



Cliff Park First School, Gorleston

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 120980
Local Authority NORFOLK
Inspection number 291933
Inspection dates 2–3 October 2006
Reporting inspector Trevor Watts

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

Type of school	First	School address	Orde Avenue
School category	Community		Gorleston-on-sea, Gorleston-on-sea
Age range of pupils	5–8		Great Yarmouth, Norfolk NR31 6SZ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01493 661523
Number on roll (school)	320	Fax number	01493 400211
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Ian Ward
		Headteacher	Mrs Janet Rigby
Date of previous school inspection	22 November 1999		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
5–8	2–3 October 2006	291933

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a large first school with pupils from Reception to Year 3. Pupils come from a wide range of socio-economic circumstances in and around the coastal town of Gorleston, just south of Great Yarmouth. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is low. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities is a little higher than average. The school is expected to become an infant school in 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Cliff Park First School provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. It is emerging from a period of uncertainty over plans for its reorganisation that has lasted for several years. The new headteacher was made permanent at the start of term after being the acting headteacher for the past year when she successfully managed developments, including the on-going refurbishment of the premises. However, despite the re-structuring of staff roles and the imminent appointment of a permanent deputy headteacher, there are too few staff with management responsibilities to properly support the headteacher. Consequently, the school's capacity for further improvement is satisfactory, rather than good. Throughout the unsettled period, satisfactory standards have largely been maintained. Children enter Reception with skill levels around national expectations. Progress is satisfactory through the school, and pupils achieve soundly. When pupils leave at the end of Year 3, standards are at, or a little above, that expected for pupils of that age. By analysing the pupils' performance data, staff identified weaknesses in aspects of English, and took clear action to provide a range of extra support activities for the pupils who were falling behind. Checks at the end of the summer term 2006 showed these measures to be successful, and standards had risen again. The school's monitoring of teaching has identified a satisfactory overall picture. There are strengths to be shared, such as very positive relationships in classes, and clear structuring of lessons. What the monitoring has not done so well is to identify and correct some weaker areas such as a rather slow pace to some lessons, and work that is not hard enough to stretch all pupils. Teachers are good at checking pupils' progress, especially in mathematics and English, but tend not to use the information well when planning their lesson activities and setting targets to help pupils to improve. Consequently, pupils' recent good progress owes as much to the extra support that was introduced as it does to improvements in class teaching. A good curriculum has been maintained and further developed. Pupils learn sound basic skills, know how to look after themselves well, and satisfactorily learn how to help their community. Pupils' attendance is a little below the national average but the school does not approach this issue with enough vigour, except for occasional pupils whose attendance is particularly poor. Staff are developing very positive communications with parents, although a few parents believe they could be further improved. With the close support of the school's governors, staff morale has been kept high during a period that continues to be uncertain.

What the school should do to improve further

- Further raise standards in English by improving the quality and pace of teaching.
- Make better use of information about pupils' progress when setting targets and planning lesson activities.
- Develop management roles and responsibilities in support of the headteacher and other staff.
- Make more effort to improve attendance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children progress satisfactorily in the Reception classes, but make good progress in developing social and personal skills. They enter Year 1 at about the level that is nationally expected. Sound progress sees pupils achieving satisfactorily, and attaining around or a little above national averages at the end of Year 2. Much recent additional support resulted in good test results by Year 2 and 3 pupils of all ability levels in 2006. A good number of Year 3 pupils exceeded the expected standard for their age, mostly in reading, but also in writing and mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' good personal, social and moral development is reflected in their clear ideas about what is right and wrong and in their good behaviour in lessons and outside at play. Spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory. Highlights, such as festivals and visits to places of worship, bring a real sense of joy and wonderment. As one boy said as he heard the music in church, 'I felt all icicles down my back!' However, day-to-day lessons often lack this sparkle. Pupils know how to be safe, especially on the nearby beaches, sea and river. They eat healthily, but many have insufficient exercise each week. Pupils' contribution to their own community is hampered because the school council does not meet regularly, but they willingly raise funds for local causes, including the lifeboat service. Sound basic skills prepare pupils satisfactorily for their futures. However, some pupils do not have the confidence to approach tasks independently. Although pupils enjoy coming to school, their attendance is a little below national levels because the school is not assertive enough in urging parents not to take long holidays in term time.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Pupils look forward to their lessons. They feel positive about learning because they get on well with the adults in the classroom. Teaching assistants provide good support for less able pupils, or those whose home language is not English, helping them to progress as well as their classmates. Teachers plan well together and so give all pupils equal access to the full curriculum. Teachers methodically check how each pupil is doing, and use the information effectively to pinpoint support outside the class to boost achievement in English and mathematics. However, teachers are not all equally good at using this information to plan work to match the needs of individuals within each class. A more able pupil in a Year 3 class commented, 'I'm sure I could do harder work'. Good teaching is not consistent enough through the school. In some lessons

