



Cowbit St Mary's (Endowed) CofE Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 120611
LEA LINCOLNSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 280854
Inspection dates 25 January 2006 to 26 January 2006
Reporting inspector Mr. Roger Brown LI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Barrier Bank
School category	Voluntary aided		PE12 6AL
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01406380369
Number on roll	63	Fax number	01406 380 369
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs. Barbara Drury
Date of previous inspection	20 September 1999	Headteacher	Mrs. Maureen Martin

Age group 4 to 11	Inspection dates 25 January 2006 - 26 January 2006	Inspection number 280854
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Cowbit St Mary's is a small village school serving the local community and the surrounding area. All pupils are from white British or mixed race backgrounds. Very few pupils are eligible for free school meals. On entry to the school, pupils have skills that are, on average, below those expected for their age. The school has a higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs than is normal; currently this is a third of the pupils in the school. Its good reputation for dealing with learning difficulties and disabilities means the school attracts a number of children with specific needs from outside its usual catchment area. This includes some pupils who have moderate learning or social and behavioural needs. The number of pupils who leave or join the school other than at the normal time is very high, reaching 90% in some years groups.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

The school assesses its overall effectiveness as satisfactory, but the inspection found some key aspects to be inadequate. Too few pupils of all abilities make satisfactory progress with a result that standards in mathematics and science are very low. Performance is monitored, but too little attention has been paid to making the best use of this monitoring evidence to improve learning and raise standards. The school has placed a strong emphasis on pupils' personal development and provided a caring learning environment. Recent developments ensure that quality and standards in the Foundation Stage are now good. Most pupils like coming to the school and are happy. The arrangements for the substantial number of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are effective despite the limited resources available. Much time and energy are expended ensuring the successful integration of all pupils, but too little attention has been given to raising the standards of the majority and the more able pupils. Consequently, the school does not give satisfactory value for money. At the time of the last inspection four key issues were identified for the school to work on. The school has addressed much of what was asked of them, and clearly has the capacity to improve further. However, it has not managed to raise the standard of scientific investigational skills at Key Stage 2; nor has the governing body managed its monitoring role effectively. In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the standards achieved, particularly in mathematics and science, the progress made by higher-attaining pupils and the management of the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Evaluate the learning of the pupils and plan their progress more effectively so that standards in mathematics and science are raised.
- Improve the governing body's support for the headteacher to enable her to fulfil her role more effectively, and better meet the needs of all the pupils.
- Implement the planned programme for gifted and talented pupils so that they can achieve their potential.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

The standards pupils attain are below average, as the school recognises. Too many pupils make slow progress in mathematics and science and consequently their achievement in these subjects is inadequate. Pupils' attainment on entry to the Foundation Stage is below the average expected for their age and the school has identified particular weaknesses in both language development and social skills. Recent changes have brought about an improvement at this stage and nearly all pupils in Reception are likely to achieve the expected standards. Teaching is good, pupils' skills

are developed well, the teacher's expectations of the pupils are high. However, by the time they leave school at age 11, pupils achieve results in the national tests that are below the expected levels in English, and well below in mathematics and science. English has been the strongest subject over the past five years, but the overall picture is of underachievement. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities tend to make good progress, but the progress of the majority is unsatisfactory. The school does set targets for pupils, but these are not challenging or demanding enough.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good. They enjoy school, attend well and arrive punctually. Older pupils talk enthusiastically about the range of duties and responsibilities they undertake. The school council and the friendship group are active in devising and supporting an anti-bullying campaign, and recognise that it requires a significant level of commitment from them to translate their good ideas into practice. The behaviour of a majority of the pupils is good, but a small number find it difficult to rise to the clear expectations that are set for them. The social and moral development within the school is good. Pupils know the difference between right and wrong and most stick to the school's rules, playing constructively and happily sharing equipment. The older pupils help to care for the younger ones enthusiastically. The procedures and practices in the school help to ensure that pupils are safe in the school's attractive and well maintained environment. Healthy eating initiatives and a programme of personal and health education are giving the pupils a good insight into developing a healthy life style. Restrictions on space make it hard for the school to come together and share thoughts and ideas in regular assemblies. It does make good use of the neighbouring church and the nearby village hall, but there are limits to the opportunities to collectively explore values and beliefs. The relative isolation of the community and lack of ready contact with cultural amenities also limits the level of enrichment the pupils have access to, meaning that their spiritual and cultural development are only satisfactory. The school always opens up its events to the whole community and is viewed by parents and other adults as an important partner in the life of the village.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. In the lessons seen the teaching was good, with pupils clearly enjoying the tasks they were set and responding thoughtfully to the questions posed. The activities were developed at a good pace and there were good levels of co-operation between pupils who were well supported by the teaching assistants. However, despite this, standards are not high enough. Talking to pupils it is clear that they enjoy some lessons, but many dislike mathematics and hence do not achieve well in this subject. All the teachers carefully assess what they are doing and record the achievements of the pupils at some length, creating targets for pupils and

