

Place Farm Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124554
Local Authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	366801
Inspection dates	21–22 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Ian Seath HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI) the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–10
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	302
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alan Pearson
Headteacher	Madeleine Vigar
Date of previous school inspection	4 February 2010
School address	Camps Road Haverhill CB9 8HF
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Age group	4–10
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. All 13 classes were observed and 12 teachers seen. Meetings were held with a small group of parents, groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative of the local authority, and a group of staff. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documentation, records, and pupils' workbooks.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas that were identified at the last inspection when the school was placed in special measures, in February 2010.

- Has leadership and management become more effective?
- Have teaching, learning and assessment improved?
- Has the poor attendance seen at the last inspection improved?
- Have standards improved in reading, writing and mathematics?

Information about the school

The school is of larger than average size. The proportion of pupils of minority ethnic heritage is low, most pupils being from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is close to the national average. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The school has Healthy Schools status and the Investors in People award.

As a result of the inspection in February 2010, the school was placed in special measures. Since then, many staffing changes have taken place, including the headteacher and senior managers. Much new building work has been carried out to enlarge the site and improve the fabric of the buildings. The school is the subject of local authority reorganisation and transition to a two-tier system. As part of this, the current Year 5, who in the past would have progressed to middle school, will remain in the school and leave at the end of Year 6.

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

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

This is now a good school that has improved quickly since being placed in special measures in February 2010. Many changes have taken place and the principal, supported by managers and staff, has rightly identified teaching and learning together with care, guidance and support as being priorities for improvement. Because of concerted and well-focused efforts, these have improved markedly and are now good. Standards are now at least at the national average and, for some groups, higher. The progress that pupils make is good and continues to accelerate.

When pupils join the school, their prior attainment is below average. In class, they quickly catch up because their learning skills develop very well. They work hard in class and are keen to contribute and apply themselves to their work. This was illustrated in one class when an inspector asked to sit at a table and a pupil politely said, 'Yes, but don't disturb us because we are trying to learn.'

The assessment of progress and its use in class has improved markedly since the last inspection. Teachers now have a clear picture of how well pupils are doing, and the evaluation and analysis of these data is used well to set targets and provide support. In class, assessment data are used well to ensure that pupils of all aptitudes and abilities work well. Combined with good intervention strategies and care, guidance and support, this has led to even better progress for those who need this support most. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities now make better progress than their peers, and this progress accelerates as they pass through the school. Attendance has improved greatly, with a reduction in persistent absence, since the last inspection. Punctuality and behaviour are both good.

The school has prioritised some aspects of its curriculum for development, for example those concerned with intervention and support. However, both the extent of extra-curricular and the provision for gifted and talented pupils are underdeveloped.

Those parents and carers that inspectors met with spoke highly of the school and its improvement, although they felt that communications with the school, especially the frequency of reports, could be improved. The school recognises the need for improvements in this area.

Leaders and managers have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The partnership with the nearby upper school has led to very effective sharing of good practice. The governing body offers good challenge and monitors the school well. Staff are held to account for the performance of their classes, and lines of responsibility are clear. Improvement plans and processes are precise and purposeful, with targets that

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are achievable and ambitious. Together with leaders' success in turning the school around, these demonstrate Place Farm's good capacity for continued improvement

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By Easter 2012, and with the involvement of parents and carers, improve the curriculum so that:
 - those pupils with particular talents are well catered for
 - the range of extra-curricular activities is broadened and enables greater participation.
- By Easter 2012, and with the involvement of parents and carers, develop ways to ensure that:
 - parents and carers are better informed, and about their child's progress
 - more opportunities are provided to enhance parental involvement in school life.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Since the last inspection, improvements in the school's quality of provision have driven up attainment and progress. Low prior attainment on entry no longer acts as a significant barrier to learning and the progress that pupils make is accelerating quickly. Currently, all year groups are making progress that is better than expected and standards are at least in line with those expected of pupils' ages, with an improving trend. Progress made in mathematics is better than average, and stronger in reading and writing.

There is little difference between the achievement of boys and girls. The progress made by those known to be eligible for free school meals is comparable with their peers. However, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make better progress because of the very effective intervention and use of assessment in class.

In class, pupils apply themselves well. Behaviour is good, and pupils learn very effectively. Most work independently and collaborate well with their peers. Poor behaviour is rare. Both pupils and those parents and carers that inspectors were able to meet confirmed these views. Around the school, pupils are orderly, polite and calm. The school has made good progress in improving attendance from the unacceptable levels at the last inspection. It is now just above the national average for schools of this type. The number of persistent absences is low, and exclusions very low. Very few pupils are now late: punctuality is good.

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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	3
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	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

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

How effective is the provision?

In class, pupils learn very effectively. This is because they are given opportunities to work both independently and with their peers in table groups. In most classes, the work they are given stretches them to think and enquire, and this is often helped by well-focused questioning from teachers. For example, in one class, pupils studied a short animated film and were asked to explain the story, producing imaginative and well-communicated answers. Pupils do not always know what levels they are working at but they do know what they need to do to improve. Teachers are aware of the levels pupils are working at because assessment is now carried out systematically across all classes and is used very well by teachers to ensure that all pupils learn. Written work is marked well, with helpful comments. Good attention is paid to correct spelling. However, parents and carers commented that the frequency of homework varies and that some of it is insufficiently demanding. In a small minority of classes, the work is not well structured or sufficiently demanding. Where this occurs, learning slows. Teaching assistants work effectively to give support and challenge where it is needed.

