



Inspection report

# Wells-next-the-Sea Primary School

**Better  
education  
and care**

Unique Reference Number 120865  
LEA Norfolk

Inspection number 273676  
Inspection dates 8 and 9 March 2005  
Reporting inspector Mr J S Hardwick HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996 and was deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

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Type of School	Primary	School address	Polka Road
School category	Community		Wells-next-the-Sea
			Norfolk
Age range of pupils	3 to 11 years		NR23 1JG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01328 710320
Number on roll	171 full-time equivalent 15 part-time	Fax number	01328 710320
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs S Heath
Date of previous inspection	June 2001	Headteacher	Mrs C Jennings

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Age group	Published	Reference no.
3 to 11 years	20 April 2005	273676

## Introduction

When Wells-next-the-Sea Primary School was inspected in June 2001, it was judged to require special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education. Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) subsequently visited the school on nine occasions to monitor its progress, and reinspected the school in December 2004.

### Description of the school

Wells-next-the-Sea Primary School serves the small town of Wells on the north Norfolk coast. The school is slightly smaller than average, and the nursery opens only in the morning. The number on roll has declined steadily in recent years, a pattern that is reflected more widely across this part of Norfolk; many properties in the area are second homes. Almost all the pupils are from white British backgrounds; 22 per cent are entitled to free school meals, which is around the average, but this figure does not fully represent the level of disadvantage in a community that is affected by seasonal patterns of employment. About a fifth of the pupils have been identified as having special educational needs; seven of these pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Need, representing a proportion that is well above average.

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## Overall effectiveness of the school

In accordance with section 14 of the School Inspections Act 1996, I am of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures, since it is now providing an acceptable standard of education for its pupils.

Wells-next-the-Sea Primary School has been beset by difficulties for a long time, largely as a result of continuing changes in the teaching force, including the senior staff. However, with determined leadership from the headteacher, hard work from the teachers and careful recruitment, the school is now providing a sound education for its pupils. Standards are below national averages, and below what they should be, but they are rising as a consequence of teaching that is at least satisfactory, and the youngest pupils achieve well. The pupils' attitudes and behaviour are mostly good and, over the last year, they have worked towards personal targets and learned good work habits. However, levels of attendance are persistently below the national average, and sometimes well below. The curriculum meets national requirements and the pupils benefit from visits and a good range of additional clubs and activities.

### Improvement since the last inspection

The inspection of June 2001 required the school to address key issues concerned with the leadership and management, standards, the quality of teaching, provision for information and communication technology (ICT), and relationships with parents. There has been good progress in relation to leadership and management and satisfactory progress elsewhere, though standards need to rise further.

### Capacity to improve

The school is well placed to improve. The headteacher has set a strong focus on raising standards and improving the pupils' approach to work, and she has been well supported by senior staff and governors. There is a thorough programme for monitoring the school's performance and tracking the pupils' progress. The resulting information has been carefully analysed to inform decisions about where extra support and effort are needed and also to set the priorities within the school's strategic plans. The co-ordinators for different subjects have contributed to the plans and are leading the developments in each subject. The school's further progress is threatened by a weak budgetary position, partly arising from the falling number of pupils on roll, but there are contingency plans, agreed with the local education authority (LEA), to handle a potential deficit.

## What the school should do to improve further

The school's development plan recognises the areas where improvement is needed. However the key priorities are to:

- raise standards, focusing on literacy and numeracy;
- continue to improve the quality of teaching;
- continue to improve the pupils' attitudes and behaviour;
- raise levels of attendance.

## Achievement and standards

The pupils make a good start in the Foundation Stage: many reach standards that are beyond those expected for five-year-olds, for instance, in their ability to write short accurate sentences. The pupils' progress in Key Stages 1 and 2 over recent terms has been satisfactory and sometimes good, but weaknesses in past provision led to widespread underachievement. This is reflected in results in national tests that, for the most part, have been well below the national average and the performance of schools with a similar intake. Nevertheless, standards have been similar to the average in mathematics at Key Stage 1 and English at Key Stage 2. Over the last two years, the improvement in national test scores has been more convincing at Key Stage 2 than at Key Stage 1, as a result of better consistency in staffing and the quality of teaching for the oldest pupils. However, the lowest standards have been in the early part of Key Stage 2.

The school is well aware that, despite improvement, standards remain too low and has established a detailed programme to boost the pupils' attainment. The pupils in Year 1, for example, are building on the high standards they achieved in the Foundation Stage and, elsewhere, standards in lessons were around the levels expected for the pupils' ages. Lost ground is being made up, for instance, in the way the Year 5 and 6 pupils phrased accurately written sentences to build the climax to a story.

