



Hilgay Village Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection Report

Better
education
and care

Unique Reference Number 121072
Local Authority NORFOLK
Inspection number 291993
Inspection dates 23–24 November 2006
Reporting inspector Martin Beale

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Church View
School category	Voluntary controlled		Hilgay, Downham Market
Age range of pupils	4–11		Norfolk PE38 0JL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01366 387685
Number on roll (school)	52	Fax number	01366 387685
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Father David Evans
		Headteacher	Mr James McBurney
Date of previous school inspection	29 January 2001		

Age group 4–11	Inspection dates 23–24 November 2006	Inspection number 291993
--------------------------	--	------------------------------------

© 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 one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a very small voluntary controlled Church of England primary school serving a village in west Norfolk. Virtually all pupils are of White British heritage. Free school meal entitlement is below average. Attainment on entry is broadly average. Pupil mobility is quite high. Consequently the profile of each year group varies and can fluctuate during any one academic year. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is above average. The pupils are taught in three mixed-age classes but pupils in Years 3 to 6 are taught together two afternoons per week.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Hilgay Village Primary School serves the local community well. The inspection shares the school's view that its effectiveness is good and that it provides good value for money. Over the last two years the school has successfully recovered from a difficult time. Major staffing problems, including a long period without a permanent headteacher and other tragic events known to the school community, seriously affected the school's performance in many areas. The staffing position is now stable. The school is improving and standards are rising, although for some pupils the legacy of the disruption remains.

Parents, many of whom are voluntary helpers in lessons, are very happy with the school and are particularly pleased with the good care, support and guidance provided for their children. Pupils are well known and feel safe and secure in the knowledge that there is always someone to turn to if they have a problem. Their personal development is good. Pupils have a positive attitude to their work and are keen to do well. They collaborate in lessons and take their responsibilities seriously.

The youngest children make a good start in the Reception class. The teacher and teaching assistant work well together to meet the needs of the children through a rich and varied curriculum. A decline in provision has been reversed so that the recent group achieved well and most reached nationally expected standards by the time they entered Year 1. This good start is now built on well in the rest of the school. The pupils respond with interest to the consistently good teaching, although pupil mobility can change the dynamics of classes and affect learning. The pupils benefit from small classes for English and mathematics. Pupils know their targets but some are not as clear about the steps they need to take to achieve them, partly because of inconsistencies in marking.

Achievement is good and standards overall are above average by Year 6, with the exception of writing where standards are average. Basic skills are given good attention but there are insufficient opportunities to write at length in subjects such as history and geography. The satisfactory curriculum has benefited from the considerable investment in computers and other new technology. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are catered for well and make similar academic and personal progress as others. This is an area of much improvement in the last two years.

