

Earsham Church of England Voluntary Aided First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121114
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	358931
Inspection dates	14–15 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Susan Thomas-Pounce

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	75
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Susan Cramp
Headteacher	Sue Armstrong (acting)
Date of previous school inspection	21 January 2008
School address	School Road Bungay NR35 2TF
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed three teachers teaching seven lessons and held meetings with groups of pupils, governors and staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at samples of pupils' work, planning for learning and development, and tracking of pupils' progress. Inspectors also looked at records of the school's monitoring of teaching and learning, minutes of governing body meetings, reports from the School's Improvement Partner and a range of policies relating to the safety, care and well-being of pupils. They analysed the responses from 62 parent and carer questionnaires as well as those from 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 impact of all leaders, including the governing body, on driving improvement in teaching, learning and pupils' progress.
- The pupils' awareness of the cultures and traditions of people from different backgrounds.
- How effectively the curriculum contributes to pupils' enjoyment and their key skills across different subject areas.

Information about the school

This smaller than an average sized first school will become a full primary school, taking pupils up to Year 6, from September 2012. Pupils now in Year 4 will remain in the school rather than transferring to the middle school. Since the previous inspection the school has moved into purpose-built accommodation. Pupils are taught in three mixed-age classes. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and none is in the early stages of learning to speak English. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is smaller than in most other schools. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is similar to other schools although the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is higher than average. The pupils' needs cover a wide range, including physical disability, autistic spectrum disorder, specific learning difficulties and those associated with speech, language and communication needs. The school has gained Healthy School status and the Activemark award. The acting headteacher took up post in the spring term 2011.

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

This is a good school where pupils make good progress in every year group and reach above average attainment by the end of Year 2. This good attainment is maintained in the Key Stage 2 class. All pupils are known exceptionally well and every effort is made to ensure they make the most of their time in school. Careful identification of pupils' learning needs, high quality targeted interventions, including one-to-one support where needed, and use of the well deployed, skilled higher level teaching assistants ensure that pupils' special educational needs are met well. As a result, such pupils also make good and sometimes outstanding progress and attain close to national averages. The school engages well with parents and carers who, with pupils and staff, are all most positive about the school. Pupils gain well in all areas of personal development. This is reflected in their good behaviour and good understanding of how to keep safe. A few aspects of personal development are outstanding. These are that pupils have an excellent understanding of what it means to have a healthy lifestyle and they make an outstanding contribution to both their own and the wider community. These first-rate outcomes are underpinned by excellent care, guidance and support. The pupils' good attitudes to work, good basic skills and above-average attendance ensure they are prepared well for the future.

Teaching is good and pupils respond well to the wide variety of learning opportunities provided by the good curriculum. Teachers generally make good use of assessment information, but the use of individual targets for improvement is not consistent across the school. Although books are marked regularly, the teachers' written comments do not always clearly explain how pupils' work could be improved. The analysis of data has considerably improved since the previous inspection and is now used well to identify underperformance so that timely support can be provided.

The school has strengthened leadership at all levels since the last inspection and this has helped to ensure a seamless transition between headteachers. The curriculum is much improved because topic work now takes more account of pupils' interests and what they already know. This has helped to make learning more purposeful. There is a real sense of the staff working towards a common goal of improvement and wanting the best experience for the pupils. The school works extremely well in partnership with others to achieve this, adding interest and challenge to the pupils' activities. Leaders and the effective governing body have an accurate and realistic view of the school's strengths and weaknesses, based on thorough analysis of its performance. The school has a good track record of including all learners, dismantling barriers and ensuring better progress for all pupils. This, and the ambition of the cohesive staff team under the very capable leadership of the acting headteacher, coupled with the deeply committed governing body, gives the school a good capacity to improve further.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further raise attainment by:
 - ensuring that teachers' marking consistently gives pupils a clear idea of what they need to do to improve their work
 - using pupils' individual learning targets consistently and effectively so that pupils always have a clear idea of how to achieve them.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Attainment on entry varies from year to year. It is generally below that typically found in the aspects of communication, language and literacy that relate to early reading and writing. Children are given a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and this is built on well in the rest of the school. Inspection evidence and the school's assessment data show that pupils make good progress throughout their time in the school and by the age of seven their attainment is above average with many reaching the highest levels. These standards are maintained in Years 3 and 4.

