

Tacolneston Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121060
Local Authority	NORFOLK LA
Inspection number	291985
Inspection dates	6–7 December 2007
Reporting inspector	John Paull

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	85
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Robert Poole
Headteacher	Mrs Lisa Blowfield
Date of previous school inspection	3 February 2003
School address	Norwich Road Tacolneston Norfolk NR16 1AL
Telephone number	01508489336
Fax number	01508488137

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

An Additional Inspector carried out the inspection.

Description of the school

Tacolneston Church of England Primary is smaller than most other primary schools. Its headteacher took up her post at the beginning of this term. Nearly all its pupils are from white British backgrounds. Very few have an minority ethnic heritage and none is believed to speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than average, although this figure has risen in recent years. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational need, is broadly average. In most years, attainment on entry is around what is usually found nationally, although in the context of small numbers, this can vary considerably, both upwards and downwards, from year to year.

The school is working towards a Healthy Schools award and is working on its own travel plan to encourage pupils to use their journey to and from school as an exercise opportunity.

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 standard of education, and pupils' personal development is good. The recently appointed headteacher has made a very impressive start. She has forged valuable partnerships with governors and the local authority, introducing changes aimed at improving progress and raising standards. Strong features include pupils' thorough enjoyment of school, excellent behaviour and their extremely sensible and safe actions towards others. Academic progress is, however, uneven and therefore only satisfactory. In the early years and up to Year 2 particularly, progress in writing has been too slow with insufficient emphasis on techniques of punctuation and handwriting. Nonetheless, by Year 6, standards are broadly average, so overall achievement is satisfactory although, particularly in science, more able pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

The new headteacher has very accurately evaluated what needs to be done to move the school forward. For example, she has concentrated on the inadequate provision in the Reception year, which inhibits learning. Decisive, immediate action to improve things has been taken. With good teaching and the support of a strong teaching assistant, this is beginning to take effect, providing relevant experiences for the age group. Plans for vital future improvement are realisable and based on known best practice. In questionnaires, many parents indicate full support for this process of improvement. Inspection findings show they are correct.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and include several good features that contribute well to the school's sound capacity to improve. However, planning is not sufficiently detailed for the full range of pupils' abilities in the mixed age classes. More able pupils, in particular, do not receive enough opportunities to develop skills at higher levels. Very good relationships with pupils are forged. Pupils respond with trust and willingness to work. In the early years, slow identification of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has reduced progress. That said, management of provision for these pupils, including those with a statement of special educational need, has recently been reorganised and is now having a beneficial impact. Care, guidance and support of pupils are satisfactory. However, potentially very powerful procedures for tracking progress are not yet consistently used to adapt what is taught. Teachers' marking is conscientiously up to date, invariably offering pupils relevant praise. However, not enough explanation is included to show them how to take their work forward. Conversely, personal care is strong. Pupils themselves speak highly of it. They are very positive about the system of rewards and sanctions, believing it to be both fair and helpful. The school's track record since the previous inspection indicates a satisfactory capacity to improve, and the headteacher, senior staff and governors are now putting into place targets which match what is needed very closely.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 4

Overall starting points when children enter the Reception class are usually close to what is found nationally. Nevertheless, standards often vary from year to year, owing to small numbers in each year group. Weaknesses in provision mean that progress is sometimes slow and fewer children meet expected goals than they otherwise might. Emerging writing skills, for example, often do not reach the standard that they should. All adults in the school and the older pupils take great care to ensure that children of Reception age feel secure and settled. Many parents are rightly pleased with this aspect. However, provision for children's learning is inadequate. Planning has not sufficiently taken account of requirements for the age group, so progress in

some areas is inadequate. The headteacher has identified weaknesses very quickly and has taken decisive action to bring about improvement. As a result, planning better meets national requirements for the age group. Plans are also underway to improve facilities in the children's outside area, increasing achievement for those children who learn better in an active environment. Good support from an effective teaching assistant is another important factor in this improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Introduce all planned improvements for the Foundation Stage as quickly as possible.
- Maintain the focus on pupils' writing skills, increasing rates of progress and raising standards.
- Provide more opportunities for potentially high attaining pupils, especially in science.
- Improve uses of marking, assessment and tracking of pupils' progress to inform lesson plans, thereby meeting individual pupils' needs more effectively and accelerating pupils' progress where it is uneven.

