

Old Newton Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124739
Local Authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	380969
Inspection dates	8–9 December 2011
Reporting inspector	Andrew Saunders

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	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	55
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Wendy Lummis
Headteacher	Sharon Waldron (Acting headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	9 December 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed teaching and learning in 11 lessons taught by five teachers. Senior leaders, staff, members of the governing body and pupils gave their views through meetings held with inspectors. Inspectors also spoke informally to pupils, parents and carers. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation of its work, the school improvement plan, minutes from meetings, records tracking the progress of pupils, and policies and procedures for safeguarding pupils. The questionnaires collected from pupils in Key Stage 2 and from staff were analysed along with 36 questionnaires received from parents and carers.

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

- Inspectors reviewed the school's analysis of data to establish the level of attainment, particularly at the end of Year 4 and in mathematics.
- They considered the effectiveness of strategies to increase the rate of progress, particularly in mathematics.
- Inspectors looked at how well teaching provides pupils with work that is closely matched to their needs and challenges them.
- They evaluated the accuracy of the views held by leaders across the school and how these are used to identify and tackle areas for improvement.

Information about the school

This is a small school in a rural location in the village of Old Newton. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. At around 10%, the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises a mixed Reception and Year 1 class. Other pupils are also taught in mixed-age classes, combining Years 1 and 2, and Years 3 and 4. A new, acting headteacher was appointed in September 2011. The school has national Healthy Schools status and has gained the bronze level Eco Schools award.

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 because teachers and the acting headteacher work closely together to ensure pupils are challenged by the work they are given to do. As a consequence, all groups of pupils make good progress and by the end of Year 4, most reach levels of attainment which are above average.

Since arriving at the school, the acting headteacher has worked effectively to gain an accurate view of its work. She has quickly developed plans which are well focused on improving areas that have been identified. For example, the focus on improving reading has been particularly effective because the teaching of sounds and letters (phonics) is a strong feature of the school. This is also helping to improve writing and ensures pupils make rapid progress in English. Progress in mathematics is not quite as rapid because pupils are too dependent on teachers to guide their improvement. They are not expected to respond often enough to the comments in their books.

The good provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage means that children make a good start to their learning. The quality of teaching is good and teachers use assessment systems well, know the pupils as individuals and plan work that challenges them. Lessons usually move on at a good pace. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because they are well supported in their work and are helped to overcome difficulties they may face.

Attendance is high: pupils enjoy coming to school and like the topics they study. Parents and carers confirmed that their children like being at school. The words of one parental comment echoed the views of many in saying, 'There is a wonderful 'family' feel to the school. The children leave rounded, polite and prepared for their future.' This is a consequence of the exceptional care, guidance and support that pupils receive from all the adults. Pupils feel exceptionally safe and get along well, with older pupils taking opportunities to be positive role models for younger pupils. They appreciate the many opportunities to reflect on spiritual matters or consider moral dilemmas and respond sensitively to these. Opportunities for cultural and social experiences are well planned and help pupils to widen their views of the world. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and culture development is excellent.

Members of the governing body are highly committed to ensuring the best possible education for the pupils and are well informed about what data show about the school. Together with the improvements already implemented by the acting

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headteacher in a short space of time, and the accurate self-evaluation of senior leaders, this means that the school has good capacity to sustain and bring about further improvements.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Enhance the rate of progress in mathematics, to match that in reading and writing by:
 - developing pupils' independence and involving them in assessing for themselves what they need to do next
 - ensuring pupils respond to high quality comments from teachers' marking in their books.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

When they join the school, children have skills and knowledge which are similar to those expected for their age, although some aspects of their personal development are often above those typically found. Along with the routines and support provided by caring adults, this means that they settle quickly and make good progress. By the time they join Year 1, children have above average skills, especially in writing. Good progress continues through Key Stage 1. Attainment at the end of Year 2 has been consistently above average, although typically higher in reading and writing than mathematics. At the end of Year 4, teachers' assessments show that pupils reach levels of attainment which are typical of pupils a year older.

