

Ten Mile Bank Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120875
Local Authority	NORFOLK
Inspection number	291890
Inspection date	8 June 2007
Reporting inspector	John Francis

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	23
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Colin Wills
Headteacher	Mr John Ward
Date of previous school inspection	17 September 2001
School address	Station Road Ten Mile Bank Downham Market Norfolk PE38 0EP
Telephone number	01366377310
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a very small primary school serving the rural community in and around the village of Ten Mile Bank. There are almost twice as many girls as boys. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage but a small number of recently admitted pupils do not have English as their first language. More pupils than average are eligible for a free school meal. The number of children with learning difficulties or disabilities is above average. Attainment on entry shows significant fluctuations but over time, evidence indicates that when children start school standards are broadly in line with those expected for this age. The school has experienced significant turbulence in staffing over a number of years and only recently has this become more stable. The headteacher has been in post for almost five terms.

The school has a Healthy Schools award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

After a period of poor achievement and very low standards a corner has been turned and the school is improving. The school now provides a satisfactory education for its pupils and satisfactory value for money. The drive and commitment of the headteacher over the past 18 months has improved teaching and learning, the curriculum, assessment systems and pupils' attitudes. This improvement in provision demonstrates a satisfactory capacity for further improvement. Reception children settle well and make satisfactory progress with most achieving the expected levels by the time they move into Year 1. Progress is also now satisfactory among pupils in later years. Even so, the long legacy of underachievement is still seen in the below average standards of pupils in Years 5 and 6, particularly basic numeracy skills. However, in other years, improvements mean that standards are now broadly in line with those expected for pupils of this age. While standards for the older pupils remain below average, their information and communication technology (ICT) skills, good social skills and ability to work together prepare them for their future education and life beyond school.

Satisfactory teaching, supported by a satisfactory and improving curriculum, provides a firm base for the school to move forward. Good lesson planning caters for the wide range of ages and needs in each class. Pupils' personal development is good; they demonstrate good attitudes and concentrate well. Pupils' good social and moral development is reflected in their good behaviour and the way they welcome and integrate new children into school. Pupils feel safe and well supported. They show good understanding of how to stay healthy and keep themselves safe from harassment or danger. The care, guidance and support provided for pupils are good and the necessary systems are in place to ensure they are looked after. More recent improvements to the assessment and recording systems enable teachers to track pupils' progress accurately. However, marking does not always identify the recurring errors that pupils make and use these to set short-term targets for improvement.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has made vital improvements that are beginning to bear fruit. From an accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses, the improvement plan targets the most important challenges facing the school. However, its weakness is in not clearly identifying what these outcomes will look like when they have been achieved to guide the monitoring of progress to them. Governors are willing and committed but have not had the understanding needed to question the school's poor performance in past years. They still lack systems that would enable them to find out for themselves what is happening in school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards by Year 6 and, in particular, improve pupils' basic numeracy skills.
- Target the errors in pupils' work more effectively to fill the gaps in their knowledge.
- Make the intended outcomes in the school's improvement plan clearly measurable so progress can be evaluated more easily.
- Increase the governors' involvement in direct monitoring so that they can evaluate the effectiveness of the school and their own contribution more accurately.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards have been very low for some years and until this year most pupils have made inadequate progress during their time in school. National test and assessment results in 2006 show standards well below those normally seen in Years 2 and 6; standards in mathematics were exceptionally low. However, they showed a small overall improvement that has been built on during this current year. Monitoring and guidance by the headteacher has improved planning, assessment and tracking of pupils' progress. As a result, current standards in Reception and in Years 1 to 4 are now those broadly expected and pupils are achieving in line with their capabilities. While this is a sound start, there is still work to be done to improve this to a uniform level. The legacy of underachievement is still evident in Years 5 and 6 where, although improvement is clearly seen and pupils are currently making satisfactory progress, standards remain below average. Mathematics continues to be an area of weakness and the school's leadership has put in place a number of strategies that are leading to improvement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall with good social and moral development. Good behaviour and positive attitudes to school and work can be seen in their improving attendance, better application to learning and generally higher achievement. Pupils are secure in the knowledge that adults in school will respond to any problems they may have. As a result, the school is a calm and welcoming place. Newcomers from different cultures and backgrounds are quickly absorbed into the school's community. Pupils have a good understanding of what they need to stay safe and healthy. They make a sound contribution to the wider community and the school council makes a valuable contribution to the life and work of the school. Their suggestions have led, for example, to major physical improvements to the building. However, there are fewer opportunities for other pupils to have such a level of active involvement.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The headteacher's drive for improvement has made teaching much more consistent across the school, in spite of the many changes in staff. Good planning for the wide age and ability range has resulted in improvements to pupils' learning and progress. Teaching methods motivate pupils and engage their interest. As a result, they are ready to learn and contribute willingly to lessons. Pupils' books show clear improvement and progress over time, although there remain weaknesses in presentation. The neat writing seen in pupils' practice books is not transferring to other written work. Pupils work together well and apply themselves to their tasks. Teachers and pupils make good and regular use of computers and other technology to make lessons interesting and enhance learning. There are some weaknesses, for example, while pupils' work is regularly marked, the marking does not address the long-standing errors pupils make and use these effectively to target the gaps in their knowledge and understanding.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