the pace is too slow, leaving insufficient time for pupils to find things out through first hand experience, so their learning is no better than satisfactory.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum includes a relevant range of experiences, well tailored to pupils' interests and needs. For example, Reception children find things out for themselves by using the stimulating outdoor area to develop mathematical understanding as well as for physical and creative play. The recent strong emphasis on reading has seen the curriculum enriched by visits by an author and the new county library van. The library has been refurbished and restocked for pupils to enjoy and borrow books. Good work in information and communication technology (ICT) is planned, but is not yet fully used to support learning in other subjects. A developing approach encourages pupils to think and work together through practical activities, for example when trying to discover why the Great Fire of London spread so quickly. There are regular visits to places of interest such as the Time and Tide Museum. Many pupils attend the very wide range of clubs and activities provided out of school-time, including dance, gardening, homework and the library.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Induction arrangements for pupils starting school are outstanding. Pupils moving to the neighbouring middle school also have good opportunities to become familiar with their next school and are well prepared to go there. Parents' views of the school are mainly very positive, 'I feel privileged to be in the catchment area,' wrote one parent. There are also strengths in the ways in which staff work with outside agencies and local schools to provide a supportive environment in which pupils feel safe. Child protection arrangements are firmly in place and pupils know that adults will listen to their concerns. Procedures for safeguarding pupils meet current requirements. The school provides satisfactory academic guidance. There are clear systems for tracking pupils' progress but this information is not used well to set specific targets for some pupils who then do not know what they need to do to improve their learning. Pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities receive good support, as do looked-after pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory, but improving rapidly under the effective guidance of the new headteacher. Governors are supportive and are preparing well for the coming reorganisation. They are involved in the day-to-day life of the school and further training is imminent. However, they have not been sufficiently challenging in holding the school to account for what it achieves. Although some monitoring of teaching has taken place, it has given an over-generous picture of learning in lessons.

Some shortcomings have not been targeted, and so the considerable improvements in pupils' reading and writing during the past year are due as much to extra support as to better class teaching. School self-evaluation is satisfactory but, in judging the leadership and management to be good, the school gives itself premature credit for the success of measures that have not been in place for long enough to have been effective. Recognising this, and the difficulties still to be faced, the school agrees that its capacity to improve is satisfactory.

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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?	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	3
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?	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

4 October 2006 Dear Pupils Cliff Park First School, Orde Avenue, Gorleston-on-Sea, Norfolk, NR31 6SZ I'm sure that most of you will remember not long ago when three inspectors visited your school and came into classes. Thank you for talking to us and showing us the work you were doing. We found that you go to a school that is getting better all the time, and you are learning at about the rate we would expect. Your new headteacher works well with your teachers and with the governors who help to run the school. She is doing a lot to make things better for you. The buildings are already much better than they were, and are going to improve more. Some of your lessons are really good and exciting. You learn lots of good things, go out of school on interesting visits, and have different people coming into school to help the teachers. We saw mathematics and history lessons and lessons in Reception that were especially good. You enjoy them and behave well. But we also saw some lessons that were quite slow, when teachers spent a long time explaining and you lost interest, because you wanted to be getting on with things yourselves. Some of you told us that your work was quite easy. We think some things could get better: - We would like to see some of your work made more difficult, so you have to think and work harder. - We would like staff to make sure that you all understand your targets and how to improve your work. - The head teacher needs to organise the teachers to help her run the school. - We want the school to encourage your parents not to take you on long holidays when you should be in school. With my very best wishes Trevor Watts Lead Inspector