



Ellingham Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 121035
Local Authority NORFOLK
Inspection number 291967
Inspection dates 26–27 September 2006
Reporting inspector Mr. Geof Timms

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Church Road
School category	Voluntary controlled		Ellingham, Ellingham
Age range of pupils	4–11		Bungay, Suffolk NR35 2PZ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01508 518250
Number on roll (school)	70	Fax number	01508 518250
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs. Clare Rutzen
		Headteacher	Mrs. Pauline McGowan
Date of previous school inspection	15 November 1999		

Age group 4–11	Inspection dates 26–27 September 2006	Inspection number 291967
--------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a very small school which works in partnership with another local school, sharing the headteacher and administrative staff. The pupils are all from White British backgrounds and very few are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and disabilities is broadly in line with the national picture, but can be much higher in some year groups which can have a significant impact on achievement and test results. Although there is a range of attainment on entry to the school, standards are often below those typically found. The school is an 'ECO' school with Green Flag status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with outstanding features. The inspection has confirmed the school's own accurate and honest self evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses. The outstanding leadership shown by the headteacher, who runs two small local schools in a partnership, is reflected in the school's successes and the willingness to innovate and try new ideas and methods. There have been many improvements made since the last inspection and these, together with more recent changes such as those to the curriculum, show that the school has a good capacity to improve further. Parents are rightly very happy with the school. One said children are 'given opportunities to develop and I am amazed by their achievements both personally and academically.' The pupils are also very happy at the school and clearly enjoy their time there. This is reflected in their excellent attitudes and behaviour. During their time in the school the pupils make good progress in their learning and exceptional progress in their personal development. A contributing factor to this has been the outstanding work done to achieve 'ECO' school status and the excellent development of the school grounds to provide a sustainable and environmentally friendly outdoor classroom. This is very well maintained by the pupils and they demonstrate tremendous pride in their work in this area. Through this they have developed an advanced understanding of how to stay healthy and safe, and of how by working together they can be more successful. As one pupil said 'Whatever you use, you must be able to give it back'. The small number of teachers makes the leadership of subjects difficult to organise within realistic limits. The headteacher has recognised this and there are plans to introduce a system of sharing subject responsibilities across both schools in the partnership. The recent significant changes made to the curriculum have already resulted in pupils being more enthusiastic about their work. It is too early for this to have had a measurable impact on standards and this will require careful monitoring in the future. Provision in the Foundation Stage is good and children make good progress. The recent improvements to the outdoor area have enhanced this work and children are often very well supported by high quality support staff. Standards achieved by most pupils when they leave the school are ahead of those found nationally, however the small size of each cohort means that this can vary widely from year to year. However, whatever the outcome, the schools' tracking shows that pupils make good progress from the levels they are at when they start school. Pupils develop good speaking and listening skills. One parent highlighted this by saying 'the school really encourages the children to be able to present information in front of others - a great skill.' Throughout the school, writing has recently been one of the weaker subjects, partly due to poorly developed spelling skills. One of the school's strengths is the way it tracks individual pupils' progress and recognises and addresses areas of weakness when they occur. This happened in science for example, where changes to the teaching had an immediate impact on the test results.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing and improve the accuracy of spelling. - Develop the leadership of subjects to ensure better monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum and the sharing of good practice.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are usually above the national average in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. As many children enter the school with skills below those typically expected this represents good achievement. Even the pupils who reach lower standards have made at least good progress from earlier years. This is true for all pupils, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities. The weakest areas evident when children enter Reception are their personal, social and emotional development, and some of their communication and language skills. There is good progress made towards the expected learning goals and by the time they start Year 1 most have caught up and are achieving broadly average levels. Writing and spelling skills throughout the school are still often below those expected. Work has begun to improve this but this is yet to have a measurable impact on standards. Throughout the school a lot is done to develop good speaking and listening skills. This is supported by very good work in music and drama, and in public speaking.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

