



Queensway Infant School and Nursery

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 120897
Local Authority NORFOLK
Inspection number 291902
Inspection dates 9–10 October 2006
Reporting inspector Marina Gough

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	Queensway
School category	Community		Thetford
Age range of pupils	3–7		Norfolk IP24 3DR
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01842 753163
Number on roll (school)	109	Fax number	01842 761284
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr R Mitchell
		Headteacher	Mrs L Grainger
Date of previous school inspection	19 March 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3–7	9–10 October 2006	291902

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors over a period of two days.

Description of the school

The school is situated in the centre of a large housing estate on the outskirts of Thetford. Most children live within walking distance of the school. The percentage of children known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than the national average. A significant number of children come to school with very poor social and language skills, and a higher than average number of children have learning difficulties and disabilities. There are high levels of pupils who join and leave the school part way through the taught year, and an increasing and higher than average number of children are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The school is part of an Excellence Cluster and has 'Healthy Schools' status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school knows itself well, and its self-evaluation paints a clear picture of its relative strengths and weaknesses which the inspection findings fully endorse. Overall, the school provides a satisfactory quality of education, enabling children to move forwards in their learning and to make at least satisfactory progress. The school's real strength lies in the way in which it works in partnership with families to remove barriers to the children's learning. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory, and the school gives satisfactory value for money. The provision for children in the Nursery and Reception classes is good, and has some outstanding features. Teaching in this key stage is lively, well focused and stimulating, and the children are enthused by the wide range of exciting and relevant activities that are provided for them. Teachers make regular observations of the children so that they can effectively plan the next steps in the children's learning. Children of all abilities in the Nursery and Reception classes make good progress, but because of their exceptionally low starting point, their attainment in terms of their mathematical, linguistic and social development is still well below the level expected for their age when they move onto Year 1. In Year 1 and Year 2, teaching is satisfactory and so pupils' achievement is sound. Individual lessons are often interesting and well managed, and teachers do much to bring the children's learning to life. Relationships between all adults and children are excellent. However, the use of assessment to closely track the children's progress and to monitor their attainment is only in its infancy. Staff are not always confident when grading the children's work using national curriculum levels, and as a result, targets for individual children, and the means of achieving them, are not always crystal clear. Standards in Year 2 are below average. This is partly because of the above average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. The school offers children in Key Stage 1 a good variety of learning experiences, but as the senior management team has already identified, there are occasions when time is not used to its maximum impact, and important learning opportunities are therefore missed. Teachers provide a good range of extra activities including clubs, and visits to places of local interest, which have a positive impact on the children's learning by successfully extending their knowledge and understanding of the world in which they live. The children's personal development is good. From an early age children are encouraged to be independent, and to make choices about their learning. As a result, they are happy, confident and sociable youngsters who enjoy talking about their work. Pupils make a good contribution to the community. The School Council meets regularly and provides a good forum for the children to express their ideas and views to the staff. The school has achieved 'Healthy Schools' status, and the children are very knowledgeable about the ways they can keep healthy and fit. The school provides excellent additional levels of support and guidance for children who attend the nurture group, and effectively meets the needs of those children who have English as an additional language, and learning difficulties. The staff work well as a team and together with the headteacher and governing body are committed to bringing about further improvements and to raising standards. The monitoring role of key staff and governors is not yet fully developed, and so progress towards targets is not always as purposeful as it might be.

The headteacher has worked exceptionally hard to develop a good relationship with parents, and has earned their confidence and support. Issues such as attendance have been tackled jointly and as a result there has been a significant reduction in the rate of absence over recent years. Parents are very pleased with the school, and are beginning to respond well to new initiatives, such as reading workshops, which have been introduced to raise standards in this area.

What the school should do to improve further

As identified in the school improvement plan, the school should: - improve standards by ensuring that staff in Years 1 and 2 are confident about accurately assessing children's work so that they can plan more precisely the next steps in the children's learning - make the best use possible of the available teaching time, especially in the afternoon sessions - improve the monitoring skills of all leaders so that improvements move forward at a good pace and developments remain closely linked to the identified.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The achievement of pupils is satisfactory. The children's starting point when they join the Nursery class is often extremely low, especially in terms of their language skills, and their social development. Despite making good progress, the children's attainment when they join Year 1 is still well below the nationally expected level for this age group. In Year 1 and Year 2, children make satisfactory progress from a significantly below expected starting point, but they still struggle with reading, writing and basic calculations. Standards in Year 2 are below average and the evidence seen on inspection confirms this. The school sets appropriately challenging targets, but they are not always achieved. Children with learning difficulties and disabilities are well supported so that they make similar progress to that of their classmates. The school caters well for the increasing number of children who come from families where English is not the main language.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The children's personal development and well-being are good. The children develop well as young people because of all that the school does to help them. They learn to get on well with others, to keep to the rules and to be polite and friendly. They enjoy doing jobs, for example as dinner monitors, that help the school to run well. The school gives children the chance to shine, in activities such as singing in the choir, or performing in assembly. The children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good. Children of all ages behave well in lessons and around the school. They play together sociably and cooperatively. Pupils are prepared satisfactorily for their next stage of education. Attendance is satisfactory and has improved significantly over the past year because of the school's efforts in working closely with parents. Children love coming to school, and they grow in confidence because they are valued as individuals.