## Personal development

When the school became subject to special measures in 2001, many pupils had a casual approach to their work, there was some misbehaviour and attendance was poor. These issues underlay the weak standards, particularly in the middle years. As a result of higher demands and better and more consistent routines, the pupils' attitudes and behaviour are at least satisfactory and commonly good. The pupils have learned good work habits; they collect and organise their equipment, settle quickly to tasks, and generally sustain their concentration, though some still need reminders to not waste time chattering. Attendance rose from 91.7 per cent in 2001 to 93.6 per cent in the last year, but fell back again in the autumn term 2004; these figures are all below the national average.

The pupils' improved approach to class work has been complemented by their ability to accept responsibilities. Time is no longer wasted in lining up before entering school after break; the pupils return to class promptly and in an orderly way. Representatives from each class form and run a school council, which has taken decisions about how the playground is organised and requested better facilities in the lavatories, that have since been installed.

The overall provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The pupils play well together, often organising games. They have opportunities to join a wide range of clubs, such as, chess, music, computers and sports. Visits in the locality, for example to the church and seafront, enable the pupils to appreciate their own heritage, the older pupils' work in literacy was complemented by seeing *Macbeth* in Norwich, and the pupils learn about different faiths in assemblies and religious education. Links are also being made with schools in London and France.

## Quality of provision

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall; it was satisfactory in six lessons, good in two and very good in two. The staff have worked hard to act on the messages from training and lesson observations. The overall profile of teaching is much improved when compared with 2001, and accounts for the faster progress that the pupils are making.

The lessons were well planned, prepared and organised, and based on appropriate learning objectives that were shared with the pupils. Care was taken to ensure that all the pupils were attentive when the class was being taught as a whole, and there was no longer any tolerance of time-wasting when the pupils settled to follow-up work. The tasks were well judged according to the needs of different pupils, and the considerable number of teaching assistants made important contributions to lessons, particularly in leading groups.

The school has established a thorough system for assessing and tracking the pupils' progress. The information from tests and assessments is carefully analysed and then acted on, for example, to determine which pupils need additional support and which overall aspects of work are the priorities for improvement.

In the last year, the pupils have also benefited from personal targets that let them know the National Curriculum level at which they are working and what they need to do to move forward. The pupils and teachers assess progress towards these goals and they are regularly referred to in lessons.

The curriculum is broad and balanced, and based on national requirements. Proper emphasis is placed on pupils' basic skills in literacy and numeracy, and links are being forged between subjects to bring coherence and relevance to what is taught in different lessons. The programme of work in ICT was criticised in 2001, but a new computer suite is now timetabled for every class and the pupils' standards have risen accordingly. The school's provision for special educational needs is satisfactory, and conforms to the national code of practice.

The school pays due regard to the pupils' safety, health and general well-being. The pupils are confident to turn to adults for help, routines and supervision at playtimes have been tightened and there are procedures, for example, to ensure that medicines are secure. A good range of equipment enables pupils to enjoy games and physical exercise at playtime; and, during the summer term, older pupils walked ten miles along the coast, stayed at a hostel overnight, and then returned the next day.

## Leadership and management

The difficulties experienced at Wells-next-the-Sea School have been longstanding, and largely related to continuing changes of staff, especially at senior level. There have been five different headteachers and two deputy headteachers since 2001, mostly in an acting capacity.

Since she arrived at the beginning of the school year 2003-4, the headteacher has provided good leadership and management. She has drawn the staff together to tackle the critical areas of standards, teaching and the pupils' attitudes to work, all of which have improved considerably.

The headteacher has been well supported by the senior staff and governors, and the teachers have worked hard to improve their own practice and to bring consistency to the school's routines. Senior staff have undertaken key responsibilities, such as tracking the pupils' progress, and the contribution of the subject co-ordinators is being increased. The governors are regular visitors to the school and have established their own annual schedule for gauging the school's progress.

The school's strategic plans are based on well-judged priorities, and there are clear timescales for implementation, as well as criteria to judge the extent of success. However, projected budgetary deficits threaten to undermine what is envisaged.

The LEA has played an important part in securing and improving provision at the school. It has been especially helpful in arranging for capable staff to work in the school on a temporary basis, while permanent appointments could be made. Consultants have also given good support over the teaching, and a forum set up by the LEA has allowed, the governors, for example, to share their views frankly and agree on solutions to problems.

## Appendix – Information about the inspection

Wells-next-the-Sea Primary School was inspected under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996 by a Registered Inspector and a team of inspectors in June 2001. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the school and, in accordance with that Act, the school was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

The school was visited by HMI in January, May and November 2002, in April, July and December 2003, and in March, July and December 2004 to assess the progress it was making to implement its action plan and address the key issues in the inspection report of January 2003.

In March 2005, HMI returned to inspect the school for two days. The inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996, which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

During the visit ten parts of lessons and an assembly were inspected. The pupils' conduct was observed around the school and on the playground at break and lunchtimes, and samples of their work were inspected. Discussions were held with the headteacher, and informally with other staff. Account was taken of the evidence from previous monitoring inspections.

The inspection assessed the quality of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of March 1999 and the action plan prepared by the governing body to address those key issues.

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