This aspect is outstanding because it forms such a central part of the school's work. This is shown exceptionally well in the work of the 'ECO' committee and the way this has become such a valuable part of the life of the school. From developing their economic awareness by growing and selling their own plants and vegetables, and making their own electricity, to developing parts of the grounds into wildlife areas or wild flower meadows, pupils have developed an extremely high quality attitude towards looking after and improving the environment. Through this they demonstrate a real commitment to their own and the wider community. They can talk at length about 'sustainability' and show real pride in their work, and the fact that they have now got the money and planning permission for a wind turbine. Their behaviour is excellent and their positive attitudes towards school mean that they learn well and make good progress. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. A small number of families fail to ensure their child's good attendance although the school works hard to address this. Because of this, attendance is below average.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The teaching is good because teachers have built such a supportive ethos that all pupils are encouraged to try hard and take a full part in lessons. This means they learn and make good progress. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good. A major strength in the teaching is the effective deployment of the very good quality teaching assistants and this supports pupils' learning. The sharing of curriculum information with parents has improved recently but some parents would like further information about timetables, projected work and teaching methods so they can help more at home. Teachers do not always insist on sufficiently well-presented and accurately spelt work. Even so, there is very good practice in involving pupils in checking their own work and teachers ensure the marking of work is effective in helping pupils understand what they have done well and how they can improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has recently undertaken a full review of the curriculum and introduced a new and more effective way of planning. This is very detailed and provides a clear picture of how all appropriate parts of the National Curriculum will be taught. Already pupils have noticed that the planning means there are more links between subjects that make the work more meaningful for them. This is mostly too new to have had much impact on standards. However, recent changes to both the art curriculum and science teaching have already resulted in raised standards. The pupils have opportunities to learn French in most year groups and the teaching of physical education is improving through the partnership with a local secondary school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school offers outstanding levels of care for pupils. Their safety is a high priority and the appropriate risk assessments, safety checks on staff and child protection training are undertaken. First aid arrangements are appropriate and pupils are confident that they have an adult to turn to if they are unhappy or hurt. Teachers offer very effective guidance to pupils through their use of the detailed checks on progress made, and the marking of their work. All staff offer outstanding levels of personal guidance which helps pupils develop and results in them clearly blossoming in confidence.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and is very ably supported in managing the two schools by her administrative assistant. She has created a willingness to be innovative and to try new methods in order to raise standards. The changes since the last inspection have been enormous and have had a positive impact on the provision. The partnership between the two schools has developed well and is currently beginning to have a clear benefit through the sharing of good practice and closer staff links. This work is yet to have a full impact on subject leadership. The development of video-conferencing between the two schools is having a positive impact on the management of the partnership. For example, the headteacher is able to talk to and share in assemblies with the pupils at the other school using this facility. It is also enabling pupils to share work and ideas with their peers. The leadership of the work leading to the school's 'ECO' status has also been outstanding. Much effort has been put into this and it is having a clearly positive impact on pupils' personal development, as well as their learning through the use of the outdoor facilities, especially the latest improvements to the Reception class outdoor area. The governing body offers a good level of support and challenge and provides the school with an effective 'critical friend'. Overall, the school provides good value for money.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	-----------------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
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?	1

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?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
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	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

28 September 2006 Dear Children Ellingham VC Primary School, Ellingham, Bungay, Suffolk, NR35 2PZ I want to thank you all for the very warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school. I met with and talked to a lot of you and you were very keen to make sure I know how happy you all are with your school. I think you are right to be happy as you are at a good school with a lot of excellent features. These are some of the things I thought were really good: - The progress most of you make in learning new things, especially in speaking and listening, and in music and drama. - The 'ECO' school work which has helped you learn so much about your environment and how to look after it, and the hard work the staff have put into this. - The amount you know about keeping healthy and safe. - You behave very well and this helps you enjoy school so much. - The adults all look after and care for you. - The school is very well led by Mrs McGowan so everyone is happy to try out new ideas. These are some ways I that could be even better for you and you need to help them to do this: - You need to improve your writing, and especially work harder at spellings; - Teachers in charge of subjects need to check more on how well their subjects are taught, how good your work is and to spread good ideas around. Thank you once again for your help during the inspection. You are very lucky to be at Ellingham - keep working hard! Geof Timms Lead inspector