structuring their work to match their needs. The problem is that the level of challenge for the majority is not high enough to develop their knowledge and understanding at the pace that is required to match the standards that are expected. Able pupils receive some support and encouragement, but the additional programme of support has not yet been implemented, and consequently their progress is inadequate.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The teachers make effective use of the national guidance to plan a broad and balanced curriculum. Good use is made of information and communication technology to stimulate pupils' interest in a wide range of subjects. In the Reception class pupils confidently used computers to reinforce their knowledge and understanding of letter sounds and symbols whilst interacting very positively with each other, the teacher and the teaching assistant. The school recognises that it needs to do more to develop and enliven the science curriculum; older pupils have too few opportunities to carry out scientific investigations. Extra-curricular activities are a strength of the school. Pupils are enthusiastic about the healthy eating initiative, and they spoke excitedly about the clubs and activities they can choose. Parents too are pleased with the range of sporting activities the school provides, and whilst they recognise that it is difficult to cater for the younger pupils as well as the older ones in these clubs, they applaud the school for the involvement in some activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good care for its pupils. The pupils report that they feel safe and secure in the school and appreciate the support they receive from adults. The relationships between adults and pupils and between the pupils themselves are warm and friendly. Playtimes and dinnertimes are notable for lots of physical activity using a wide range of equipment which produces lots of laughter and enjoyment. Child protection, and health and safety procedures are well documented. Incidents at the school are tackled firmly and effectively. There was no evidence of bullying found during the inspection, and many of the older children were actively engaged in devising plans and activities that would help deal with issues should they arise.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

The management of the school is inadequate overall. Low standards and the failure to promote higher levels of achievement mean that the school is not fully meeting the needs of all pupils. The headteacher has too many roles and insufficient support to carry out her work effectively. There are positive aspects. Through her leadership, the headteacher has given high priority to the provision of a caring and safe learning environment, and ensured that the significant number of pupils with special needs have been fully integrated into the school. In addition, she has provided extended

enrichment activities to help develop good attitudes and self-esteem. The changes to the teaching in the Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1 have brought about a marked improvement in the standards achieved. However, the headteacher has attempted to do too much, and to cover too many responsibilities to protect and support the young staff, and in doing so has not been able to monitor standards effectively. The improvements that have been made indicate a determination to improve, but the lack of focus on the important issues arises from too many distractions and a failure to put the performance of the school in to a true perspective. The school's self-evaluation of its own performance is improving. To begin with the judgements were too optimistic and unrealistic, but of late it has begun to take a more stringent view that is closer to a realistic appraisal of its overall achievements. The governors fulfil their statutory role adequately, but they have failed to act as an effective critical friend who challenges the school on standards and achievement, and guides the management of the school in a realistic fashion. A small number of parents believe that their views are not listened to, although the school has clearly canvassed the views and opinions both of the parents and of the children on a regular basis. Financial management is good. The principles of obtaining value for money are adhered to in all spending. The school meets its statutory requirements in all respects including the successful inclusion of all pupils whatever their needs or background. Relationships with the community are satisfactory, and the school has begun to establish a partnership with neighbouring schools that has the potential to bring about further improvements.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	4	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	NA
The behaviour of learners	3	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	4	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	4	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	4	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Many thanks to all of you for being so helpful when I visited your school recently. I was impressed by how friendly, helpful and polite you all are. A special thank you to those of you who gave up your time to talk to me. The views and opinions you shared with me have been very helpful in writing a report about the school. In the report I say: You enjoy your lessons and the activities that are after the lessons. I also comment that there is lots for you to do at playtimes and lunch times and that I saw you happily playing together on these occasions. This means I was able to say that you were nearly always well behaved. In the lessons I saw, the teachers gave you interesting work to do, you answered their questions thoughtfully, and I saw many of you working together and coming up with some good ideas to complete the tasks your teachers had given you. However, I was disappointed by the results of some of the assessments that have taken place in the past. Some of you told me that you think your headteacher has too many jobs to do and I agree with you. I would like her to have more time to concentrate upon helping you to improve your work, particularly in mathematics and science as I think you can all improve on the standards you achieve in these subjects. I would also like the school to run the programme of activities it has planned to develop those of you who are very able as I think that this would be both challenging and exciting. I thoroughly enjoyed the time I spent with you in school and I wish you and the staff well.