



St Mary's Community Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 121011
Local Authority NORFOLK
Inspection number 291952
Inspection dates 11–12 October 2006
Reporting inspector Roger Sadler

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Elmham Road
School category	Community		Beetley, Beetley
Age range of pupils	4–11		Dereham, Norfolk NR20 4BW
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01362 860114
Number on roll (school)	207	Fax number	01362 860114
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Glynn Burrows
		Headteacher	Mr Charles Phillips
Date of previous school inspection	11 October 1999		

Age group 4–11	Inspection dates 11–12 October 2006	Inspection number 291952
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors

Description of the school

Pupils come to this school mostly from Beetley and the local area and are taught in seven single-year classes. Almost all pupils are from White British families and most are from advantaged economic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average. The leadership of the school has gone through an unsettled period since October 2004 due to long-term absence and retirement of key staff. The school has had acting leadership for over a year.

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 provides a satisfactory education. Leadership and management are currently improving after a period of uncertainty and are now satisfactory. Until very recently delegation of leadership roles was limited. The senior management team and subject leaders, although individually hard-working and enthusiastic, had too few opportunities and too little guidance on how to carry out their leadership roles consistently and effectively. This left senior managers and subject leaders ill-equipped to lead the school when required. Although the school was managed efficiently on a day-to-day basis, monitoring and evaluation were inadequate. This resulted in inconsistencies in the quality of education provided by the school. The quality of teaching, because of the effective work of individual teachers, is satisfactory overall, but inconsistencies in teaching have gone unrecognised and unaddressed. For example, although sometimes good, the quality of marking is inconsistent and the school lacks an effective system to set and remind pupils of their targets. This occasionally slows their progress. Chances are missed by teachers in lessons to give pupils a clear understanding of how to improve specific aspects of their work. Since the appointment of an acting headteacher in the summer term of 2006 and a new management team, monitoring and evaluation have already begun to improve and are now satisfactory. The acting headteacher has quickly gained the full support of the staff and the new senior management team has already gained a clear understanding of what needs to be done. A sound school improvement plan has been prepared and work has begun to bring about greater consistency in the quality of education. For example, the curriculum has been revised and staff now benefit from improved guidance when undertaking their lesson planning. Despite uncertainty in leadership and inconsistencies in the quality of education, standards are above average, pupils' achievement from Reception to Year 6 is satisfactory and pupils, including higher attaining pupils and those with learning difficulties, make satisfactory progress throughout the school. A few pupils in each class are not doing as well as they could be because lesson planning does not consistently take sufficient account of the full range of learning needs. Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Behaviour is good in lessons and satisfactory around the school and in the playground. Most pupils enjoy school and levels of attendance are average. Pupils show a good understanding of key aspects of a healthy lifestyle and make a good contribution to the school and wider community. Although the school's overall effectiveness is satisfactory, leadership has been unsettled. Monitoring and evaluation have been neglected and only recently been improved to become satisfactory. Before its next section 5 inspection, Ofsted inspectors may visit the school to check on the progress that it has made. The school would receive two to five days notice of such a visit.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that lesson planning takes account of the range of differing learning needs so that all pupils make good progress.
- Provide pupils with a clear understanding of how to improve specific aspects of their work, both in their marking and through setting challenging targets for pupils.
- Ensure that recent improvements in monitoring