In lessons seen, pupils made good progress because the tasks they were given to do were well matched to their needs and provided the challenge to ensure they had to work hard, which they enjoyed. For example, during a session learning letters and sounds, pupils enjoyed the competition when their teacher tried to catch them out. However, there are times when pupils wait for teachers to provide them with the support they need rather than finding ways of tackling their work independently. Pupils appreciate the helpful comments teachers make when they mark their books. They do not respond often enough to these comments though, so that marking is not fully effective in promoting good learning. Pupils like the fact that they have 'target toes' to aim for in English and mathematics and these help them to know what they need to do next.

Pupils are clear that they feel particularly safe at school because they are so well cared for. They are aware of what they should do to stay safe when using the internet. They enjoy taking on responsibilities, for example on the school council and as the eco team. Pupils said they liked being involved in planning the wildlife area and are looking forward to using this soon. This helped the school to achieve the Eco School award. Pupils get along very well most of the time; if they occasionally fall out with each other, they feel this is sorted out very quickly. They help each other to be considerate and respond rapidly to reminders about the school's 'golden rules'. Those with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties have particular rewards and

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reminders to help them play a positive role in the school. Pupils feel that there is always someone they can talk to if they are worried. They know what they should do to stay healthy and enjoy being active at break times; sports clubs after school are very popular. Girls and boys have done particularly well in a recent rugby tournament, competing successfully against much larger schools. They respond sensitively to opportunities to reflect about the world around them, for example considering the similarities between themselves and pupils in France, Tanzania or in a larger, urban school through the links the school has established. Pupils are curious and ask questions about pupils who may lead lives different from their own. They are keen to help those less fortunate than themselves. Along with their enthusiastic participation in many events and activities with the local parish and other churches, this demonstrates their excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

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	1
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	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

There are well-established systems to record pupils' progress. These are evaluated robustly and discussed with staff to identify the next steps that each pupil needs to make. This informs planning and is used to set targets for pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. Consequently, tasks in lessons are well focused on providing the challenge pupils need. Confident delivery and a willingness to adapt explanations to match pupils' responses mean that teaching is almost always good. Teachers are also skilled at promoting literacy and numeracy skills through different contexts. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 enjoyed refining their explanations about shadows while using shadow puppets to illustrate their poems in a literacy lesson, bringing in

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

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ideas explored in physical education. Texts chosen to support the topics being studied are carefully chosen to appeal to boys and girls. Teachers ensure learning proceeds at a good pace and that they use a variety of strategies to involve pupils, although at times pupils are too reliant on the teachers’ input about what they need to do next. Similarly, there are times when teachers constrain the input of pupils by limiting their expectations to specific responses, with closed rather than open questions. The teaching of sounds and letters (phonics) is consistently strong across the school and carefully focused on the specific needs of pupils. The use of information and communication technology is well organised and integrated into the work pupils do in other topics. There are plans to upgrade the quality of technology available to improve this aspect further. The use of themes to focus the work pupils do is enhanced by the trips and visitors the school arranges. For example, pupils found it fascinating to talk to a veteran during their topic on the Second World War.

The excellent relationships staff have with pupils and their parents and carers are a result of outstanding care, guidance and support. Pupils and their families feel that they can raise any concerns with the school and that these will be dealt with quickly and sensitively. Consequently, pupils show great care for one another and understanding for those who may find learning or behaviour more difficult. The school has developed good links with partner agencies to support pupils at different stages of their development or when they face difficulties. For example, links with the middle school mean that arrangements to support pupils when they transfer to Year 5 are good. Other links with a secondary school mean that the school is able to provide high quality sporting opportunities, which have helped it to gain national Healthy Schools status.

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?

Following a period of change, there is now a good sense of stability and teamwork among the staff. The acting headteacher has ensured that all staff are involved in evaluating the effectiveness of the school, and that they are reflective about how they can provide the best possible teaching and learning opportunities. The role of middle leaders is being extended and they are beginning to take the lead in identifying and promoting best practice. There is a strong commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity which has led to the closing of the gap in performance between boys and girls. Although groups of pupils with specific special needs are very small, the school identifies such needs early and then ensures that pupils

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receive the support they need, where appropriate by developing outside partnerships. As one parent expressed it, 'The amount of support we have received from this school has been second to none.'