A small proportion of the 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

In Years 1 and 2, while reading is often above average and pupils' creative skills are good, their insecure understanding and use of punctuation and spelling hold achievement back. Results of national assessments in Year 2 support this finding. These are consistently much better in reading than in writing and mathematics. The headteacher has made these weaknesses a matter of urgent priority and powerful changes to rectify the situation are underway. Throughout Years 3 to 6, much effort is put into ensuring that pupils catch up on missing skills. By the time they leave in Year 6, standards are broadly average, with the result that overall achievement is satisfactory. Nevertheless, progress has been too uneven to raise standards any higher. Results of Year 6 national tests reflect these findings, especially in the case of more able pupils in English and science.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, reflecting the school's status as a Church of England school. Pupils' understanding of right and wrong is developed effectively and their behaviour and attitudes towards others are usually exemplary. Appreciation of minority ethnic cultures is good and older pupils are able to explain much about faiths besides Christianity. They enjoy school greatly and attendance is above average. Personal, social and emotional development is good in the Reception year. Pupils understand the importance of exercise and a balanced diet. Contributions to the community are good. Pupils trust their teachers and other staff and are therefore confident about raising issues that concern them. They feel safe because they feel that staff act on their concerns, including those of pupils with emotional or behavioural difficulties. However, formal arrangements for pupils to make their views known, such as a school council, are not provided. Pupils are not, therefore, fully aware of the extent to which others might share ideas in a democratic context. Involvement in the wider community is good. Pupils visit the Norfolk Show, take part in village days and sing in the local church. Promotion of future economic well-being, including skills in literacy and numeracy, is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Good features observed during the inspection suggest that improvement is underway. The use of interesting topics, such as cooking and modelling, ensure that pupils are interested and work hard. Relationships are good and pupils' attitudes to learning are promoted strongly, resulting in excellent levels of concentration. However, planning is not always sufficiently detailed, and so does not consistently meet the needs of all individuals. Learning opportunities are sometimes missed, as in a science lesson which also focused on skills in food technology. While pupils were enthused, the more able were not given the opportunity to predict what would happen to their mixed ingredients when these went into the oven. Nor was it pointed out to them how the baking process would be a test of their predictions.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

What is taught contains all statutory subjects, including religious education, which is provided for well. Good opportunities for enriching the curriculum are available, including instrumental lessons, visits, visitors and clubs. These enhance physical education and cultural development well. However, assessment of pupils' work has not been used consistently enough to adapt planning, especially for younger age groups. This means that, in Years 1 and 2, intervention has not always been soon enough to ensure progress for pupils with learning difficulties. New arrangements for co-ordinating such provision, introduced and supported by the headteacher, have already gone a long way to improving the situation.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The overall quality of care, guidance and support is satisfactory. Procedures for personal care and guidance are often good, but systems for academic support are not always used well enough to ensure that progress is sustained for all pupils at all times. The staff take considerable care to ensure that pupils' personal requirements are met. Statutory procedures for safeguarding, supporting vulnerable pupils and meeting local child protection arrangements are in place. Systems to assess risks and to ensure health and safety have been reviewed and are now good. However, while procedures to assess and track progress are potentially strong, information has not always been applied successfully to planning. This has slowed rates of progress in younger age groups and has also meant that the needs of more able pupils have not been fully met, especially in writing and science.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

A renewed partnership between the headteacher and governing body has quickly resulted in a strong vision for the school's future. Academic rigour, raising standards and improving achievement are at its centre. This message is being articulated clearly and supported by staff. Everyone concerned is embarked on a process of change and improvement rooted in the headteacher's accurate evaluation of the school and analysis of what needs to be done. Although

very little time has elapsed since the headteacher's appointment, what has already been tackled is beginning to produce impact for the better. Parents and pupils alike have recognised this very promising start. They understand that it is early days to measure the full impact of what has been done and that much is still at the planning stage. Nevertheless, sound value for money is being achieved.

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Annex A

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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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.

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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

10 December 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Tacolneston Church of England Primary School, Tacolneston, NR16 1AL

Thank you for being so helpful and polite when I visited your school. I was very impressed with your behaviour, which I thought was excellent. I enjoyed speaking to you, hearing your views of the school and seeing your work. I particularly enjoyed my lunchtime conversation with the two Year 6 pupils who represented you all at the conference in Norwich. Their ideas about healthy lifestyles were very interesting and I understand that they shared their findings with you all. Many of you told me how much you enjoy school and I agree with you that this is to do with the interesting things that your teachers provide for you to work on.

Here are some more things that I liked about your school:

- You are willing to be amazed by what you see and what you are taught in the world around you; you are developing the right ideas about what is good and bad; you work and play well together, and you are developing good, tolerant attitudes about people with different ideas and backgrounds from your own.
- You cooperate well with your teachers and other adults in school.
- You read well and much of your creative work is good.
- Your headteacher and governors, together with the staff, are producing good ideas and working hard to improve your school.

Here are the things that I have asked your headteacher, governors and the staff to do next:

- Introduce all their ideas to improve what is provided for Reception aged children as soon as possible.
- Keep helping you to improve your writing, so that you make faster progress with it.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils who find school work easier than others to achieve the best that they can, especially in science.
- Use information from marking your work and finding out what you know to plan better progress for you all, so that you learn even faster.

I hope that you will always be proud of your school and enjoy your education.

Yours sincerely,

John W. Paull (Lead inspector)