

St George's First and Nursery School, Great Yarmouth

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120972
Local Authority	NORFOLK
Inspection number	291929
Inspection dates	27–28 June 2007
Reporting inspector	David Wynford-Jones

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–8
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	261
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Margaret Ellis
Headteacher	Mrs Anne Robinson
Date of previous school inspection	19 November 2001
School address	St Peter's Road Great Yarmouth Norfolk NR30 3BQ
Telephone number	01493 843476
Fax number	01493 745398

Age group	3–8
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is of a similar size to most primary schools but the number on roll is expected to fall when the school becomes an Infant and Nursery School in September 2008. Pupils come from an area of social disadvantage. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is well above the national average. The proportion of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and disabilities, those who speak English as an additional language, and those who come from minority ethnic groups are above the national averages. The proportion of pupils joining and leaving the school is also above the national figures. The school holds the Norfolk 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

This is a satisfactory school which provides sound value for money. Pupils feel safe and are developing their social skills well. This is because the leaders and managers of the school have successfully placed great emphasis on providing the pupils with a secure and supportive environment. They ensure that pupils develop a positive attitude to school and make good progress in their personal development. The level of care, guidance and support is good.

Overall, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Children enter the Nursery and Reception classes with skills below those expected for their age. The vast majority make sound progress from a low starting point. Standards by the end of Year 3 are below the expected levels. Teachers' assessments standards at the end of Year 2 in 2006, are exceptionally low in reading and writing and below the national average in mathematics. This year, teachers assess standards in reading and writing and mathematics to be slightly higher but still below national average. Pupils' performance in mathematics is again better than that in reading and writing. The below average standards, to some extent, can be attributed to the increasing number of pupils entering the school in Years 1 and 2 with little or no knowledge of English.

Until recently, the leadership team did not focus enough on raising standards. Nevertheless, leadership and management are satisfactory because the pupils make satisfactory academic progress. In addition, their personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Pupils have a good understanding of how to lead healthy lives, stay safe and make a good contribution to the community. They enjoy their education because the school provides a good curriculum. They particularly like the links made between subjects. The behaviour of the vast majority is good, but this sometimes lapses when teaching lacks pace and interest. Pupils' positive attitude towards learning provides them with a sound basis for their future lives. Attendance is satisfactory, although it is below the national average. The low attendance is caused by too many pupils taking holidays in term time and a few pupils whose attendance is not good enough.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Some of the teaching is good. The better lessons are well planned. Teachers have good subject knowledge and high expectations; they ask searching questions and teach basic skills well. Pupils make good progress in these lessons. However, in too many lessons teaching is only satisfactory because the pace of lessons is slow and teachers tend to focus on promoting pupils' social skills rather than their academic development. The monitoring of teaching does not focus sufficiently on pupils' attainment and progress. Hence, it does not help teachers to place the right emphasis on pupils' learning. Pupils are aware of their targets, but some are too general and they are not given sufficient guidance on how to achieve them. Access to the information contained in the school's system for tracking pupils' progress is difficult and time consuming. It is not always used effectively to set challenging targets or to evaluate the school's performance. This results in some of the school's self evaluation judgments being over-optimistic. The school development plan has too many priorities and the measures by which it can be evaluated are not precise or sufficiently well linked to outcomes. Governance is satisfactory; governors are supportive but do not challenge the leadership team enough.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and improve pupils' achievement in reading and writing.

- Use assessment information more efficiently and effectively to track pupils' progress, set more challenging targets and evaluate the school's performance.
- Improve the quality of teaching by more rigorous monitoring and evaluation and a strong focus pupils' learning.
- Refine the school improvement plan by reducing the number of priorities and by clearly identifying the measures by which its success can be evaluated.

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

The vast majority of children start in the Nursery with skills below those typical for their age. They develop their social and physical skills well so that, by the time they start in Year 1, these are in line with the standards expected nationally. However, very few pupils achieve the expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics. From Year 1 to the end of Year 3 pupils make satisfactory progress. Pupils joining the school from abroad, particularly those who speak English as an additional language, are quickly integrated into the life of the school. They and pupils with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress because they receive good support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils have a good sense of right and wrong and relate well to each other and to adults. Their social skills are developed well. Pupils support each other well as 'playground buddies' and enjoy using the large play equipment in the playground. The vast majority like school and their behaviour and attitudes to learning are good. Most work hard and are eager to do well, they grow in confidence and self-esteem as they move through the school. Pupils' knowledge of other cultures is developing well and they are keen to contribute to the wider community and take responsibility. Members of the school council have an adequate understanding of their responsibilities. Despite the school's best efforts, the attendance of some pupils is not good enough. Satisfactory progress in the basic skills of English and mathematics means that pupils are satisfactorily prepared for their next step in education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

