

Astley Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	121015
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	380149
Inspection dates	14–15 June 2012
Lead inspector	Geof Timms

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	223
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stephen Hems
Headteacher	Helen Pegg
Date of previous school inspection	18 June 2008
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Geof Timms

Additional Inspector

Piers Ranger

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed 15 lessons, taught by 10 teachers, for a total of almost eight hours, as well as spending other time looking at pupils' work. In addition, meetings were held with staff and members of the governing body, as well as pupils. The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of assessment data, policies, reports and planning documents. They analysed the responses to 99 parental questionnaires, and others from staff and pupils.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average-sized primary school. A below average proportion of the pupils are currently known to be eligible for free school meals. Most pupils are White British, and very few have minority ethnic heritage. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported at 'school action plus' or have a statement of special educational needs is above average, and high in some year groups. The main needs relate to speech and language or moderate learning difficulties.

The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. The headteacher was appointed three months before the inspection. This followed a long period of temporary leadership during which she was acting headteacher.

The school has Healthy School status and Artsmark, Activemark, Eco School and International School awards.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. It is not yet good because the teaching of key skills is not consistently effective enough to ensure that pupils achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics. However, it is rapidly improving after a period of significant changes to leadership and staffing turbulence. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Children’s progress in Reception is good. Older pupils’ progress in reading, writing and mathematics is satisfactory. Attainment is broadly average although too few pupils reach the higher levels, especially in mathematics.
- Increasingly effective teaching is having a positive impact on the progress made by all groups of pupils. Even so, there are some residual weaknesses. Teachers do not always make pupils’ next steps in developing their reading and writing skills clear enough, or give them enough time to respond to this guidance. The most able pupils are not always fully challenged in mathematics, and the academic support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is not fully effective in promoting their academic progress. The school does not yet monitor the success of such interventions sufficiently well.
- Pupils’ behaviour is good. This has a positive impact on their learning and on how safe they feel at school. Pupils talk positively about their experience at school and how well they get on together. They demonstrate a good level of care for others. Attendance is above average.
- The leadership of teaching and management of performance are satisfactory. The headteacher has successfully built a more stable staffing structure and new senior leadership team. This is already having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and pupils’ learning. The governing body now provides better support and challenge.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in mathematics by:
 - providing sufficient opportunities for pupils to solve problems and extend their thinking skills
 - consistently challenging the most-able pupils so that more of them reach the higher levels.
- Raise standards in reading and writing by:
 - improving the way the teaching of letters and sounds is based on what they already know and can do
 - ensuring pupils' next steps for improvement are clear and they have time to follow them up.
- Ensure that disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make more rapid progress by:
 - providing more effective interventions that better support their academic progress
 - ensuring that these interventions are monitored, and progress tracked, more effectively.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Achievement is satisfactory but the progress pupils are making is rapidly improving. Attainment in Year 6 was below average in 2011 because leadership issues and significant staffing turbulence had a significant impact on the progress pupils made in Key Stage 2. This has been resolved through improved leadership at all levels and a much-improved quality of teaching. Many pupils are now making good progress.

The work seen in lessons and pupils' books shows that progress in reading, writing and mathematics is satisfactory overall from starting points that are often below the levels expected nationally. In 2011 the school recognised that attainment in mathematics was too low, and a lot of recent improvements to the teaching of this subject are now resulting in improved progress and rising standards. Even so, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to solve problems related to real life so that they develop robust thinking skills, and too few make sufficient progress to reach the higher levels. The teaching of reading has improved and helps pupils to develop better skills in linking letters and sounds. However, it is not always effectively matched to pupils' prior learning.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, reading skills, including linking letters and sounds (phonics), are developing well. Children's attitudes are positive and they clearly love being in school. The school's data show that children are making good

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progress and are well prepared for their future learning.

Basic skills are developing well. Pupils' understanding of sounds and letters is satisfactory, and they enjoy looking at and reading books. The current Year 2 pupils are on track to attain broadly average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. This represents a good improvement over recent years.

In Key Stage 2, pupils' progress is currently much more rapid because of improvements to the consistency and quality of teaching. In reading and writing, progress in the lessons observed was typically good and attainment broadly average. In some mathematics lessons, for example when more-able Year 3 pupils were asked to plan a party based on a given amount of money, progress was much stronger and the most able were fully challenged.

Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are very well cared for, and their social and emotional development is good. However, they make less progress than similar pupils nationally. The school does not track these pupils' progress sufficiently robustly to ensure that teaching is fully effective in meeting their needs.

Quality of teaching

Much of the teaching observed during the inspection was good, although the school's records show that it has improved recently and is not yet sustained or consistent. Teachers are improving their practice through well-focused professional development. For example, the teaching of mathematics is rapidly improving after work to develop the assessment of pupils' progress, and much closer monitoring of pupils' work and teachers' planning.