The school's decline has been halted and reversed under the effective leadership of the headteacher who has been in post for the last two years. He is supported well in this by a close staff team and committed governors. Leadership and management are good, although much work rests with the headteacher. Self-evaluation is generally accurate, acting as a secure base from which to plan for the future. The analysis of data is used well to track pupils and to evaluate where action is needed. Leadership and management are good, although much work rests with the headteacher. The leadership role of other staff is restricted by budget constraints that limit the time that can be provided to release them from classes. This holds back the school's ability to take the next steps forward as rapidly as it would like. Accordingly, the capacity to make further improvements is satisfactory rather than good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more opportunities for pupils to develop their writing in all subjects.
- Improve the guidance given to pupils to help them to improve their work and meet their targets.
- Develop the leadership roles of staff so that they can play a greater part in supporting the school's improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils are now making good progress during their time at the school, although this has not consistently been the case since the last inspection. There is no significant difference in progress between different groups of pupils. Targets are reasonably challenging and generally met by the pupils. Test results for Year 2 pupils had fallen considerably during the period of staffing problems but have improved over the last two years. They were broadly average in 2006, but with writing being the weakest area. As was the case at the last inspection, virtually all pupils reach and many exceed nationally expected standards by the end of Year 6. They are prepared well for the demands of secondary school. Year 6 test results have improved steadily and were above average in 2006. Science results were the strongest being very high and writing was again the weakest aspect being average.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The pupils enjoy school and participate with interest and enthusiasm in activities both in and out of lessons. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils understand key aspects of the cultures and customs of others. They know how to adopt a healthy lifestyle but the accommodation limits opportunities to exercise in all aspects of physical education (PE). Nevertheless, the school compensates for this so that overall standards in PE are sound. In the main pupils behave well and mostly act in a safe and sensible manner, treating each other with care and their teachers with respect. The pupils are developing a stronger voice in the school and can point to areas where they are proud to have made a difference. They contribute well to both school and community life. Attendance has fallen in recent years and is now broadly average. Holidays in term time are a major factor here, but family illness can also have a considerable effect on absence figures in this small school. Pupils' attitudes to learning, ability to cooperate and standards in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology are giving them a good base for future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching has improved considerably now that there is a stable staff team. Lessons have many strong features that benefit pupils' learning. The sharing of objectives for each lesson helps the pupils to understand the purpose of the work they are doing, but this is most effective where clear indications are also given of what individuals are expected to achieve. Teaching assistants are briefed and deployed well, making a substantial contribution to the progress of groups of pupils. Interactive whiteboards are used creatively to enhance teaching and make lessons more interesting. Pupils also have many opportunities to use computers to aid their learning. Assessment is thorough and its use to support the pupils' learning is becoming increasingly effective.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The broad curriculum successfully promotes the pupils' academic and personal development. Given its size, the school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities, which are much appreciated by pupils and parents. The local environment and strong links with the community are exploited well to enrich the pupils' experiences and to extend their personal development. Planning ensures that pupils build skills systematically within core subjects in the mixed-age classes. The school is aware that planning is less secure in other subjects in Years 3 to 6 and is taking steps to remedy this situation. Information and communication technology skills are developed well in a wide range of subjects, but there are insufficient opportunities for the pupils to extend their writing. The good support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities ensures that they are fully involved in all school activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Arrangements for safeguarding the pupils' well-being are thorough and a high priority for the school. Health and safety arrangements are rigorous and first aid arrangements are very good. Relevant members of staff have received recent training in child protection. Arrangements for the introduction of children into Reception give them a smooth start and older pupils are prepared carefully for their transfer to secondary school. Pupils are set targets for their improvement but are not always clear about the specific action they need to take to achieve these. There is some constructive marking which shows pupils how work can be improved, but this quality is not consistent throughout the school.

Programmes of support are carefully established to meet the identified needs of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and strong links with outside agencies used to give further advice and guidance.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. Appointing a permanent headteacher and filling other teaching posts has brought much needed stability over the last two years. This has benefited teaching, learning and the pupils' progress. The school is very aware of its strengths and where improvements are needed, such as in planning for non-core subjects in Years 3 to 6. Secure procedures are in place to identify strengths and weaknesses in the school's performance. This is backed up by support where needed and carefully focused training. This clear direction underpins the school's success in overcoming recent difficulties. Funding is carefully directed towards the main priorities of maintaining staffing levels and improving resources and the accommodation. However, fluctuating pupil numbers severely affect the budget and the time that can be made available for other staff to undertake leadership roles. Governors, many of whom regularly help in school, are keen to improve their effectiveness. For example, they are taking action having identified that they are not sufficiently involved either in shaping the school's future direction or monitoring its performance closely enough.

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?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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?	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?	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	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

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?	3
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?	2
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	2
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	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

24 November 2006

Dear Pupils

Hilgay Village Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Church View, Hilgay, Downham Market, Norfolk, PE38 0JL

I am writing to thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave to me when I visited your school. You were all very kind, helpful and showed how proud you are of your school. I enjoyed talking with you and your teachers and watching you learn. There are many aspects of your school that I liked. You and your parents are right in thinking that you go to a good school.

You make good progress during your time at the school. Most of you achieve well and many of you exceed the standards expected by the time you move on to secondary school. You enjoy school, work hard and behave sensibly. The care and support you receive is good, particularly when you find learning difficult. You take your responsibilities seriously and make a considerable contribution to the life of the school and the village.

Your teachers and governors are trying hard to make the school even better. There are some areas where we all agree that improvements could be made. I am suggesting that teachers provide more opportunities for you to practise your writing in subjects such as history and geography. I am also suggesting that your teachers set clearer targets and give more guidance to help you to achieve them. I am sure you and your teachers will work hard to make this all happen.

I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Martin Beale

Lead Inspector