They have a good understanding of the importance of exercise and healthy eating and how to keep themselves safe.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teachers are skilled in managing the children, and in motivating them in their learning. Individual lessons are well planned and prepared. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to the children's learning by offering additional support to those who are having difficulties. The weaker element of teaching is the use of assessment information in Years 1 and 2 when planning the next stage in the children's learning. Staff are not always precise enough when they grade the children's work, and as a result, the next steps that need to be taken for individual children are not always clearly identified. In the Nursery and Reception classes, teaching is good. Activities are stimulating, and do much to promote the children's personal development, as well as providing good opportunity for the ongoing development of their basic skills.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum and other activities are sound. The curriculum for the children in the Nursery and Reception classes is good. Activities are well matched to the needs of the children, and outstanding use is made of the outside learning area in the Nursery as a learning resource. The school provides a satisfactory curriculum for children in Year 1 and Year 2 that is well enriched by a good variety of clubs, visits and visiting speakers. However, the time in the afternoon sessions is not always used to best effect because of where the afternoon break is situated. The school has already identified this problem, and is looking at a variety of solutions. Children speak enthusiastically about their work, and they especially like physical education and art.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The level of care and support provided by the school for children and their families is good and a major strength. The school does much to help overcome the barriers to learning which many children face, and lays firm foundations for their success in school and beyond. Excellent aspects of this provision include the nurture group, which builds children's social skills and confidence in learning, and the family support work which creates an exceptionally positive partnership with parents. Vulnerable children and those with learning difficulties and disabilities are cared for very well so that they are able to take a full and active part in school life, and develop good levels of self-esteem. The school sets targets for older pupils' learning, but these could be clearer to ensure that children achieve even more effectively.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher provides a clear sense of direction and fosters excellent relationships throughout the school community. Governors fulfil their roles satisfactorily. The governing body is well led and very supportive of the school, although it finds some difficulty in evaluating how well the school is doing. The school runs smoothly, and children thrive in an orderly environment. The school has moved forward well since the last inspection, and has dealt appropriately with key issues identified then. The school has a satisfactory capacity to improve in the future. Currently, the school's self-evaluation shows that it has a clear and honest picture of its own strengths and weaknesses. It identifies areas for improvement, but it is not as clear in pinpointing the action needed to bring about this improvement. Arrangements are in place for monitoring teaching and learning, and assessing pupils' progress, but these are not focused sharply enough on how pupils could learn better. The school has effective procedures to safeguard children, and to ensure their health and safety. The school works particularly well with other agencies to provide all-round support where it is needed.

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?	2
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?	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.

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	2
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

11 October 2006 Dear Children Queensway Infant School and Nursery, Queensway, Thetford, Norfolk, IP24 3DR I am sure you will remember that I visited your school a short while ago to look at your work, and to find out what you thought about school. I had a lovely time, and really enjoyed talking to you, and sharing some of your activities. From the first morning I arrived, I was pleased with the kind way you treated one another, and the polite way you spoke to me and your teachers. You know a lot about being healthy and staying safe, and you told me that you can go to any of your teachers if you have a problem or are feeling poorly. You like your work, especially PE and art. When you are in the nursery and reception classes you take part in many exciting activities and do well. In the infant classes, many of you struggle with your reading, writing and number work, and although I know you try hard, I would be pleased if you could do even better. I have asked your teachers to give you a very clear picture of what you need to do next so that you can see how you can improve your work further. I have also asked them to try to fit more activities into the day so that you are working hard from when you start in the morning to when you finish. Your headteacher and the other teachers get on well together, and they have firm plans in place to make Queensway a better school. I have asked your teachers to spend more time sharing ideas with one another, so that they can find new ways of doing things, and to visit other classes so that they know what is going on right through the school. I know that your parents and guardians are very pleased with the school, and this is mainly because your headteacher and teachers give them lots of information, and suggest ways they might help you at home with your work. Marina Gough Lead inspector