

Freeman Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124612
Local Authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	359722
Inspection dates	11–12 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Katherine Beck

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	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	161
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sally Wray
Headteacher	Charlotte Whyte
Date of previous school inspection	24 June 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Twelve lessons taught by six teachers were observed or visited. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, staff and representatives of the governing body. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including the procedures for safeguarding pupils, the school's self-evaluation form, the school development plan and the report from the school improvement partner. In addition inspectors scrutinised pupils' work, records of pupils' progress, notes of the monitoring of teaching, attendance records, curriculum plans, and 52 questionnaires from parents and carers as well as those from staff and pupils were taken into consideration.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- The effectiveness of leaders and managers in planning for long-term changes to the school.
- The methods used to sustain above average standards over a number of years.
- The effectiveness of the new provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average primary school. The number of pupils on roll is increasing as new homes are being built in the area. One third of pupils travel from outside the immediate locality as parents and carers choose the school. The majority come from White British backgrounds. A very small number of pupils speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below that found in most schools. The proportion of pupils with identified special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is broadly average. These pupils have moderate or severe learning difficulties.

All classes except the Nursery and one class in Year 2 consist of two age groups. Pupils currently transfer to a local middle school at the end of Year 4, but there are discussions about the possibility of extending the age range to include children aged three and in Years 5 and 6. In the past two years there have been a number of changes of staff and to the membership of the governing body. A privately run pre-school operates on the site. This was inspected separately and the report placed on the Ofsted website.

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

3

Main findings

Freeman Community Primary is a good school. For several years it has sustained above average standards for pupils at the end of Year 2 and when they leave the school in Year 4. This is because pupils are taught well and work is matched carefully to their abilities. Teachers and teaching assistants collaborate well so that all are clear about what pupils are to learn and to achieve in each lesson, and the best ways to support them. Building on the positive attitudes to learning and knowledge established in the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils from Years 1 to 4 acquire a thorough understanding of important skills in literacy and numeracy. This gives them confidence to write imaginatively and at length for a wide range of purposes, as well as apply their mathematical skills to real-life situations. Detailed tracking of pupils' progress identifies quickly if they are falling behind so that effective support, designed to meet specific needs, can be implemented. Good provision for pupils who speak English as an additional language and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities ensures they are involved fully in lessons and make good progress. This good provision is also supported by close partnerships with parents and carers and outside professionals who assist the school in helping pupils to develop the skills to overcome their learning difficulties.

A lively and engaging curriculum sparks pupils' interests so they want to learn. It promotes healthy living and ways to keep safe, and provides many opportunities for participation in sport. Consequently pupils confirm in their questionnaires that they enjoy being at the school, and that it keeps them healthy and safe. The good Early Years Foundation Stage programme has particular strengths in literacy and numeracy, but does not provide sufficient opportunities for children to work on themes which provide continuity between their indoor and outdoor learning. Most pupils behave well and this contributes to their good learning and happy atmosphere in school. Pupils take pride in presenting their work neatly and those taking on responsibilities to lead games in the playground carry out their roles sensibly.

The headteacher has maintained the good provision identified at the time of the last inspection, and has brought about improvements to the accommodation for the Reception class and outcomes at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Improvements in the consistency of the use of assessment and setting of individual targets for pupils to achieve have sustained pupils' good progress. Representatives of the governing body are more involved in the life and work of the school. However, at the time of the last inspection, the headteacher's heavy teaching workload did not give her enough time to develop her long-term strategic vision for the school to bring about even better outcomes for the pupils. This is largely still the case and the school is growing in size. Since September this year, she has further reduced her teaching workload and delegated some management responsibilities to members of staff. Neither they nor the governing body have yet had sufficient training to enable them to contribute fully to drawing up a long-term strategic

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plan, to the effective monitoring and evaluation of the school's effectiveness, or to augmenting the school's capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build the school's momentum for improvement by developing the skills of the governing body and leaders and managers so that they can:
 - all play a full role in strategic planning for the school's future
 - monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the plan in bringing about year-on-year improvements in outcomes for pupils as the school continues to increase in size.
- Provide more opportunities for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage to work on themes which offer continuity between their indoor and outdoor learning to:
 - enable children to develop further their creative ideas
 - extend their knowledge and understanding of the world in their play.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

