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education
and care**

Inspection report

Erpingham CE Primary School

Unique Reference Number 121036
LEA Norfolk

Inspection number 276190
Inspection dates 28 and 29 June 2005
Reporting inspector Mr S Harford 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.

Type of School	Primary	School address	School Road
School category	Voluntary Controlled		Erpingham
	<i>Diocese of Norwich</i>		Norwich
			Norfolk
Age range of pupils	4 to 11 years		NR11 7QY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01263 761365
Number on roll	36	Fax number	01263 761365
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr K Codling
Date of previous inspection	March 2004	Acting Headteacher	Mr A Day

Age group	Published	Reference no.
4 to 11 years	6 September 2005	276190

Introduction

When Erpingham CE Primary School was inspected in March 2004, 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 one occasion to monitor its progress, and reinspected the school in June 2005.

Description of the school

Erpingham CE Primary School serves a rural community near to the market town of Aylsham. It draws its pupils from the village of Erpingham and the surrounding area, and is much smaller than average; the number of pupils on roll has dropped by seven to 36 since the last inspection. Nearly all of the pupils are from white British backgrounds and all speak English as their first language. About a quarter of the pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is above the national average. A sixth of the pupils have been identified as having special educational needs, but none has a Statement of Special Educational Need. The pupils' attainment on entry to the school varies widely, but is generally in line with the national 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.

This is a satisfactory school with a number of good and very good elements. The leadership and management of the school are good overall. The acting headteacher has marshalled the school's efforts successfully to tackle its weaknesses and lay the foundations for future improvement. The governors are effective in holding the school to account, but while subject leadership is satisfactory, it is underdeveloped, especially in the foundation subjects. As a result of the continually improving and consistently good quality of teaching, standards have risen significantly and are broadly average overall. Most of the pupils make at least satisfactory progress, although achievement in writing continues to be too low. The previous turbulence in the staffing of the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 has been stabilised; in common with the older pupils, the younger ones thrive on the consistency and strength of the relationships with their teachers and teaching assistants. The pupils behave very well; they have developed good work habits and approach their studies with interest. They show a great deal of thought and care for each other in lessons and in their play; there is a strong sense of community in the school. The pupils' attendance has improved, but it remains below average.

Improvement since the last inspection

The inspection of March 2004 required the school to address key issues concerned with the pupils' learning, raising standards, leadership and management, attendance and punctuality and partnership with parents. The school has made good progress in each of these areas, except on attendance and punctuality where progress has been satisfactory. However, standards in writing remain too low.

Capacity to improve

The school's capacity to improve is sound. Over the past 15 months, it has focused on raising the pupils' achievement successfully through a combination of accurate assessment and closer tracking of their performance, coupled with rigorous monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning. The resulting information has been used to support the pupils and teachers effectively. The acting headteacher has fostered strong teamwork among the staff and given the school a clear sense of direction for its next stage of development. After a long period without a substantive headteacher, the governors have recently made an appointment; the post will be filled from January 2006, but the acting headteacher will give continuity

to the senior leadership of the school until then. The number of pupils on roll is expected to fall further in the coming year, but the local education authority (LEA) has agreed to continue its very good financial and advisory support until September 2006.

What the school should do to improve further

The key priorities for the school's development plan are to:

- continue to raise standards, especially in writing;
- build further on the good quality of teaching and learning;
- develop the roles of the middle leaders;
- continue to improve the pupils' attendance.

Achievement and standards

Throughout the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, the pupils make reasonable progress, so that by the end of Year 2, most reach standards of literacy and numeracy in line with those expected for seven-year-olds and some go beyond. The results in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 1 this year show a significant improvement over last year, especially in reading and writing. In lessons, most of the Year 2 pupils attained at least satisfactory standards; for example, many could write whole sentences with capital letters and full stops to describe how to plant and grow beans. In mathematics, all of the pupils knew the value of different coins and most could use them to make amounts up to 50 pence and calculate change reliably.

Following a downward trend over the last five years, standards in Key Stage 2 have risen sharply in recent terms; most of the pupils attain standards in line with national expectations and their achievement is satisfactory. The pupils' attainment in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 this year in mathematics and science was significantly better than in 2004; most of the pupils made satisfactory progress in mathematics and a significant proportion made good or better progress in science. However, while the teachers' assessments show that achievement and standards are broadly average in reading, despite improvements, too many of the pupils continue to make insufficient progress in writing, particularly the higher attainers. In Year 6, for example, the pupils' recent writing about their residential trip to the Kingswood activity centre demonstrated their general proficiency in constructing chronological accounts, but few used lively, thoughtful language or

connectives in complex ways. However, the school has sensible plans to build upon the gains made in writing this year and to address the underachievement that still exists.

Personal development

The pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good overall. The pupils enjoy learning and respond very well to the good quality of teaching and the strong relationships in the school. They listen attentively to their teachers and each other, and adhere to the well-established classroom rules and routines; they are polite and courteous. The pupils take appropriate responsibility for their learning by helping to set up equipment and resources sensibly; for example, in physical education lessons. The younger pupils demonstrate particularly strong attitudes towards their work; they offer their ideas willingly and many can confidently explain what they have learned. The older pupils in Key Stage 2 have developed their independence, work intently and are not easily distracted; however, during the course of discussions, few ask questions that seek to deepen their understanding. Around the school, behaviour is exemplary and reflects the caring and friendly atmosphere in the school. There has been no need to use exclusion as a sanction this year, reflecting the pupils' high standards of behaviour.