Good relationships between pupils and teachers encourage pupils' involvement in their learning. Pupils say they enjoy school and talk especially positively about residential visits and after-school clubs. Their behaviour is well managed so that there are rarely any interruptions to lessons. This was particularly evident when Year 6 pupils were skilfully directed in small groups to compose and perform music related to sporting events. The teachers manage disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs effectively and demonstrate a genuine care and concern for their welfare. However, the interventions to encourage their academic progress are not always effective. The progress is not tracked sufficiently well to ensure that provision can be reviewed and revised where necessary. Teachers' marking shows pupils how well they have done and what they need to do to improve, although they do not have sufficient opportunities to reflect on or respond to this. Target setting is well matched to pupils' prior attainment, and they are aware of their targets and what they can do to improve their work.

Teachers generally make satisfactory use of the curriculum to provide a wide range of activities. Leaders are aware of the possibilities provided by the school site and plan to develop outdoor learning more thoroughly in the future. Children's learning needs in Reception are well provided for in a wide range of adult-led and child-

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initiated activities. In one good session, children had opportunities to listen to sounds made by runners and to compose percussion pieces linked to the Olympic theme. Teachers help pupils to learn about other faiths and cultures, and this promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The school is a harmonious and friendly community. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is typically good, as is evident from questionnaire responses, school records and observations. The vast majority of the pupils are polite and friendly to those they know and respectful towards visitors. Their good behaviour in lessons helps their learning and they cooperate and collaborate effectively when the activities give them this opportunity. In Year 2, for example, pupils worked together well to explore capacity using water and a range of containers outdoors.

Pupils throughout the school enjoy talking about and sharing their work. They told inspectors that they really enjoy solving problems and enjoyed the day a door appeared on the playground and they had to imagine what might be under or behind it. Their enthusiasm for school is fully reflected in their attendance, which is above average and improving.

A very large majority of the parents and carers say their children are safe at school and this view is supported by the inspection evidence. Many parents and carers take a full part in school life. For example, a number attended a mathematics puzzle day with their children. Pupils say that behaviour is usually good in lessons and at other times as well. They have a good understanding of what constitutes different types of bullying, and are confident that if there was any it would be dealt with well by adults. They talk knowledgeably about safety issues regarding the internet and are confident that there are adults they trust in school and would go to if they had a concern.

Leadership and management

The strong leadership demonstrated by the headteacher and the new leadership team is having a positive impact on raising standards and improving teaching through focused staff training and much-improved monitoring of teaching and learning. There is a good team spirit and the vast majority of the staff are proud to be members of the school. The senior leaders have a clear vision that is focused on raising standards, and their self-evaluation is accurate and honest regarding strengths and areas for development. The school has made good use of external expertise to support it through the recent lengthy period of uncertain leadership and staffing turbulence. Successful recent developments in mathematics reflect their determination to raise standards further. Significant staff changes have meant that some leadership roles have changed. Even so, the leadership of literacy, numeracy and for the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is effective and leading rapid improvement.

The school has a detailed tracking system that enables staff to see clearly how well

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their pupils are progressing. This means any underachievement can be more quickly recognised and addressed. However the extra support and expertise provided to suit the needs of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs has not been monitored closely enough by class teachers and their progress is slightly below that of similar pupils.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets pupils' needs appropriately. They talk enthusiastically about how they enjoy learning other languages and about other cultures such as Mali. This is one way in which the school successfully promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The members of the governing body have worked hard under the new leadership to improve their understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and to monitor its effectiveness. The school satisfactorily promotes equality and tackles discrimination. The governing body ensures that safeguarding arrangements fully meet current government requirements.

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.



18 June 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Astley Primary School, Melton Constable, NR24 2HH

Thank you for the way you welcomed the inspection team to your school recently. We really enjoyed our visit, reading your questionnaires and talking to many of you. Your behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. This is important because it means the teachers are confident in providing you with interesting work, as well as keeping you safe and happy in school. We were very impressed with how thoughtful you are regarding others' feelings. Keep it up!

Astley is a satisfactory school. We are sure that it will improve further in the future because you are all working hard together to make it successful. You work well, and are reaching higher standards than you have in the past. Even so we think more of you are capable of reaching even higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics. We have asked your teachers to help you get better at mathematics by giving you more problem-solving activities and tasks that will extend your thinking. We have asked them to provide work that is based on what you already know and can do, and to give you time to look at their suggestions for improving your writing and to put these into practice.

The teachers are working hard to help you learn. We have asked them to ensure those of you who find learning harder are well supported and make better progress in your basic skills. Your headteacher and the senior leaders provide good leadership and the leadership of the governing body is improving. They are keen to help you do as well as you can and you can help them by continuing to work hard. They seek ideas from outside the school and this is helping make your school even better.

Thank you again for your friendliness and help. We hope that you continue to enjoy your time at Astley and keep looking out for each other so well!

Yours sincerely

Geof Timms
Lead inspector

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