All teachers have secure subject knowledge and manage their pupils well through good relationships. Pupils say they 'like their teachers and know that they will always help them'. Teachers who teach the same year group work well together to provide interesting lessons and make good use of drama and visits to capture pupils' enthusiasm for learning. Teaching assistants are proficient and provide good support for groups and individuals. Teachers are not always deploying them profitably, especially during whole-class sessions. Pupils at an early stage of learning English receive very good bi-lingual support which helps them settle into school happily. Teaching is satisfactory for children in the Foundation Stage where the good provision for pupils' personal development helps them make good progress in developing social skills and positive attitudes to learning.

There are two main reasons why teaching is not better: firstly, teaching is not checked with enough rigour to help teachers improve it more quickly. Secondly, teachers are not given precise information about the levels their pupils should be achieving at the end of the year. As a result, some teachers do not always have high enough expectations.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets the needs of pupils well. The good range of visitors and visits in particular make a good contribution to pupils' personal development. Staff have worked hard to make relevant links between subjects so that lessons are interesting and purposeful. They are now revising the overall plan to make sure that enough time is allocated for practising and improving basic literacy and numeracy skills. The Healthy School's award ensures a curriculum which successfully promotes pupils' understanding of how to eat healthily and keep fit. The good range of clubs and sporting activities are well attended and usually oversubscribed.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school is justified in identifying its caring and nurturing ethos as the cornerstone in its work. Pupils feel safe and secure. Those needing extra help are particularly well catered for. The more vulnerable pupils benefit significantly from the work of the Nurture Group. The strong links with outside agencies ensure pupils get the support needed to help them progress satisfactorily. Procedures to promote good behaviour and safety are fully in place, ensuring that incidences of challenging behaviour are kept to a minimum. Policies and procedures for protecting and safeguarding children are robust. The involvement and support of parents is not as wholehearted as the school would wish, but the school is working hard, and with some success, to improve this. Academic guidance is satisfactory, but the school could make better use of the data it collects to provide precisely targeted support for all pupils, not just those with particular needs.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school operates smoothly on a day-to-day basis. Leaders and managers have established a good nurturing environment in which pupils develop their personal skills well. Greater emphasis is now being placed on raising standards by increasingly holding teachers to account for the progress pupils make and the standards they achieve. However, greater rigour is still required in this process. A broadly satisfactory system to track pupils' progress is in place and the information is starting to be used to monitor pupils' progress and to set targets. The format of the tracking system is not easily accessible and obtaining accurate group or whole school information is time consuming. Many of the earlier assessments on which pupils' progress is assessed are not secure. The school development plan is not monitored with sufficient rigour. Nevertheless, the school has taken appropriate steps to bring about sound improvements since the last inspection and has satisfactory capacity to improve.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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	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	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.

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	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

29 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St George's First and Nursery School, St Peter's Road, Great Yarmouth. Norfolk.
NR30 3BQ

Thank you very much for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We really enjoyed our visit and talking to you. We thought that you were very friendly and polite. Your behaviour in class and in the playground was good. We were very pleased to hear that you like coming to school but surprised that the attendance of so many of you is not as regular as it should be.

Your school is a satisfactory school. Your headteacher and teachers work hard to make certain that you are safe, well cared for and enjoy school, (especially those wonderful trips to places of interest). They look after you very well, help you to settle into school and to get on with each other. You have certainly learnt a lot about being healthy and being safe. You have a lovely playground and you use the equipment carefully and sensibly. We were very impressed by your work around the school and the way you look after things. Although the standards you reach in reading, writing and mathematics are not as good as those in most schools you do make satisfactory progress. You have made a lot of improvements in your writing recently. Well done!

Your school can improve further. Your teachers could sometimes help you to learn faster. To help them do this, they will need to make better use the information they have about your work and the progress you are making in order to set you more challenging targets. The governors can also help by making sure that the school does not plan to do too many things at once and to concentrate on improving your standards in reading and writing. You too can play your part by working hard and by being in school. Your teacher cannot teach you if you are not there.

Once again, thank you for making our visit so enjoyable.

Best wishes

David Wynford Jones Lead Inspector