At 93.6 per cent, the pupils' attendance has improved steadily since the inspection in March 2004, but is still below the national figure. However, through its newsletters the school regularly reminds the parents of the importance of good attendance and has appropriate procedures to follow up absences. The pupils' punctuality to school is satisfactory.

The pupils' spiritual and cultural development is good. Assemblies generally make an effective contribution; they are based on appropriate themes and include suitable moments of quiet reflection and prayer. Regular visits to local church services complement the daily acts of collective worship. The school's provision for the pupils' cultural development is enhanced by celebrating special events; for example, the staff and pupils dressed in character roles for World Book Day. A good range of visitors to the school helps to highlight different cultures and ways of life, although there are limited opportunities for the pupils to visit places of worship other than Christian churches.

The pupils' moral and social development is very good. The pupils have a strong grasp of their rights and responsibilities in the school and to the local community. The school council has been involved in the recruitment of the new headteacher and in suggesting the changes to the lunch menu; they feel that the school listens to their ideas appropriately. The pupils generally resolve differences of opinion sensibly and through their play, develop their capacity to socialise, share and deal

sensitively with each other. They relish the recreational opportunities offered to them by the excellent provision of sports and play equipment at break and lunchtimes.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching continues to improve and is good overall; it was at least good in all lessons and sometimes very good. The teachers have responded well to the training and identification of areas for development through the rigorous monitoring procedures.

The lessons were well planned and organised for the wide range of age groups. The teaching assistants worked effectively with small groups and short-term plans made provision for all the pupils to be given suitable attention. The work was matched appropriately to the pupils' different needs and a good range of activities kept the pace of teaching and learning brisk. The sound management of the pupils' behaviour ensured that the teachers' appropriately high expectations were met. The teachers' questioning was suitably challenging and required meaningful responses, especially during the concluding plenary sessions that accurately assessed the pupils' learning.

The school has established an accurate and thorough system for monitoring the pupils' progress in English and mathematics, although it is underdeveloped in the other subjects. The information has been used to identify targets for improvement and to provide appropriate support for the pupils. Marking is conscientious and gives suitable encouragement to the pupils; the best, for example in English in Year 6, is referenced to clear success criteria and explains to the pupils the next steps for improvement. However, in most other subjects, it concentrates on corrections and the pupils' effort and is less helpful.

The curriculum is broad and balanced; it is based on national requirements. The provision for the Foundation Stage was criticised by the inspection in March 2004, but planning for the very small number of pupils now includes appropriate opportunities for outside activities and meets statutory requirements. The school pays suitable attention to the national strategies and gives proper emphasis to developing the pupils' basic literacy and numeracy skills. The school's provision for the pupils who have special educational needs is satisfactory and conforms to the national code of practice.

Accommodation is broadly satisfactory, though the prefabricated temporary structure for the Foundation and Key Stage 1 pupils that has been in use for too long offers a low standard of accommodation for learning. The school is resourceful in overcoming the lack of indoor facilities for physical education; equipment is

located at the village hall and, in addition to the use of a local school's swimming pool, there are plans to make further links with other partners to share facilities. The LEA has agreed to contribute funds for the necessary transport costs.

The pupils receive very good care and support. The school provides a safe and friendly environment for learning. Break and lunchtimes are well organised and supervised; the pupils generally enjoy healthy food and very good opportunities for exercise and play. The pupils are happy to turn to adults for help and content with the school's response to the very small number of bullying incidents. The school prepares the older pupils well for the next stage of their education.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the school is good overall. The acting headteacher provides very good leadership and management; well supported by the hardworking staff and governors, he has established an atmosphere for learning that couples care and achievement in equal measure throughout the school. He has developed systems for monitoring and evaluation that yield accurate information; this has been used effectively to improve the quality of teaching and learning, and to raise standards. The school has good strategic plans to take the next steps forward in its development. The acting headteacher has been successful in establishing a good sense of teamwork and his leadership and management have been critical factors in the school's rapid improvement.

The leadership and management of subjects is satisfactory overall. Appropriate emphasis is given to English, mathematics and science, although the leadership of other subjects is underdeveloped; the school has sensible plans to make improvements.

The governance of the school is good. The governors have a firm grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and provide appropriate challenge and support for the school in seeking to raise standards. They are regular visitors to the school during the day. They are well informed and have developed their critical role well since the inspection in March 2004.

The LEA has given the school very good advisory and financial support, especially in providing the acting headteacher following the last inspection. Through its advisers, it has helped the school to develop more effective ways of catering for the wide range of age groups in lessons and has supported the governors well in recruiting the new substantive headteacher.

Appendix – Information about the inspection

Erpingham CE Primary School was inspected under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996 by a Registered Inspector and a team of inspectors in March 2004. 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 December 2004 to assess the progress it was making to implement its action plan and address the key issues in the inspection report of March 2004.

In June 2005, one 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, six parts of lessons and two assemblies 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 acting headteacher, other teachers, the chair of governors and representatives from the LEA and informally with other staff. A wide range of the school's documentation was scrutinised. 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 areas for improvement in the inspection report of March 2004 and the action plan prepared by the governing body to address those key issues.

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