

The Harlaxton Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120525
Local Authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	358781
Inspection dates	14–15 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Tim Bristow HMI

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	161
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Susan Taylor
Headteacher	Susan Dixon
Date of previous school inspection	2 July 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. Inspectors observed six teachers and visited 14 lessons. They held meetings with governors, representatives from the local authority, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school development plan, assessment information, lesson plans, school policies and responses to questionnaires from 85 parents and carers, 88 pupils and 17 staff.

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

- Has marking, the use of assessment to decide next steps in pupils learning, the pace of lessons, and the ability of teachers to pitch the work accurately to meet the needs of all pupils improved since the previous inspection?
- How effective have school leaders been in improving the quality of teaching and learning?
- Has the improved achievement of pupils at the end of Year 6 in 2010 been sustained?

Information about the school

The school is a below average-sized primary school. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups and pupils who speak English as an additional language are well below average. The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportions of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and pupils who have a statement of special educational needs are below average.

The pupils benefit from a breakfast club that is privately managed and subject to separate inspection arrangements. Last year the school was working in close partnership with a school that was designated a National Leader in Education. In October 2010 there was a planned reduction of these partnership arrangements. During the inspection the school roof was being replaced and children in the Early Years Foundation Stage were having lessons in the hall.

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

Overall the quality of education that pupils receive is satisfactory. Nearly all pupils report that they enjoy school. The curriculum and the care, guidance and support for pupils are satisfactory overall. However, stronger aspects such as the wide range of good-quality enrichment activities have resulted in pupils' development of a healthy lifestyle and safety awareness being good. Pupils' contributions to the community and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are also good. This is in part due to the strengthening of the school's contribution to community cohesion that is now good.

The achievement of pupils is satisfactory. This is because their attainment is average by the time they leave Year 6 in most years and their progress is satisfactory overall. However, there are inconsistencies in progress for some groups of pupils, particularly at Key Stage 2. A small group of parents are rightly concerned about their children's progress and inspectors agree that for some groups, in particular the more able pupils, it is not as rapid as it could be.

Teaching is satisfactory overall, but varies in quality. The school has benefited from a great deal of support from a partner school to make improvements. In 2010 school records show that this resulted in a much greater proportion of good teaching and pupils making much more rapid progress. Consequently, pupils in Year 6 attained the best English results for a number of years. However, the leadership of teaching and learning is currently inadequate overall because school leaders have not kept a careful check on the improvements implemented last year and, as a result, the quality of teaching in lessons has recently declined, particularly in Key Stage 2. For example, in satisfactory lessons, work is not as accurately pitched at the appropriate level for all groups of pupils so that a few either find it too hard or too easy. Lesson objectives and marking are not as helpful as they could be in advising pupils on the next steps to take in their learning. In addition, the curriculum does not enable pupils to have sufficient opportunity to practice their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects.

Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory. They are well-behaved, polite and respectful to each other around the school, but in lessons that are satisfactory, pupils are given too few opportunities to demonstrate how their behaviour can contribute to their learning. When this occurs a few pupils do not engage as well as they could with their work and the pace of learning slows.

Overall, leadership and the capacity for improvement are satisfactory. School leaders have demonstrated that in some important aspects of the school's work they can accurately prioritise where improvements can be made and then effectively make these improvements sustainable. For example, strengthened teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in English at Key Stage 1 has been sustained and is now good. Also good improvements to community cohesion result in pupils demonstrating a much greater

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understanding of the diversity of society. Satisfactory governance has strengthened over the last year. Governors demonstrate that they know the work of the school very well and the governing body robustly holds the headteacher to account to remedy the weaknesses in the leadership of teaching and learning.

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.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In order to become a good school, raise standards so that they are regularly above average by:
 - accurately pitching work to meet the needs of all groups of pupils so that it is sufficiently challenging and engaging
 - ensuring that marking, lesson objectives and targets are sufficiently linked so that they give pupils good advice on the next steps they need to take to improve their work
 - establishing more opportunities for pupils to practice their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects.
- Rapidly strengthen the leadership of teaching and learning by:
 - taking a much more rigorous approach to checking the quality of teaching
 - checking that all groups of pupils are making the rapid progress that they could
 - continuing to share good practice with partner schools
 - ensuring that teachers are held to account for the quality of their work.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Assessment information shows that in Key Stage 1 attainment in reading and writing continues to rise because of pupils' good progress. For example, results show that in 2010 the attainment of pupils for the first time in a number of years was above average. This year, once pupils entered Key Stage 2 their progress slowed. This is disappointing, as assessment information for 2010 shows that pupils left Year 6 having made good progress overall. The progress made by pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is similar to that of other groups in the school.