Pupils say they enjoy school. This is reflected in their above average attendance. They pay attention to the teacher, show good levels of concentration and carry out work individually or with a partner sensibly. When participating in a discussion with the whole class they willingly volunteer answers to the teacher's questions. In a good literacy lesson, for example, they were all keen to share their experience of the trip they had made during the inspection to a local aviation museum. These older pupils made good progress and achieved well because the lesson engaged their interest and work was pitched well to the different levels at which pupils were working. Pupils talk with great enthusiasm about the work they do in school, but are less confident when asked about what targets they have in order to help them improve further.

Pupils make a very strong contribution to the running of the school. They are extremely proud that they helped design their new school building. In the local and wider community, their wide-ranging contribution includes singing or dancing at village functions, regularly participating in supporting a local home for the elderly, raising money for a variety of charities and designing a new playground in the village. They maintain very strong links with the local church and much of their work is on display there. Pupils have a clear understanding of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of life. They know right from wrong and play happily together. Pupils know and understand the important factors which affect health and respond extremely well to the health promotion strategies which have earned the school the Healthy School status. The wide range of physical play equipment at break times and the daily 'Wake up and Shake up' add to their good physical development and their enjoyment. They learn about aspects of other cultures and major world religions and this helps them to understand the world around them.

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

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	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
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	2
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 enjoy good relationships with the pupils and know how to get the best out of them. Planning for different abilities is typically good and matches the needs of the different pupils. Teachers use discussion and questioning well to promote better understanding. When pupils are asked to talk with each other there is a buzz of activity. Teaching assistants work as a strong team to support colleagues and they lead small groups confidently. While there are some good examples of teachers involving pupils in setting their individual targets, they are not always used effectively enough to boost pupils' learning. Teachers' marking of pupils' work is generally constructive in helping pupils know how to improve their work, but this too is not consistent across the school.

The curriculum is planned well and closely monitored to ensure it provides pupils with plenty of exciting learning opportunities. There are some excellent links between subjects. Provision in literacy and numeracy is good and the school focuses well on promoting pupils' personal, social and health education. Because the curriculum is developed to provide activities at different levels, pupils with different abilities all participate well. Particularly strong partnerships with local schools enable the best use to be made of expertise and resources, such as those to support sports development and scientific enquiry and experiments. The good range of extra-curricular clubs and educational visits is particularly impressive for such a small school. These enhance pupils' enjoyment and experience of school and help them find new interests and talents.

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The school's excellent and well-organised arrangements for the care, guidance and support of all pupils, including those with special education needs and/or disabilities, contribute to their good development and well-being and support their learning very well. The school puts enormous effort into ensuring a welcoming and trusting environment; consequently pupils are secure, safe and very well looked after. Staff make the most of the school's small size by getting to know pupils and their families extremely well. Their consistently pleasant, encouraging and approachable style explains much of the happiness and sense of security that pupils display. The school successfully secures support from other agencies, when necessary, to make certain that the needs of the few pupils who may face particular challenges in their lives are met well.

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 acting headteacher leads by example, interacting very effectively with pupils, staff, and parents and carers, and also teaching successfully. She provides good leadership for the school and is very highly regarded by staff, parents and carers alike. Subject leadership is well established and effective so that all staff have a stake in, and are ambitious and accountable for, the development of the school. Plans for further improvement address the right priorities.