The curriculum adequately meets pupils' needs and aspirations, and arrangements for intervention and support have been improved. Opportunities to apply skills of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum have been extended, and these skills are used well to support topic work. The curriculum is beginning to benefit from collaborative arrangements with the partner upper school, for example with transition between key

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stages in different subjects. However, recent building works have meant that the provision of extra-curricular activities, especially sports, have been limited and participation has fallen. There are too few opportunities to cater for those pupils who have particular talents.

The school provides a welcoming environment for pupils. Transition and entry arrangements are good and have been strengthened by partnership working with other schools. Pupils with challenging behaviour or other specific needs are well supported. Promptly implemented support arrangements successfully remove barriers to learning. As a result, the school is able to point to striking examples where self-confidence and progress have improved markedly. For example, the school's 'rainbow room' gives particularly effective intervention support. The school works well with external agencies and families. Parents, carers and pupils talk positively about the support that they receive, although those parents and carers who met with inspectors agreed that the school's provision of progress reports was not frequent enough.

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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders embed and drive ambition well. The school has approached the issues identified at the last inspection with determination and clarity. Priorities for improvement have been sensible and have led to much improved provision and outcomes. Senior leaders share their time with the outstanding partner upper school, and this has worked well because it has enabled the effective sharing of best practice and considerable opportunities for professional development. Partnership working is increasingly well developed and pupils are already benefiting from better transition arrangements. Improvements seen across the school are robust and sustainable.

School self-assessment is realistic, and associated action plans are clear and challenging. The monitoring of progress towards targets is good, with all staff playing their part. This is aided by increased accountability and improved performance management. Many staffing changes have occurred, and a number of newly qualified teachers appointed. Leaders' lesson observations are accurate and enable the provision of professional development to respond well to the needs of the school and its pupils. Assessment of progress is accurate, both for individual pupils and for groups. As a result, leaders are able to monitor the performance the school accurately.

The governing body has productive relationships with partnership schools. It monitors the performance of the school well and has not hesitated to take difficult decisions for improvement. It provides a good mix of skills and experience, and gives good challenge to

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the principal. The performance of different groups is carefully monitored and the governing body has ensured that the school complies with all statutory requirements. Good safeguarding arrangements mean that, for example, systems are in place to ensure that adults receive high quality training. The promotion of equality of opportunity is good. All groups of pupils make good progress, and differences between boys and girls are minimal. Those who need support most make the best progress.

The school is increasingly involved in the local community and building on partnerships with other schools. It understands the community that it serves and is striving to develop links further afield, for example with a school in Africa. The school is increasingly well regarded within the community that it serves.

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	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	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 enjoy learning and make good progress. Their welfare needs are met well. On joining the Reception classes, many have skills that are below those expected for their ages, especially in communication, language and literacy. However, most leave at the end of Reception with knowledge and skills that are broadly in line with expectations for their age. The two Reception classes are now linked, and good use is made of the available space to provide a stimulating environment for children to explore. Ambitious plans are in place to develop the outside area and a range of new equipment and resources are due soon.

Children settle quickly. They enthusiastically enjoy a wide range of well-planned activities. Movement between indoors and outside is encouraged so that they develop independence. They freely choose what activity they want to do and who they play with. The teaching of letters and the sounds they make (phonics) has resulted in children

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acquiring better literacy skills and an appetite for reading, as well as improved confidence and ability to articulate their thoughts and feelings.

Children enter into daily routines confidently. Friendships develop well and children play imaginatively in pairs and often in larger groups. For example, they work collaboratively to ensure that meals are prepared in their play cafe. The quality of provision is good. Staff work closely together and children are safe and secure. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader and her team are building a good knowledge of the children in their care. They work effectively as a team, tracking individuals, identifying learning needs and ensuring that their interventions support good progress.

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

Those parents and carers met during inspection confirmed the improvements noted by inspectors. All were pleased with these improvements and a number of very positive comments were made regarding the support that their children had received. Parents and carers noted improvements in behaviour and that instances of bullying were now very rare. They confirmed that their children are increasingly developing an appetite for learning. However, all agreed that communications between school and home could be improved, for example by providing more frequent reports and by making homework more systematic and challenging. Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire Parental questionnaires are not normally distributed for monitoring inspections conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

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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.



23 June 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Place Farm Community Primary School, Haverhill, CB9 8HF

As you will be aware, I visited your school with two other inspectors earlier this week. During our visit, you were helpful and courteous at all times. Thank you for that.

Your school has got a lot better since the last inspection. Because of this we have removed it from special measures. It is now a good school. Much of this is because of you: well done! Your attendance has improved, and the way that you apply yourself to your work is much better. In class, your behaviour is good and you are not worried about asking questions or working with others. You should continue this because it is the best way to get the most out of your education.

You and a small group of your parents and carers told us many things. You said you were happy at the school and felt safe. Many of you said you are proud of your school and you have a right to be because it has improved such a lot. Even though Place Farm is now a good school, it can still improve further, and the principal and her staff agreed with us about what these improvements should be.

First, we have asked the school to make more activities available to you, especially after school. Second, we agree with some of your parents and carers that they could have reports more often and have more ways to become involved in school life. In the next few months you will find that these changes start to happen, so take advantage of them.

Once again, well done and I wish you all well.

Yours sincerely

Ian Seath

Her Majesty's Inspector

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