The quality of pupil' learning varies from lesson to lesson. In the lessons that are satisfactory or weaker, a few pupils do not complete as much work as they could, particularly if the teacher or teaching assistant is working with others. More able pupils generally receive work that is harder than for others in the class, but it is not as challenging as it could be. It does not concentrate sufficiently on pupils applying their skills to develop their creativity, independence or problem-solving ability. In the lessons that are good, pupils are thoroughly engaged in their work and make good progress. For example, in a Year 4 and 5 English lesson all groups of pupils really concentrated on their written work because the tasks were well tailored to meet their needs.

All parents, carers and their children report that they feel safe in school. Pupils demonstrate a sensible understanding of how to keep themselves safe. For example, in a

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crowded playground pupils were observed playing very cooperatively and considerately with the equipment provided. Pupils report how much they enjoy the school sports activities and are pursuing their interests outside the school, demonstrating their pleasure in developing a good, healthy lifestyle. Regular participation in fund raising for charity and local community activities, such as tree planting, enable the pupils to make a good contribution to the community. Within school, pupils responsibly carry out their roles, whether they are members of the school council or monitors for milk and fruit. Pupils' cultural understanding is much better developed than at the time of the last inspection. For example, pupils talked knowledgeably about the activities involved in celebrating Diwali. In assembly they showed good insight into the feelings of others and responded to reflection and prayer with respect and reverence.

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	2
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	3
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?

Generally teachers group pupils accurately by ability in lessons giving them tasks that enable most groups to make satisfactory progress. Occasionally in the majority of lessons that are satisfactory and the few that are inadequate the teacher spends too long talking to the class. In addition, the questioning of pupils is not sophisticated enough to engage groups of all abilities. When this happens a few pupils become distracted and bored. The teaching of reading and writing in Key Stage 1 is now good. For example, in a Year 2

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English lesson, work was accurately pitched at all groups of pupils so that they made good progress developing their writing and phonics skills.

Assessment information is used adequately to track the progress of individual pupils and to identify those who may need additional support with their learning. Teachers generally mark books conscientiously, giving praise and some points for improvement, but they are less effective at linking their marking to the objectives for the lesson or pupils' individual targets. As a result, pupils are unclear about their success in meeting lesson objectives or of the steps they need to take to further improve their work. Occasionally opportunities for pupils to self-assess their own work are superficial and of little value as pupils give the answers they think the teacher wants to hear rather than reporting how well they think they have understood or completed their work.

The curriculum gives a satisfactory balance of time spent on different subjects. A good range of visits and visitors greatly enrich the curriculum and enjoyment of school and result in some of the good outcomes for pupils. However, these are often treated as separate activities and the opportunities to link them with work in lessons are missed. Teachers have successfully made the curriculum for science more practical so that pupils have regular opportunities to take part in experiments.

Pupils are happy, safe and well-behaved in school because they are well cared for. Links with outside agencies to support pupils whose circumstances have made them vulnerable and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are satisfactory. A small group of pupils benefit from the school breakfast club that gives them a good start to the day. The school behaviour log shows that the rate of bullying is low and dealt with satisfactorily. However, the judgement about which incidents of misbehaviour should be added to the log is inconsistently applied.

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	3

How effective are leadership and management?

Where leaders have made a concerted effort to improve aspects of the school's work they have been successful, such as the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, which now gives children a good start in school. This is because the school improvement plan correctly prioritises some aspects of school development. Recently, however, leaders have not spent sufficient time observing lessons, checking pupils work or the teachers' plans. This means that they are unaware of whether improvements to teaching made last year have been embedded in lessons or of the next steps that need to be taken to improve teaching. There are also too few opportunities for teachers to work together to improve their practice. Recent initiatives, such as the establishment of pupil progress meetings,

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demonstrate the desire to hold teachers to account for their work. At the time of the inspection the impact of these meetings on provision and outcomes for pupils was not apparent.

