



Engaines Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115314
Local Authority ESSEX
Inspection number 290203
Inspection date 22 January 2007
Reporting inspector Raymond Jardine

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	St Osyth Road East
School category	Foundation		Little Clacton, Little Clacton
Age range of pupils	4-11		Clacton-on-sea, Essex CO16 9PH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01255 860210
Number on roll (school)	266	Fax number	01255 861838
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Hazel Funnell
		Headteacher	Mr Doug Brown
Date of previous school inspection	7 October 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector over one day.

Description of the school

The school is a little larger than average. About half of the pupils come from the village of Little Clacton and the rest from the surrounding areas. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds but a few are from other ethnic groups. A small number do not have English as their first language but none are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion entitled to free school meals is broadly average, as is the proportion that has learning difficulties or disabilities. Pupils' attainment on entry to Reception is below average. The school has experienced quite high levels of staff changes in the last two years, although staffing levels are now stable again.

The school has gained Healthy School and the Active Mark awards in recognition of its efforts to promote healthy and fit lifestyles.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Engaines Primary School provides satisfactory education for its pupils. There are some good features, such as in pupils' personal development, the quality of care provided and the stimulating and greatly enriched curriculum. These are key reasons why pupils' enjoy school life and make good progress in their personal development and relationships. Parents are very pleased with the school's work. It provides satisfactory value for money.

The Foundation Stage curriculum is well planned and taught and consequently prepares children well for the next stage of their education. In Years 1 and 2, standards have risen in recent years to a little above average as a result of consistently good teaching. By Year 6, pupils' progress and achievements are satisfactory but they are better in English than in either mathematics or science. In 2006, English standards were average. They have risen since 2004 as a result of better use of assessments of pupils' progress and effective staff training to improve pupils' writing in particular, when the subject was a school priority. Both mathematics and science standards declined in 2006. Both were below average and there was some underachievement, particularly among more able pupils. These pupils' standards were below average when they were in Year 2, so they have made broadly satisfactory progress. The school has rightly identified weaknesses in teaching methods that are affecting pupils' confidence in accurately applying their mathematical calculation and problem solving skills. Too little emphasis is also being given to teaching scientific enquiry skills.

Pupils respect each other and behave very well. They readily take responsibility around the school and are thoughtful and generous to those less fortunate than themselves. They play a full part in the school and local community, for example, as members of the school choir. Pupils take seriously and act on the knowledge they gain about how to live healthy and safe lives and many participate in the many clubs and sports opportunities provided. Much has been done to make the curriculum stimulating through interesting topic work and good use of visits and visitors which contribute well to pupils' enjoyment of learning.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has led the school well through a difficult period when there have been many changes of staff. The school has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. The staff work well together but many are new or relatively inexperienced subject leaders and their role in monitoring and improving their subjects is not developed enough. The governing body also has a number of new members. While governors are very supportive, they are not yet confident enough to challenge the school's progress in its priorities. The school's ability to sustain further improvement is satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics and science by improving pupils' calculation skills and placing more emphasis on their acquisition of mathematical problem solving and scientific enquiry skills.

- Develop the role of subject leaders in monitoring and improving the school's performance, particularly their use of assessment information.
- Ensure that governors are well informed and challenge the school's progress in its key priorities so that weaknesses are tackled more quickly.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children make a good start in Reception. Their needs are assessed carefully and the stimulating curriculum and good teaching helps them to progress well. Many reach standards that are close to the goals expected nationally by the end of their Reception year. This good progress continues in Years 1 and 2 so that standards in reading, writing and mathematics are typically slightly above average by the end of Year 2.

In Years 3 to 6, pupils' progress has been uneven in the last few years. In 2006, pupils' progress was satisfactory but it was slower than the good progress evident in the previous year. English standards were the best and were about average. Mathematics and science standards were below average and there was some underachievement, particularly in mathematics. While pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities do reasonably well, too few of the more able pupils achieve above the expected standards nationally. The school missed its 2006 targets for Level 5 in this respect. Pupils' progress currently in mathematics and science is satisfactory. While the school is working hard to improve mathematics in particular, the full impact on pupils' achievement of changes is yet to be seen.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They enjoy good relationships with each other and with adults. Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils' behaviour is very good and they show care and concern in many ways. Playground friends and play leaders from Year 6 take responsibility for ensuring that playtimes are enjoyable experiences. Pupils say that there is very little bullying or harassment and when it does occur, staff deal with it very well. Excellent displays around the school add much to the encouraging environment for learning and pupils' enjoyment. There is a good partnership with parents to help promote pupils' diet and health. For example, a 'walking bus' to school has been established. The school shares lunch menus with parents. Pupils are taught about the importance of healthy eating choices and of exercise. Consequently, most pupils choose wisely at meal and snack times. Pupils' concern for others is evident in their successful efforts to raise considerable funds to help rebuild and support a school in Sierra Leone since 2003. Pupils also contribute well to their own school and local community through the many well attended clubs and competitive sports and develop a good understanding and respect for their own and other cultural traditions.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There is good teaching in the Reception class where pupils learn to relate well to each other and progress well, particularly in their communication and literacy skills. Teaching is also good in Years 1 and 2 and in English throughout the school. But teaching is not so effective in mathematics and science in Years 3 to 6. Pupils are not secure enough when solving mathematical problems and are making errors in calculations because they do not practise such skills enough. Neither are they building on their scientific investigation skills systematically. These aspects, recognised by the school, form the current focus of training to improve teachers' skills.