and evaluation by senior managers and subject leaders are built on further to promote consistently good teaching and learning and so raise standards.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils make satisfactory progress so that, by the time they leave the school, they attain standards that are above average. Children enter the Foundation Stage with knowledge and skill levels above those expected nationally. In the Foundation Stage (the reception class) they make satisfactory progress and exceed national expectations by the time they move into Year 1. By the end of Year 2 pupils attain above average standards. Year 6 pupils attained well above average standards in 2005 national curriculum tests. In 2006, fewer Year 6 pupils attained the higher levels in national tests than in the previous year, but school assessments of the progress of this year's Year 6 pupils indicate that many pupils are on track to attain their ambitious targets and well above average standards. Although achievement is satisfactory overall, a few pupils in each year group are not doing as well as they could because they are not challenged enough or guided sufficiently on how to improve. Work in pupils' books in some classes is poorly presented because consistently high expectations have not been established. Year 2 and Year 6 pupils show well above expected standards in speaking and listening and this helps ensure that pupils are adequately equipped for the next stage of education and the world of work beyond.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Opportunities for reflection, the school's code of conduct, pupil responsibilities and the quality of the school's links with the Gambia all help the pupils exhibit good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils feel safe in school and enjoy their favourite subjects such as art and physical education but show much less enthusiasm in some literacy and numeracy lessons when the lesson is not well matched to their personal learning needs. Although behaviour is good in lessons pupils are often too boisterous in corridors and the playground. Pupils enjoy playing at break times with their friends and the school is a safe place. Attendance levels are satisfactory. Many pupils develop a sense of responsibility by volunteering for additional jobs or through membership of the school council. They also contribute well to the wider community through charitable fund-raising activities and providing entertainment for the elderly at Christmas. Pupils develop a good understanding of the contribution balanced diets and exercise can make to healthy lifestyles.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teachers show strong commitment to their pupils, work hard and manage behaviour and relationships well in all lessons. Teachers mostly demonstrate good subject knowledge in their teaching and often use interesting materials and ideas to help pupils learn. In a Year 2 lesson, for example, pupils used an interesting poster and a tape with sounds of a park when preparing to write their own stories. Although many teachers demonstrate a range of good teaching methods in their work, lack of monitoring, evaluation, guidance and support has led to considerable inconsistencies in the quality of teaching across the school. For example, teachers' marking is good in some classes and provides pupils with clear guidance but, in other classes, marking is much less effective. Throughout the school pupils show limited awareness of their learning levels, how to assess their work and lack clear targets for improvement because the school has not yet ensured an effective system for teachers and pupils. Also, because daily lesson plans do not take sufficient account of different learning levels, a few pupils could progress at a faster rate in all classes. Staff and pupils are just beginning to develop their use of the new interactive whiteboards and when they are used well, they bring impact and interest to lessons, but further staff training and monitoring are needed to ensure consistently effective use of these resources throughout the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. The school's curriculum has appropriately concentrated on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and standards in these subjects are above average. Until quite recently, teachers planned individually without the guidance provided by a whole-school curriculum plan. Recently a good start has been made on developing curriculum plans to ensure appropriate coverage in all subjects and to ensure that they are more consistently adapted to meet the range of pupils' needs. There are uneven levels of teachers' skills in the use of information communication technology (ICT) in their teaching and opportunities for pupils to use ICT in other subjects have yet to be clearly identified. There is good curriculum enrichment through sporting clubs, visits and visitors and a quarter of the children learn to play a musical instrument.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils receive satisfactory care, guidance and support. Good pastoral care by teachers contributes to their good behaviour in lessons. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. All staff are committed to promoting the importance of healthy living. There are good arrangements for checking that pupils are safe, although the school

lacks an effective system for monitoring and assessing pupils' personal development. The school has a robust system for tracking the academic progress of pupils as they grow older but staff understanding of this system is limited and it is insufficiently used to ensure that lessons meet the learning needs of all pupils. There are good procedures for monitoring absence and steps are being taken to reduce the number of days taken for holidays in term time. The support given to pupils with learning difficulties is satisfactory and they make satisfactory progress. The level of risk to pupils during out of school activities is assessed well but the school lacks a consistent way of assessing risk in school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Parents are mostly supportive of the school but some are concerned that, since October 2004, the school has been without a permanent headteacher. Lack of leadership experience and training meant that senior staff were ill-equipped to carry out leadership roles. Although staff worked hard and day-to-day management remained effective, monitoring and evaluation were inadequate and this led to inconsistencies in the way in which pupils are taught. In May 2006 a member of Norfolk County Council Headteacher Service took over as acting headteacher. Since then leadership has improved significantly. The school has recently introduced some effective strategies for judging its success and checking that pupils are equally successful. Monitoring and evaluation arrangements are now adequate and the school is in a satisfactory position to continue to improve. All teachers have been observed teaching and provided with guidance. A satisfactory school improvement plan has been prepared after consulting parents, staff and governors. This plan is helping to guide staff's work to improve the school. However, subject leaders are not involved enough in monitoring teaching quality and standards in their subjects and the school lacks a system to analyse test papers so that possible weaknesses in learning can be highlighted and addressed. Governance is satisfactory. Governors have useful links with particular subjects and classes and visit the school regularly. Governors have only very recently begun to check that the school improvement plan is being properly implemented.

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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	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	2
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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
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?	3

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

13 October 2006 Dear Children St Mary's Community Primary School, Elmham Road, Beetley, Dereham, Norfolk, NR20 4BW Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to inspect your school. We are pleased that you like your school. We thoroughly enjoyed talking with you and your teachers and watching you learn. We think your school is giving you a satisfactory education. Here are the things that we think are best about your school - Your behaviour in lessons is good. - You know right from wrong, show consideration for others and show good understanding of your own and others' ways of life. - Some of you take responsibility for helping others both within the school and outside school. These are the things that we think could be better - A few of you in each class could make better progress if teachers planned different levels of work more often. - It would be helpful if you each had targets to reach and a clearer idea of what you need to do to improve your work. - The school's managers need to check more closely on how well the school is doing to help make your learning even better. With very best wishes for the future, Mr Sadler Lead Inspector