All groups of pupils make good progress from levels of skills and understanding that are broadly as expected on entry to the school. Their good behaviour and positive attitudes contribute to good learning and above average attainment. In the lessons observed, the work of pupils in Year 4 confirmed their secure skills in spelling, grammar and a fluent joined script. Consequently, they write confidently, expressing their ideas in amusing, sensitive or assertive ways that capture the interest of the reader. In mathematics, pupils are positive about their ability to apply their problem solving skills to the collection and analysis of data in the form of graphs. In addition, pupils use computers as a tool to enhance or help them with their work in data analysis or pretending to be reporters. Pupils' assured literacy, numeracy and information and communication skills contribute much to their future work economic well-being.

The majority of pupils enjoy their learning as there are interesting things for them to do. They take pride in doing their best and presenting their work neatly and tidily. They concentrate hard and work capably together in groups. Attendance is average and not as good as it was at the time of the last inspection, but this is largely due to outbreaks of swine flu and chicken pox. A large proportion of pupils enjoy taking part in all the out-of-school clubs, including music as well as sporting activities that contribute to their healthy lifestyles. Pupils are proud to be school councillors, young leaders or monitors and take their duties seriously. They raise funds for a range of charities, and contribute to the community woodland project and events at the local church. Pupils know about different faiths and religions and their knowledge of the way children live in other parts of the world is developing well through links with a school in Africa.

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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	2
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	2
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?

Effective assessments and close collaboration between teachers and teaching assistants ensure that pupils of all abilities receive work that is matched to their needs, are fully included and make the most of each lesson. Teachers use good strategies to capture pupils' interest, such as making up recipes for the giant's lunch or finding out who raided the teacher's lunchbox by measuring foot and handprints left by the burglar and comparing them to their own and those of adults in school. Such exciting activities motivate pupils to draw on knowledge and skills already learned and apply them to new situations. They enable pupils to be fully engaged and eager to contribute ideas, as well as to help each other with their spelling or in working out their measurements. Occasionally, teaching is not quite so effective because pupils do not have sufficient resources or they are kept too long sitting on the carpet listening to their teacher. As a result, some lose interest and their rate of learning slows. In most lessons observed, staff provided clear feedback about how well pupils were doing and additional challenges were put before them to enhance their progress. Effective marking gives good advice to pupils on how to improve their work. Most pupils are involved in checking what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. Their targets are made clear to them and to their parents and carers, and are checked regularly to see that they have been met. These strengths in assessment also contribute to pupils' good rates of progress.

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Regular reviews of the curriculum ensure that it continues to meet pupils' needs and interests, so that they are motivated and view learning as purposeful. It develops knowledge, skills and understanding effectively year on year, and promotes pupils' personal development well. The curriculum is enriched by a wide range of cultural and physical opportunities, visits out and visitors to the school. Additional opportunities to design exhibitions for a local museum that can be loaned to other schools in the area extend pupils' knowledge of the locality.

Close links with the playgroup and other schools in the local 'pyramid' help children to settle into the school happily and make a smooth transition to the middle school. Sharply targeted provision to help pupils overcome their difficulties in learning, as well as provide support to families, stems from the good partnerships established with parents, carers and other agencies.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and staff share the ambition for pupils to reach high standards and make good progress regardless of their abilities. The headteacher's robust analysis of data identifies where pupils may be falling behind. Human and material resources are then purchased to meet pupils' precise needs, and directed effectively to enable pupils to improve their rates of progress. This was particularly successful in raising standards in reading last year and enabled the school to exceed its challenging targets. Teaching is monitored regularly by the headteacher, often on an informal basis. The emphasis on raising the quality of teaching through advice, clear guidance and demonstration is proving successful. As a result of this monitoring and feedback, most lessons are good.