Lessons throughout the school are stimulating and capture pupils' interest. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well to enrich learning and illustrate class discussions. A recent innovation to encourage boys' creative writing through the use of pictures and DVD extracts is proving very successful. Teachers plan group activities adequately to match the range of abilities in the mixed age classes. Lesson objectives feature prominently so that pupils know what is expected of them. These are used well to give pupils feedback on how well they are doing through focussed marking and oral comments in lessons. Pupils have helpful targets for writing and more recently in mathematics, but are not yet skilled at using their targets to review their own work and progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum is enriched by many visitors, residential and day visits. They contribute much to pupils' personal development and enjoyment of school life. Year 6 pupils make a residential visit to an outdoor activity centre which helps develop their confidence and self esteem. Much has been done to make connections between subjects through interesting topic work and good use is made of ICT within subjects. The school is working to improve planning for mathematics and science. Pupils acquire sound basic skills, with strengths in literacy and ICT. They also readily take responsibility and learn to work both collaboratively and independently, which prepares them adequately for their future lives. Pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities are supported well in lessons and through small group work. There is a strong focus on citizenship and personal, social and health education. Pupils learn how to stay safe and understand ways of living healthily. The good range of clubs and other additional activities further enhance pupils' experiences, particularly in music and sports.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good levels of care, which parents and carers much appreciate. The school has effective systems for ensuring pupils' welfare and safety and for safeguarding them. Pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities are assessed and planned for specifically and adults review their progress regularly. The parent of one such child reports that, 'The staff have demonstrated time and again that they have the knowledge and understanding of my son's needs, providing extra support when needed'.

Teachers check and review aspects of pupils' academic progress regularly, particularly in reading and writing. Recent improvements to the pupil progress tracking systems in mathematics enable the school to intervene more promptly where potential underachievement is identified. These centralised systems do not extend far enough, particularly in not encompassing science and ICT. The school has good arrangements for children's induction to Reception and for the transition of the oldest pupils to secondary education.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher and his acting deputy lead the school well. The staff have established a very positive environment for learning, providing rich displays and good standards of care. Parents express confidence in the school's leadership, which has led it through a difficult period of staff changes. The post of deputy headteacher, for example, has been temporary for much of the last three years.

The school accurately diagnoses its strengths and weaknesses, drawing widely on the views of staff, parents and pupils and the school development plan is soundly based. The plan contains a lot of actions relating to many aspects of its work so that the few key areas are not prioritised sufficiently clearly. The senior management team lead many school developments. The role of some subject leaders is not developed enough to enable the school to drive forward planned improvements quickly. Some are new to their roles or are relatively inexperienced, for example, in analysing patterns in pupils' progress and observing teaching to guide the focus of their work. Governors too do not play a sufficiently central role in influencing the school's work. Many governors are relatively new and are still undergoing training. They support the school and help manage its finances but lack the confidence to challenge how well the school is doing in their role as a 'critical friends.'

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

23 January 2007

Dear Pupils

Engaines Primary School, St. Osyth Road East, Little Clacton, Clacton-on-Sea, CO16 9PH

Thank you for the polite way that you received me when I visited your school recently. I greatly enjoyed speaking with many of you in lessons and discussions. What you told me helped to confirm what your teachers, parents and governors had to say about your school. I thought you would like to know what I found out.

It was very clear to me how much you enjoy school life and you play very well together. Your behaviour is very good and you clearly enjoy learning in lessons. I think that you receive a satisfactory education and there are a number of good features. The wonderful displays around the school provide a very welcoming and lively environment in which to learn. You also take part in many clubs, visits and sports activities. I was impressed with how much the school council has done to provide toys for playtime and to help provide healthier options at meal times. The school teaches you about how to live healthy and fit lives and it was pleasing to see that most of you are taking up this advice. You are also very thoughtful of other children less fortunate than yourselves. The work the school has done to improve the lives of children in Sierra Leone with the help of your fund raising is very heartening.

Those of you in Reception get off to a good start at Engaines Primary and you acquire good levels of knowledge and skills in reading, writing and mathematics by Year 2. Older pupils are doing quite well in English. Your teachers have been working hard to improve this subject. But mathematics and science have not been quite as good. I have asked Mr Brown and the staff to help you to carry out calculations and solve mathematical problems with greater confidence and also to provide more opportunities for you to carry out science investigations for yourselves. You can help them, especially in mathematics, by checking your work closely and regularly reviewing how well you are working towards your targets.

The staff and governors are always looking for ways of making your education even better. Mr Brown agrees that teachers who are in charge of subjects should be even more involved in checking and improving how well their subject is doing. The governors are also going to be more involved in checking the school's progress.

With all good wishes for your future at Engaines Primary School.

Ray Jardine Lead Inspector