Governors are now robustly holding the school to account. For example, they have recently taken decisive action to improve the leadership of teaching and learning and to ensure that leaders make savings in the budget to secure future financial stability. They have also raised their expectations of what should be reported to them by leaders and regularly challenge this information. While governors meet all statutory requirements for the safeguarding and equality of pupils, visits to the school to check the impact of policies and procedures are limited.

The school tracking procedures are used conscientiously to ensure the equality of opportunity for pupils. All groups are appropriately checked and nearly all make satisfactory progress. Satisfactory procedures and policies to deal with discrimination are in place. Safeguarding procedures are secure, with the very thorough procedures for vetting new staff forming a strong feature.

Effective links have been established with schools in contrasting localities in this country and abroad so that the school promotes community cohesion well. This is as a result of leaders following a clear policy and driving forward improvements supported by an effective action plan.

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	4
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Following the previous inspection the Early Years Foundation Stage experienced a decline in the quality of provision and the progress made by children as a result of unavoidable

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staffing instability. Since September 2010 the new Reception teacher has very effectively established provision of a much higher quality.

The large majority of children enter the Reception class with the expected skill development in all areas of learning. Usually they make satisfactory progress and enter Year 1 with skill development that is in line with national expectations. This year, progress is accelerating because of the better quality provision. For example, children's social, physical and creative development is improving well.

Children take part in a range of exciting and stimulating activities that cover all the necessary areas of learning. This was particularly impressive at the time of the inspection as they were all working and playing in the hall. Children demonstrate great self-confidence and are eager to talk about what they are doing. For example, one child who was making a paper pig demonstrated good speaking and listening skills as she described all the animals that were on her family's farm. The teacher and the teaching assistant expertly question and assess the children's progress so that they can ensure that learning is of a high quality. For example, the teacher encouraged a group of children who were floating and sinking objects in water to devise their own investigation and make a written record of what they found. Children thoroughly enjoyed doing this, demonstrating well-developed social skills, concentration and independence.

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	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

In responding to the questionnaire the very large majority of parents and carers supported the work of the school. For example, nearly all parents and carers agree that they are happy with their children's experience at school. While there were a number of positive comments praising the work of the school, there were more comments raising concerns about aspects of its work. There was no apparent trend to some of these concerns. However, groups of parents and carers were concerned about the quality of school leadership, the communication between school and home and the progress of their children. The quality of school leadership and pupils' progress have been addressed elsewhere in this report and the concerns about communication have been passed on to the governing body for further investigation.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Harlaxton Church of England 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 85 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 161 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	57	67	28	33	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	52	61	32	38	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	32	38	46	54	6	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	33	39	40	47	10	12	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	36	42	44	52	3	4	2	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	38	45	42	49	4	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	35	41	44	52	2	2	2	2
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)	23	27	47	55	4	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	32	38	40	47	7	8	2	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	34	40	38	45	10	12	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	31	36	39	46	14	16	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	33	39	34	40	8	9	5	6
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	46	54	37	44	0	0	2	3

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.



16 February 2011

Dear Children

Inspection of The Harlaxton Church of England Primary School, Grantham, NG32 1HT

I am sure you will remember that I came with my colleagues to inspect the work of the school and to check how well you were doing. Thank you for the help you gave us. We felt very welcome. We enjoyed meeting you and thought you were friendly and polite. We think that you behave sensibly in school. Most of you try to do your best in lessons and leave school having reached the expected standards in your work. We were particularly impressed at how well you are developing a healthy lifestyle. We saw that you take your responsibilities to the school and the wider community seriously. We were pleased to learn that you are developing a good appreciation and knowledge of the rich variety of cultures living in the United Kingdom.

The adults in school are working hard to care for you and provide you with interesting and exciting activities that we know that you thoroughly enjoy. Taking everything into account, we decided that yours is a satisfactory school.

To make things even better, we have asked the school to do the following:

- raise standards by the time you leave Year 6 by making lessons more challenging, giving you better advice on how to improve your work and giving you more opportunities to practise your reading, writing and mathematics skills in other subjects
- make sure that the headteacher and others in charge keep a careful check on your lessons so that teaching gets better and you make more progress.

You can help your teachers by concentrating hard on your work particularly when trusted to work without help.

Yours sincerely

Tim Bristow

Her Majesty's Inspector

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