The school is strongly committed to tackling discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity. For example, gaps in progress between pupils in different classes are closing as the quality of teaching improves. Also to ensure consistency in the quality of outdoor learning across all classes in the Early Years Foundation Stage, the school has identified and is prioritising the work to be done to enhance this aspect of provision

The governing body discharges its statutory duties appropriately and ensures that pupils and staff are safe. Provision for safeguarding is monitored effectively to ensure that training in safer recruitment, child protection and first aid remains up-to-date. Members of the governing body are well organised and know the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They are informed about the school's effectiveness through reports from the headteacher, seeking the views of parents and carers, and talking to the staff and pupils. However, they lack the training and skills to offer a constructive challenge through more

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rigorous monitoring and evaluation. While the governing body agrees the priorities for development in the short term, it is not sufficiently involved in determining the long-term strategic development of the school.

Partnerships with parents and carers and other schools in the locality are effective in supporting pupils' learning and personal development. Community cohesion within the locality is promoted well, especially through the school's links with the woodland group, church, and other organisations. Contacts with schools nationally and globally are beginning to raise pupils' understanding of how children live in other parts of the country and in other parts of the world. The school has an appropriate plan to develop these aspects further, and is already working to extend this provision.

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	3
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good progress as a result of many exciting activities that capture their interest and spur them on to learn well. A particular strength is the number of opportunities for children to make decisions and to talk and extend their vocabulary, as well as learn the sounds that letters make. These help them to develop a secure foundation for their early communication and reading skills that are built on successfully in the Reception class. In addition children make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development as they play happily together in groups, share resources and help one another.

In the Nursery, children make a good contribution to provision by suggesting ideas about what they would like to learn, such as how to make cakes, what makes beans grow or what it is like to be a policeman. In the Reception class, children make good progress in learning to read, spelling simple words, counting and calculating because they are taught alongside pupils in Year 1. The accommodation is now appropriate in size and includes an

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outdoor area and canopy for inclement weather. However, there are not enough opportunities for children to remain active and work on themes that offer continuity between their indoor and outdoor learning. This reduces the chances for them to pursue their imaginative ideas further and extend their knowledge and understanding of the world in their play.

Leadership and management are good, and thorough assessments give staff a clear idea of what children know and need to learn next.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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

Almost all of the parents and carers who completed the questionnaire are very happy with the school. They are particularly pleased with their child's experience of the school and the way it keeps them safe. Some added comments of praise about the school's provision, in particular, for the support for the families and pupils with identified special educational needs.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Freeman Community 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 52 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	38	73	14	27	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	41	79	10	19	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	28	54	23	44	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	32	62	20	38	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	36	69	16	31	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	32	62	19	37	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	30	58	22	42	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)	31	60	20	38	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	33	63	18	35	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	28	54	20	38	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	25	48	23	44	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	32	62	17	33	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	37	71	15	29	0	0	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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 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. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

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.



15 November 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Freeman Community Primary School, Stowmarket, IP14 4BQ

Thank you for making us all very welcome and answering all our questions when we visited your school recently. I am writing to let you know what we found out.

You go to a good school. Most of you make good progress because you try your best and are taught well. Teachers give you many interesting things to do. We noticed that you read well. You also know how to spell many words and use full stops, capital letters and speech marks correctly. We read some of your stories and really enjoyed them, as you had given a lot of thought to making them interesting to the reader. You are good at mathematics too. Most of you behave well and this means you can concentrate on your work in lessons. The grownups help you if you get stuck, look after you and keep you safe. Those of you who are young leaders or monitors carry out your duties sensibly. The younger children in Nursery enjoy all the fun things they have to do. The Reception children now have a new, spacious classroom and outside area to play in. They are pleased about that.

Even good schools can get better, and we have asked the school to work on two things to help it improve.

The number of pupils attending your school is increasing as families move into the new houses. We have asked the grownups to go on some courses so that they can think carefully about this and give more help to the headteacher in making sure that all pupils are doing as well as they possibly can.

We have also asked the school to ensure that children in the Reception and Nursery classes have more chances to carry on with their imaginative ideas that they have begun while playing indoors when they go outdoors.

You can help by continuing to work hard and sharing your ideas with the grownups about how the school can be made better.

Yours sincerely

Kath Beck

Lead inspector

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