

Gunton Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	124677
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	395479
Inspection dates	14–15 June 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	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	342
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Phil Riley
Headteacher	Sue Barrett
Date of previous school inspection	10 May 2007
School address	Gainsborough Drive Lowestoft NR32 4LX
Telephone number	01502 584661
Fax number	01502 567973
Email address	office4gunton@yahoo.co.uk

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Nick Butt

Additional Inspector

Mark Jones

Additional Inspector

Margaret Lewis

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 23 lessons, some jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher, taught by 12 teachers. They also visited a wide range of family group activities during the school's 'Freezone' session. Meetings were held with parents, carers and pupils, three members of the governing body and a wide range of staff. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. They observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation including self-evaluation documents, strategic plans and other development plans. Inspectors scrutinised 153 questionnaires returned by parents and carers and those returned by staff and pupils.

Information about the school

Gunton is larger than the average-sized primary school. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those supported by school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is average.

In September 2010, the school retained its pupils as part of Suffolk's reorganisation of its schools, changing from a first school to a primary school. Additional accommodation has been provided to cater for the increased numbers of pupils. There is no information about floor standards, which determines the minimum expectations for attainment and progress. This is because 2011-2012 is the first year the school has had Year 6 and the oldest year group in the school in 2010-2011 was Year 5.

Pupils are grouped in three phases (Years 1 and 2, Years 3 and 4, Years 5 and 6) each of which contains three parallel classes. The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of a Nursery, and a large Reception class (with two teachers), which share an outside area and other resources.

Awards include Eco-school silver, Artsmark and Healthy Schools status.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. It is not yet outstanding because attainment and progress in mathematics are not quite as strong as in writing, and not enough teaching is outstanding. The school has not always made full use of performance data at meetings to measure pupils' progress. Nevertheless, pupils achieve well in a caring family atmosphere.
- Pupils make good progress from below expected starting points, especially in language and literacy. Attainment is generally above average. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs achieve well because good-quality support helps them fill gaps in their understanding. The school has identified that methods for calculation are not always taught consistently across all year groups and has made this an area for improvement.
- Teaching is consistently good. Relationships are very positive in lessons and teachers ask probing questions to extend pupils' thinking. Very occasionally, more-able pupils are not challenged enough. The learning environment reinforces pupils' basic skills very well, but does not always celebrate their work sufficiently.
- Behaviour and safety are outstanding. Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and are keen to take an active part in lessons. They say there is no bullying and that they feel extremely safe in school. The school's excellent pastoral care ensures that pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable are able to overcome barriers to learning.
- Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide very strong leadership and are ambitious in driving forward improvement. Good leadership of teaching and the management of performance ensure that teaching continues to improve and attainment to rise. Although the school has recently introduced new tracking systems, it has not always made sufficiently detailed use of data at meetings to analyse pupils'

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progress. Parents and carers overwhelmingly support the school, but several expressed a desire for greater communication between home and school about their children's reading.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make progress and teaching outstanding, especially in mathematics, by:
 - developing the calculation policy to ensure consistency in how mathematics is taught across each year group
 - developing the learning environment to create a greater balance between reinforcing basic skills and celebrating pupils' learning
 - improving communication between home and school about pupils' progress in reading
 - ensuring more-able pupils are sufficiently challenged in all lessons.
- Improve the use of pupils' performance data by:
 - consolidating the new systems for tracking pupils' progress
 - using this information effectively to increase the impact of meetings that consider how to boost pupils' progress and ensure no one falls behind.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children join the Nursery with skills and abilities below those expected, especially in language and communication. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage because adults work well as a team to promote children's speech and language and provide an exciting range of interesting and engaging activities. Children leave Reception with broadly average attainment in all areas of learning. This good progress continues in Key Stage 1 so that attainment by the end of Year 2 is above average in reading, writing and mathematics.

Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and are enthusiastic and keen to work together in lessons. For example, Year 1 and 2 pupils enjoyed completing a grid which assigned a value to different items of fruit and adding up the totals of each row and column. Pupils are willing to put forward their ideas in class discussion and to try new challenges.

Pupils achieve well in Key Stage 2, making better progress than all pupils nationally and building on their above-average attainment. The current Year 6 pupils have made good progress because their attainment was only average at the end of Year 2 and it is now above average. It is stronger in writing than in mathematics. Attainment has risen rapidly in writing because of a whole-school focus which has emphasised the spoken word as a way of inspiring pupils to write. The school has identified mathematics as a focus for improvement, because calculation is not taught consistently across all year groups.

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Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress overall because their needs are identified early and effective intervention gives them a personal programme of support tailored to individual requirements. There are no gaps in attainment between other groups of pupils, all of whom are performing better than pupils nationally, including those known to be eligible for free school meals. Attainment in reading is above average at the end of Key Stage 1 and when pupils leave the school in Year 6. Systematic teaching of the sounds that letters make gives pupils a good start in learning to read and this is reinforced by the development of more advanced skills as they mature. Older pupils spoke with enthusiasm about the authors they enjoyed.