The governing body is well informed and provides constructive and decisive support. This helps the school to make changes efficiently and to maintain the momentum of good improvement. The governing body was particularly effective in steering the school through the rebuilding and changes of leadership. Safeguarding procedures fully meet current requirements and follow recommended good practice. Pupils' safety is given a high priority and this is reflected in every aspect of school life. Equality of opportunity is promoted well, for example by ensuring that provision meets the learning needs of all so that there are no significant differences in the progress of different groups. Excellent partnerships with local schools and community organisations allow pupils to enjoy a range of experiences that the school alone cannot provide. These partnerships also support the personal development and well-being of pupils very effectively.

The school is a harmonious place and leaders promote community cohesion well. There is a wide range of effective programmes for outreach locally. Pupils' understanding of the global diversity of communities is developed well, including through assemblies and theme-days such as 'Our World Festival'. The school has clear plans to widen pupils' understanding further. The school makes good use of all its resources, particularly in its deployment and use of support staff, and so provides good value for money.

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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	1
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

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress and achieve well. This is because planning is clear and teaching is focused well so that the wide range of activities provided captures children's interests and helps them play and learn together well. In a good lesson involving guided choice, children enjoyed the range of activities relating to Jack and the Beanstalk. They made good progress as they planned a route for Jack to reach the giant's castle and talked excitedly about the plants they were growing. Staff encouraged children's vocabulary well by listening, commenting and questioning the children. The children interacted well in pairs and small groups so their social and personal skills were developed very well. Adults make frequent observations of children's progress and these are incorporated into each child's 'Learning Journey'. Parents and carers also contribute to these, providing a shared understanding of the key achievements both at home and at school. Partnerships and communication with parents and carers are good, as evidenced in inspection questionnaires and the school's own survey of their views. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well managed because it is successfully incorporated in to the Key Stage 1 class. The use of systems for tracking children's progress so that attainment over time can be evaluated more easily is relatively underdeveloped and has rightly been identified as a priority for next year.

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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

The response to the questionnaire was high. All parents and carers who responded said their children were happy at school and kept safe. Most feel that this is a friendly, welcoming and well-led school with very approachable members of staff. A very large majority of parents and carers think their child is making good progress and they are helped to support their children's learning. One wrote, 'We have been very pleased with how nurturing and caring the school is about each and every pupil. They make everyone feel welcome and special. Our daughter has really flourished in the wonderful environment that they provide.' Very few expressed concerns; these followed no particular pattern and none were supported by inspection findings.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Earsham Church of England Voluntary Aided First 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 62 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 75 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	47	76	14	23	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	50	81	12	19	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	41	66	18	29	2	3	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	36	58	24	39	2	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	46	74	15	24	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	46	74	13	21	3	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	42	68	17	27	2	3	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)	39	63	16	26	1	2	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	39	63	21	34	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	40	65	16	26	1	2	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	39	63	16	26	2	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	43	69	15	24	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	47	76	14	23	1	2	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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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 June 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Earsham Church of England Voluntary Aided First School, Bungay NR35 2TF

It was lovely to meet you and talk with you when my colleague and I inspected your school recently. Thank you for being so welcoming and for sharing your work with us. You are rightly proud of your new school building, which you helped to design. I know how much you all enjoy working in the garden, sowing and growing vegetables and flowers. The perfume from the sweet peas growing outside each of your classrooms was just wonderful.

Like you and your parents and carers, we have judged Earsham to be a good school. It is led and managed well. You are extremely well cared for and supported so you develop very well as individuals. The curriculum is good and so is the teaching, so you learn well. Your behaviour is good and the very young children do well because of all that the school provides.

Every school has things it would like to do better and I have found that there are two things the school needs to do. I have asked the teachers to involve you more in planning targets to help you improve your work. I have also asked them to give you a clearer idea of what you need to do to improve your work when they mark your books. You can help too, by always asking if there is anything you do not understand.

I am glad that you enjoy school and hope you continue to do so. Thank you once again for being so welcoming. I wish you all the best and hope you continue to make the best of your time in this happy, caring school.

Yours sincerely

Susan Thomas-Pounce

Lead inspector

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