on the horse allowed pupils to pursue their equine interests with quiet equanimity.

There are excellent links with the local pre-school so that transition runs very smoothly when children join the school, and with the middle schools to which pupils used to transfer. The provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is good, with teaching assistants making a valuable contribution to their well-being and academic progress. The school promotes attendance extremely effectively, having seen absence fall

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sharply in the past year. The school's excellent caring ethos means that pupils settle quickly when they start, and that pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable play are able to play a full part in the life of the school. The very well run breakfast club and after school club ensure that pupils begin and end their school day with a nutritious snack and friendly company.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has successfully built up staff morale and developed a close-knit team who work together extremely well. In the past 18 months, a drive for consistency has been successful in improving pupils' behaviour so that it is now outstanding, and in ironing out unevenness in teaching to make it all at least good. A whole school focus on talking about learning in mathematics has helped standards of attainment to rise to above average, particularly improving girls' attainment. The school's improvement is aided by a good governing body that takes a strong strategic lead, especially in preparing the way for additional year groups in the coming years. Governors oversee key priorities for improvement on the school development plan, and report on those aspects as part of their monitoring activity. This works well and gives them a clear focus. The governing body promotes equality of opportunity well, ensuring that the school is fully inclusive and that all pupils have the same access to good quality provision. Safeguarding arrangements are also good, with all staff trained up to date, rigorous procedures in place and meticulous records kept. The school promotes community cohesion well, giving pupils opportunities to live and work with pupils from a range of different cultural backgrounds on residential visits, and ensuring they have a good knowledge of its local area. Links are being established with schools in other countries, such as Fiji, to help pupils understand the global perspective. Exning primary is an outward-looking friendly school and a credit to its community. As one parent stated, 'I know that if I have any issue I know that I can talk to someone straight away and it will be dealt with professionally and efficiently.'

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These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

The Reception class is a powerhouse of learning, taking children on an exciting and dynamic journey of discovery every time they pass through its doors and catch sight of the jungle role-play area festooned with creepers and writhing with snakes. While awe and wonder are not on the menu of its Chinese restaurant, they are certainly the order of the day every day. Children are confident, secure and independent, with routines so well established that they select resources effortlessly and engage in high level activities, able to work and play together maturely. They have free access to the well-resourced outside area, where on one occasion they were hanging different coloured socks on a washing line to make patterns. The teaching is outstanding and staff have an excellent appreciation of how young children learn, planning activities that inspire and motivate them. A particular success this year has been in encouraging boys to write. Children join the Reception class with a wide range of skills and abilities which are overall a little below those expected for their age and they make outstanding progress. Staff keep detailed records of progress, and build up a very clear picture of how each child is developing, using this information to plan work that will inspire and engage all. The Early Years Foundation Stage is led and managed extremely well with verve and precision, with the leader constantly looking for new ways to make learning even more relevant and fascinating for children.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

A much larger than average proportion of questionnaires was returned by parents and carers, who declared themselves overwhelmingly in favour of the school's work. All those who responded agreed that their children enjoy school, that the school helps them to support their children's learning and that they are happy with their children's experience of school. These views were supported by the many very positive written statements. A few parents and carers expressed apprehension about the school's ability to provide for Year 5 and Year 6 pupils, without the facilities of the middle schools. This is something that the headteacher and governing body are liaising closely on with the local authority and other interested parties. A few parents and carers were concerned about mixed age classes, but inspection findings were that all pupils make good progress, whether they are in a single age or a mixed age class.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Exning 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 72 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 101 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	46	64	26	36	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	56	78	16	22	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	42	58	28	39	1	1	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	43	60	26	36	2	3	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	50	69	20	28	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	49	68	21	29	1	1	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	44	61	28	39	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)	43	60	21	29	2	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	43	60	25	35	3	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	40	56	27	38	2	3	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	45	63	23	32	2	3	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	52	72	19	26	0	0	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	54	75	16	22	1	1	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.



7 February 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Exning Primary School, Exning, CB8 7EW

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school recently, for showing us your work and for sharing your views with us, both in conversation and through the questionnaires some of you filled in. You told us that Exning is a good school that makes learning enjoyable for you and gives you lots of interesting things to do. We know this is true, because you are so keen to come to school, and we saw how enthusiastic you are about learning. Here are some of the school's particular strengths.

You make good progress in your learning.

Your behaviour is outstanding and you have an excellent understanding of how to keep healthy.

You take every opportunity to get to know pupils from cultures and traditions that are different from your own, for example, by going on a residential visit with them.

The teaching is good and gets you excited about learning.

There are plenty of visits, visitors and clubs for you to enjoy.

The school cares for you extremely well, especially if you are having difficulties.

Children in the Reception class get off to a cracking start in their education because there is so much for them to find out and do.

We admired the lovely work on display in your classrooms but found work in some of your books to be rather untidy and slapdash. You can help by improving this. We have asked your teachers to make sure that you all take care in how you present your work and to give you time to read their comments about how well they think you are doing. We think that it would be good for all the staff to find out what works best in the school, and especially to get ideas from Reception about how to help you learn even faster.

Thank you once again for your help, and a special thank you to the pupil who gave me my portrait, making me look both young and thin!

Yours sincerely

Nick Butt

Lead Inspector

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