

Erpingham Voluntary Controlled Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	121036
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	380152
Inspection dates	17–18 May 2012
Lead inspector	Nick Butt

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	29
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Longhurst
Headteacher	Simon East
Date of previous school inspection	24 January 2008
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Nick Butt

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed seven lessons taught by four members of the teaching staff. Meetings were held with parents, carers and pupils, three representatives of the governing body and members of staff. The inspector observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation including self-evaluation documents, strategic plans and other development plans. The inspector scrutinised 26 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, and those returned by staff and pupils.

Information about the school

Erpingham is much smaller than the average-sized primary school. Almost all pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average, and a high proportion of pupils are supported at school action plus or have statements of special educational needs. An increasing number of pupils join the school outside normal times. The number on roll has more than doubled in the past 18 months. There are two classes, and both contain pupils from more than one year group. The school meets current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

The school operates a system known as 'flexi-schooling' for 11 of its pupils, who are partly home-educated and spend between one and four days each week in school. Most of these pupils are in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1.

The school has recently completed a log cabin extension that serves as a staff room and community room. The school has expertise in outdoor learning and operates regular 'Forest School' classes for its pupils.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- Erpingham is a good school. Its distinctive ethos places the needs of the individual child at the centre of its work. Its excellence in 'Forest Schools' work makes an outstanding contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It is not yet outstanding because teaching is not outstanding, marking is inconsistent and pupils do not always know what they have to do to reach the next level of attainment.
- Achievement is good. All pupils achieve well from their different starting points. Outstanding engagement with parents and carers ensures that the work pupils do at school and at home dovetails well, enabling them to make good progress however many days they are in school each week. Children learn well in Reception, especially in the attractive and stimulating indoor learning environment. The outdoor area is recovering from being a building site for the log cabin and is not fully meeting children's needs in all areas of learning.
- Teaching is consistently good. Teachers are skilled at making learning enjoyable and challenging, and pitch work to meet the wide range of needs in their mixed-age classes. Targets in reading clearly show pupils how to improve their attainment, but this is less precise in writing and mathematics.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils of all ages mix well together and are keen to take on responsibilities, such as running their own enterprise activities. Pupils say that there is no bullying in school and that they feel safe.
- The school is led and managed well. The headteacher leads by example and has built an energetic and enthusiastic staff team, who all contribute to the school's caring atmosphere and reflect upon their practice to drive forward improvement. The leadership of teaching and the management of performance are good and ensure that the school continues to improve at a rapid pace.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and pupils' achievement to outstanding by:

- ensuring marking routinely shows pupils how to improve their work
 - extending the good practice in setting pupils' individual targets in reading to refine those in writing and mathematics so that pupils know what they have to do to reach the next level of attainment.
- Restore the outdoor area of the Early Years Foundation Stage so that it promotes children's learning in the same stimulating and exciting ways that are well established indoors.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

The number of children joining the school in any given year group is very small, and individual variations mean that their attainment varies considerably. In general, their skills and abilities are mostly in line with those expected. Children make rapid progress in Reception because a focus on developing their basic skills prepares them well for Year 1. Pupils go on to achieve well throughout the school and reach levels of attainment that are often above average by the end of Year 6. For the past two years, the very few pupils in Year 6 meant that there was some fluctuation in attainment. The school's data show that in each year group the pupils make good progress, and attainment is currently above average. This is also true of attainment in reading in Year 2 and by the time pupils leave in Year 6. Pupils achieve well in reading because the sounds that letters represent (phonics) are taught systematically throughout the school, and booster classes for Key Stage 2 pupils have successfully filled any gaps in their knowledge. Pupils develop a love of reading and speak with enthusiasm about books they have enjoyed.

Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and are excited about their lessons, especially those that take place outside in the school's extensive grounds. They recall with relish making nettle soup, toasting marshmallows by a log fire and building dens. As one pupil said, 'We learn something new almost every day!' Pupils develop and apply a wide range of skills well, including reading, writing, communication and mathematics, which prepare them well for secondary school. For example, Year 3 pupils learnt about the features of three-dimensional shapes and were able to identify and count their edges, vertices and faces.

Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress because their needs are identified early and the school works with them and their families to ensure that they receive good quality support targeted to their particular requirements. Staff know the pupils extremely well as individuals and follow their progress closely, adapting the support in line with their changing needs. There are no gaps in attainment between different groups of pupils because all achieve well. Parents and carers strongly believe that their children make good progress and are delighted with the way the school caters for their particular interests and needs. This is especially the case for 'flexi-school' pupils, whose good progress and continuity of learning is promoted by the excellent collaboration that exists between the school and their parents and carers.

Quality of teaching

Lessons are well organised to meet the wide range of abilities and ages represented in each class, and to take account of the needs of pupils who attend part time. There is outstanding communication between the parents and carers of 'flexi-school' pupils and teachers to ensure that all parties know what pupils are learning and are able to build on their achievements.