Governance is good. Members of the governing body are active in monitoring the effectiveness of the school and have an accurate view because they interrogate the data available, in partnership with the acting headteacher. As a result, they challenge the school and play an effective role in helping it to improve further. There are good opportunities for parents and carers to make their views known. Members of the governing body are developing ways to find out the views of pupils more regularly. Safeguarding policies and procedures are robust and regularly reviewed to ensure they comply with the latest requirements. Any training needs are identified and implemented so that staff feel confident about their role in keeping pupils safe. Parents' and carers' highly positive views about the school reflect the fact that they are well informed about the progress their children are making. They also like the opportunities to find out how their children learn through the 'share days', where pupils show their work and undertake activities with them. Arrangements to promote community cohesion are good. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on the lives of others, for example when the cannon of Kagera, Tanzania, visited the school, or a pupil shared information about schooling in another country. However, limited opportunities mean that pupils are not always as well informed about the multi-ethnic nature of the United Kingdom.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

The helpful routines, close links with families and great care the staff take mean that children settle quickly into Reception. There is a well-structured approach to teaching

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letters and sounds which means that children make good progress in this area. Good leadership means that adults reflect on how they can engage each child’s interest. Adults work well together to form an accurate picture of the children’s skills and knowledge. Leaders have ensured that well-established systems are used to track and monitor each child. Staff provide children with a wide range of interesting activities both indoors and outdoors, to promote the use of letters, writing and numbers as well as the development of physical skills. Children who need additional support are readily identified and support is provided. For example, those who need help in remembering the high expectations about behaviour are supported through appropriate reward systems. Behaviour is good. Children develop good independence and are quite content to choose their own activities or to help each other when they get stuck. However, they do not always have sufficient opportunities to contribute to records about how well they are developing skills, or thinking about what they need to do next. Children show curiosity in exploring their surroundings and enjoy interacting with the older pupils when they get the chance.

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 proportion of responses to the parental questionnaire was well above average. Almost all were positive about every aspect of the school’s work. A very few responses indicated concerns about whether the school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors found that the school has robust systems to manage and encourage good behaviour. Leaders are aware of the need for consistency in how any incidents are dealt with, especially during lunch time and are working to ensure this is the case. Many parents and carers expressed positive views about the recent improvements and the approachability of staff.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Old Newton Church of England Voluntary Controlled 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 36 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 55 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	28	78	8	22	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	28	78	8	22	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	21	58	15	42	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	24	67	12	33	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	26	72	10	28	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	19	53	17	47	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	20	56	16	44	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)	23	64	10	28	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	25	69	11	31	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	21	58	13	36	2	6	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	17	47	19	53	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	22	61	14	39	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	24	67	12	33	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 08 April 2011 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.



12 December 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Old Newton Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Stowmarket, IP14 4PJ

We thoroughly enjoyed talking to you and seeing the work you were doing when we visited your school. We judged that it is a good school.

Many of you told us you 'love' coming to school and we could see how much you enjoy your lessons, because the topics you study are interesting. The teachers make sure that the work they give you is just hard enough, and you like being challenged. You are particularly good at reading, because the teachers know how to teach you about letters and sounds. Your writing is also improving quickly and by the end of Year 4, you have skills and knowledge which are above average. You also make good progress in mathematics, although this is not as fast as in English, because you sometimes rely too much on the teachers to tell you what to do.

You said that you feel very safe at school, and that you know how to keep healthy. The many opportunities you have to do sports help you with this. You behave well and your attendance is high. You make a good contribution to your school, for example by helping to plan the wildlife area. During assemblies and other opportunities to think carefully about the lives of others, you respond sensitively and with maturity. You know a lot about the lives and beliefs of others, particularly those in the schools you have links with. Those of you in the Reception class settle quickly because the staff make it such a welcoming place. As a result, you learn well, both inside and in the outside area.

While there are many good things about your school, the acting headteacher and staff want to make it even better. We have asked them to help you to make faster progress in mathematics, by giving you more opportunities to think for yourselves and to respond to the comments they make in your books. You can help by trying your hardest to do work yourselves, before asking for help. Above all, continue to play an active part in making your school a great place to learn.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Saunders
Lead inspector

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