Almost all parents and carers agree that their children are making good progress. A small minority would like more communication from the school about how their child is progressing in reading, something the school is willing to undertake.

Quality of teaching

Teachers ensure that learning is enjoyable and that pupils are actively involved in lessons. For example, in a Year 3 and 4 mathematics lesson, pupils had fun being rounded up as sheep to illustrate the concept of division. There was a good emphasis on key vocabulary. Reception children enjoyed searching for numbers in their outdoor area, which developed their early numeracy skills. Skilful questioning by a teacher in Years 5 and 6 brought a discussion to life about the merits of permitting celebrities to carry the Olympic torch. Pupils expressed strong views, which inspired them to write both sides of the argument.

Support staff make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. Specific interventions help disabled pupils and those with special educational needs to make good progress, such as in improving reading. The excellent relationships between staff and pupils make learning purposeful, as pupils are keen to do well. Very occasionally, there is insufficient challenge for more-able pupils. The school has successfully tackled the issue from its last inspection so that pupils know their individual targets very well, and marking clearly shows them how to improve their work. The learning environment focuses on helping pupils to develop their basic skills, but does not always leave sufficient space to celebrate their work or inspire new learning.

Teaching promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. For example, the teacher of a Year 1 and 2 class used a puppet to prompt pupils to create mathematical word problems that always had the answer 'four' (the only sound the puppet could make). This caused pupils to reflect upon their learning as they came up with ever more complicated puzzles and taught them to take turns. The 'Freezone', where pupils engage in a wide range of different activities in family groups, helps pupils to work together as members of a team in a range of different learning contexts.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

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Pupils say that behaviour is very good and they feel totally safe in school, a view supported by almost all parents and carers. Pupils report that there is no bullying, although they understand what bullying means and know about different types, such as name-calling and cyber bullying. School records support their views. Pupils typically behave extremely well in and around school and show one another and adults considerable respect. The school's 'Oasis Room', where pupils are helped to socialise and behave well, has eliminated the need for exclusions and enabled individuals to see great improvements in their engagement with learning and with their peers. The 'Freezone' activities give pupils opportunities to make friendships with pupils of all ages, and the older ones often help the younger ones. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep safe when faced with potentially dangerous situations, such as fire, railways and water.

Leadership and management

The headteacher and deputy headteacher promote leadership skills in others well, encouraging them to take on new challenges and share best practice. This makes for a confident and united staff team, with a clear vision for improving the school. There has been particular progress in writing in the past year as a result of professional development in using new methods which encourage pupils to discuss their ideas first. There has also been a positive impact from training in the sounds that letters make. Robust performance management has made a strong contribution to school improvement both for teaching and support staff.

The school has recently introduced a new tracking system to make data analysis more efficient. This is because senior leaders identified that meetings about pupils' progress were not rigorous enough to hold teachers fully to account for their pupils' performance. Members of the governing body are passionate about the school. They conduct regular monitoring visits and offer a good level of challenge and support.

The curriculum is planned to be relevant to pupils' interests and is creative and innovative. During the 'Freezone', pupils take part in family groups in a wide range of artistic and sporting activities, including exploring the local woods, making clay pots, weaving and yoga. This gives them a series of enjoyable and memorable experiences. The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. For example, pupils were shocked by the news in an assembly that across the world 65 million children do not have the opportunity to go to school, and many have to work long days. They were keen to make Olympic-style medals for the local member of Parliament to raise awareness that world leaders have pledged universal worldwide free education by 2015.

Gunton is an inclusive school. Equality of opportunity sits at the heart of its work. Discrimination is not permitted and all pupils are helped to succeed whatever their circumstances. As one parent wrote, 'The school is very welcoming to parents and guardians and encourages us to be part of the team.' The governing body ensures that all safeguarding requirements are met to keep pupils safe, and that training for

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all staff is up to date. Leaders and managers know the school well and self-evaluation is accurate, leading to well-written strategic plans with outcomes that can be measured. Inspectors and senior leaders were in agreement about the quality of teaching they observed together. The school has maintained and built upon its strengths and has a strong capacity for further improvement.

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 Gunton Community Primary School, Lowestoft, NR32 4LX

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited your school. Thank you also for sharing your views with us and filling in the questionnaires. We agree with you that Gunton is a good school. Here are some of its strengths.

- You make good progress in your work and do better than other pupils in other schools nationally.
- The teaching is good and makes learning enjoyable.
- Your behaviour is excellent and you care for one another very well.
- Children in the Nursery and Reception classes get off to a good start in their learning.
- There are plenty of activities for you to enjoy, such as the 'Freezone'.
- The school is led and managed well.

Even good schools can improve, so we have asked your headteacher and teachers to:

- think about how they teach you to calculate in mathematics in each year group
- give your parents and carers more information about how well you are reading
- make sure more of your work goes on the displays
- make sure those of you who find learning easy are given challenging work to do
- make good use of the information about how well you are doing to help you to make even faster progress in your work.

You all can help by working hard and telling your teachers what you enjoy about your learning.

Thank you once again for all your help on the inspection. My best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Nick Butt
Lead Inspector

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