A thorough review by the headteacher has produced a broad and balanced curriculum that meets the needs of the wide age and ability range in the classes. This is suitably enriched by a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities and additional projects such as themed days, much enjoyed by the pupils. However, the development of basic literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum is not yet securely embedded in long-term planning. Consequently, pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to practise and reinforce the skills they need. Regular use of ICT in lessons develops pupils' computer skills and links with the work being done to enhance their basic skills in literacy and numeracy. Effective 'catch-up' programmes are used for those pupils who have not made as much progress as they should. These are well supported by the work of teaching assistants. For those pupils who show particular talents, additional provision is made in cooperation with other local schools. The improved outdoor provision for Reception children enables them to experience the full range of physical and creative activities necessary for children of this age. There is a suitable emphasis on personal, social and health education, providing pupils with a secure understanding of what they need to do to stay healthy and form good relationships.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The arrangements for child protection and safeguarding meet current requirements and reflect the priority the school places on pupils' safety and well-being. Relationships with parents are very strong and reflected in their written comments. For example, 'Never before have I witnessed such an open-door policy or been invited to take part in so many extra-curricular events in the school'. The school has secure systems to check on how much progress pupils make in reading, writing and mathematics and intervene where they feel progress is slipping. Pupils' performance in these subjects is monitored and evaluated to set suitable long-term targets for improvement. However, few pupils know what their targets are or what they need to do to move on to the next level in their work. Equality of opportunity is actively and successfully promoted. Class teachers and teaching assistants provide good support for pupils with learning difficulties so that they make similar progress to their peers. Effective support in school for pupils at the early stages of learning English has enabled them to make good progress in developing their spoken language.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Since taking up the post the headteacher has carefully and accurately evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of the school. From these, he has put in place a sound plan to address the long-standing weaknesses in achievement and standards. This improvement plan is detailed, addresses the core issues facing the school and provides a sound basis for the school's development. There has been good progress on many issues, although the instability in staffing has slowed down some of these. However, the plan does not clearly identify what the expected outcomes of its priorities will look like and this makes it more difficult to measure the progress and success of these initiatives. Good support and guidance is provided to staff which is helping to improve teaching quality in particular.

There are weaknesses in governance. While the governing body is now much better informed about standards and pupils' achievement, it relies too heavily on information from others. Governors are not sufficiently involved in long-term strategic planning for the school and have no systems in place that would enable them to gather information for themselves. As a result, their ability to evaluate the school's progress or their own effectiveness is limited. The available finance has been used well to make major improvements to the fabric of the school and the facilities. This has resulted in a warm and welcoming place where children enjoy learning and are now achieving greater success.

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Annex A

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	3
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	3
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	3
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?	3
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.

Annex A

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	4
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

12 June 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Ten Mile Bank Primary School, Downham Market, PE38 0EP

You will remember that I visited your school a little while ago. I want to thank you for making me welcome. I was pleased that those of you I talked with enjoyed school and wanted to share your work and ideas. This letter is to tell you what I found out about your school.

Mr Ward has worked very hard to make your school bright, attractive and an interesting place to come to. I also like the way the school council works to improve your school. You have responded well to the changes and most of you enjoy school, work hard and try your best. I can see that you are improving all the time, although you do need to get better at your number work and take more care in your writing and presentation. You said your lessons were interesting and in the ones I saw I would certainly agree with you, particularly the way you and the teachers use your computers to help you learn. You also said that everyone in school gets on well and I can see this in the way you work and play together and welcome new children to school. I thought you behaved really well.

While some of you know about the targets you are working towards and what you need to do to get better this is not the case for most of you. To help you get even better we have asked your teachers to make sure that they tell you exactly what you are going to learn and that when they mark your work they help you to correct some of the regular mistakes you make. You can help here by making sure you take notice of what your teachers say you need to work on. One other thing I have asked Mr Ward and the governors to do is to make sure that, when they are planning what the school needs to do to get better, they have good ways in which they can check how well they have done them.

John Francis

Lead Inspector