Teachers provide pupils with memorable learning experiences that instil in them a love of nature and promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development extremely well. For example, pupils in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 visited local bluebell woods and were in awe of the swathes of colour that stretched before them. One said, 'It's a fairy wood!' Good questioning by the adults helped pupils to use a range of senses in appreciating the wood and to observe closely its fauna and flora. Once back at school, no time was lost in encouraging pupils to describe their experiences, writing outside in a sunny glade. They wrote of 'lovely, lush lavender colours' and an 'unbelievable umbrella of bells.' One pupil summed up the morning as 'bluebelltastic'!

Pupils work purposefully in lessons and meet teachers' high expectations of them. Pupils have good opportunities to use technology to carry out independent research, for example into the customs and culture of another country. In Reception, the good provision extends topic work across all areas of learning. Children were studying the Ancient Greeks and conducted an archaeological dig in their sandpit for pieces of pottery, created their own mythical monsters in the Ancient Greek tradition, and designed and made their own authentic historical costumes. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are taught well and fully included in class activities. A close partnership between teachers and support staff ensures that help is provided efficiently and kept under regular review, so that adjustments can be made in a timely fashion where required. The teaching of reading is thorough and ensures pupils make good progress at every stage in their development, from gaining a good grasp of the sounds that letters represent early on, to acquiring more advanced reading skills in Key Stage 2. All parents and carers agree with their children that teaching is consistently good.

Marking often informs pupils about what they do well, but does not consistently show them how to improve their work. While pupils have individual targets, only their reading targets clearly indicate what they need to do to reach the next level of attainment. Targets in writing and mathematics are more general.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour is typically good, and this is confirmed by pupils, their parents and carers. Pupils say that there is no bullying whatsoever, although they are aware of different types of bullying such as persistent name calling and racist taunting. In lessons, pupils are enthusiastic and willing to try their best, persevering when learning does not come easily to them. Where any pupils struggle to behave well, the school's excellent relationships ensure situations are defused quickly so that other pupils'

learning is not disturbed. Staff are extremely successful at giving confidence to pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable and many parents and carers wrote with great appreciation of the support the school had given their children, whose experiences of schooling may not all have been happy ones in other locations. One parent, speaking for many, remarked how the school was 'such a unique and special place where children are genuinely valued and supported as individuals.'

Pupils all say they feel safe in school, a view endorsed by their parents and carers. They know about keeping safe, for example when using the internet. Attendance is average and rising steeply, as the vast majority of pupils attend school well.

Leadership and management

Highly effective leadership from the headteacher has contributed much to the school's unique ethos, which appeals so much to parents and carers. One said, 'This is an exceptional school with caring, talented staff who bring the best out of our children.' The innovative and imaginative 'flexi-school' approach works extremely successfully because of leaders' willingness to accommodate the individual needs of pupils and the wishes of their families. As a result, parents and carers have enormous confidence in staff to develop the whole child and have, in their turn, become great ambassadors for the school. The very rapid rise in numbers is due to personal recommendations, especially among families who prefer to educate their children at home for part of the week. One, whose child now attends full time, said, 'He kept wanting to come because he enjoyed it so much'.

Very thorough systems ensure that the school knows itself well and that self-evaluation is accurate. As a result of effective professional development and rigorous performance management, teaching is consistently good with outstanding features and pupils are making rapid progress. The issues from the last inspection have been tackled well and support staff, in particular, have a very positive impact on pupils' learning. The knowledgeable and supportive governing body is generous with its talents and holds the school to account well. It ensures that all safeguarding requirements are met so that pupils are kept safe. The school's good track record means it is well placed to continue to improve further.

Equality lies at the heart of all the school does, based on deeply held values, and it tackles discrimination robustly. The curriculum is broad and balanced and excels in the promotion of outdoor learning for pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 in particular. The 'forest schools' work is led extremely effectively by a specialist teacher and gives pupils a wealth of memorable experiences in appreciating the natural world and in developing craft skills. For example, pupils made twine from stinging nettles to bind sticks together. The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development extremely well as they consider moral dilemmas, care for the environment and develop their own business. This has been running for several years, with pupils taking full control of the investment and expenditure, as they grow fruit and vegetables to sell locally and bake foodstuffs with the produce.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



21 May 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Erpingham Voluntary Controlled Church of England Primary School, Norwich, NR11 7QY

Thank you for giving me a warm welcome when I visited your school. I enjoyed meeting you and hearing your views. Thank you also to those of you who filled in questionnaires. I agree with you that Erpingham is a good school. Here are some of its strengths.

- You make good progress in your learning and achieve better than most pupils of your age.
- The teaching is consistently good, and you find lessons interesting and enjoyable.
- You behave well and get on well together.
- The 'forest schools' work in particular teaches you about the natural world and gives you memorable experiences.
- The school is led and managed well, especially in supporting those of you who come to school on a 'flexi-school' basis.

Even good schools can become even better so I have asked the staff to:

- make sure that marking clearly shows you how to improve your work
- give you individual targets in writing and mathematics that are as helpful as the ones you have in reading in showing you how to reach the next level of attainment
- improve the outdoor area for the Reception children so it is as interesting as inside.

You all can help by acting upon the comments in your books and continuing to do your best at school.

Thank you once again for your help, and I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Nick Butt
Lead Inspector

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