



The Norman Church of England Primary School, Northwold

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 121122
Local Authority NORFOLK
Inspection number 292020
Inspection dates 13–14 November 2006
Reporting inspector Keith Sadler

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	School Lane
School category	Voluntary aided		Northwold, Thetford
Age range of pupils	4–11		Norfolk IP26 5NB
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01366728241
Number on roll (school)	107	Fax number	01366728241
Appropriate authority	The local authority	Headteacher	Mrs Marion Dawe
Date of previous school inspection	11 June 2006		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This small primary school is substantially over-subscribed. Most pupils come from the village, though about one quarter are from surrounding areas. Almost all the pupils have White British heritages but a few are from minority ethnic backgrounds. No pupils are at an early stage of learning English. Parents' social and economic circumstances are broadly average. Children's attainment on entry to the school is at normally expected levels.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory and improving school, which has some good features. Since the last inspection, the school has gone through considerable turbulence and many changes of senior staff. The present headteacher ensures stability and effective leadership of the school and is pivotal to the school's increasing effectiveness. As a result of the strategies that she has introduced, pupils' behaviour, their attitudes and the atmosphere of the school have been transformed. As one pupil said, 'Mrs Dawe has changed our lives!' Parents agree; they are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and recognise the very considerable improvements recently made. A parent stated that the school provides 'Fun, a safe environment, an excellent learning environment and a high standard of discipline.' Furthermore, the headteacher has steered the school through developments to the premises, which are now excellent. Consequently, pupils love school, seize the many opportunities to be healthy and active and, due to the excellent arrangements for their care and support, feel safe and valued by all its adults. Pupils' personal development is good and has a positive impact on their learning and achievement.

Until 2006, standards were inadequate, particularly in mathematics. Pupils were not achieving their potential and the school's results in national assessments were consistently below the national average. However, there was a significant improvement in 2006. Results were slightly above average in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 and in Year 6, results in English, mathematics and science improved to average levels. However, standards in mathematics still lag somewhat behind other core subjects because fewer pupils attain above average levels in this subject. Importantly, these improvements are being sustained. There is evidence in pupils' work and school data that, by the time the current Year 6 pupils leave the school, standards could be above average in all three subjects. Currently, pupils' progress is satisfactory, with growing pockets of good achievement in all classes, which demonstrate the impact of the headteacher's effective strategies to boost achievement.

The progress pupils make and teaching and learning are improving. They are satisfactory with some good features. One pupil stated that 'The teachers really put a lot of effort into making our learning fun.' This is reflected in very good relationships and excellent behaviour management by all staff. They listen carefully to the pupils and provide them with good quality activities that capture their interest well. However, staff do not check systematically enough that lesson objectives have been met to ensure that future work is pitched at the right level to challenge all pupils. Quality and standards in the Foundation Stage are satisfactory and on an upward trend because the new Reception teacher is improving provision. The children are happy and settled and are achieving satisfactorily, with some making good progress in their learning.

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory overall. However, school is too reliant on the head's highly effective skills and so other members of staff do not take on enough responsibility. Their leadership and management of subjects lack rigour, particularly in the checking of the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' progress.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics at the end of Years 2 and 6, particularly for pupils with the potential for higher levels of attainment.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that lesson objectives are checked at the end of lessons and that these assessments are used to amend future plans.
- Strengthen the quality of subject leadership and management.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

In the reception class, progress is satisfactory overall. Most pupils enter Year 1 having attained the expected standards for their age. Test results show, for the past five years pupils have made inadequate progress and have under-achieved, particularly those who found learning easy. Consequently, standards were too low and few pupils attained above average levels for their age. This is no longer the case. In the 2006 tests in Years 2 and 6, most pupils attained nationally expected levels and the proportion gaining higher levels increased substantially, although this improvement was less evident in mathematics than in other core subjects. In the current Year 2 and Year 6, an even higher proportion of pupils are on course to attain or exceed nationally expected standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Achievement is satisfactory and on an upward trend as progress in all year groups is quickening. Apart from the differences for higher attaining pupils in mathematics, pupils of all abilities achieve similarly.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The Christian ethos of the school supports these developments exceptionally well. Pupils love school and relish all it has to offer. As a result, they find it easy to concentrate and apply themselves to their tasks in lessons. Pupils' behaviour is consistently excellent in class and around the school and so exclusions are rare. The school works very hard to promote satisfactory attendance. Assemblies create a strong sense of community. Pupils are considerate to others and sensitive to one another's backgrounds and cultures. Those pupils with responsibilities take them seriously and make a valuable contribution to the life of the school. Older pupils thoroughly enjoy caring for younger pupils in their 'families' and taking part in village events, such as May Pole celebrations and Plough Monday. Improving basic skills and attitudes to learning prepare them satisfactorily for the next stage of their education and for later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is improving. It is now satisfactory, with some good features in each of the classes. For example, good questioning of pupils helps to develop and reinforce their learning at a fast pace. All the teachers are confident in using the interactive whiteboards and this helps to capture pupils' interest and thus encourage good learning. There is universally excellent management of pupils' behaviour. The recent focus on strengthening pupils' learning by making them more independent is starting to pay dividends. Pupils have a clear understanding of what their targets are and what they have to do to achieve them. However, weaknesses remain because these features need to be embedded consistently in all classes. In particular, teachers do not always check that objectives have been successfully met during lessons to enable future work to be pitched appropriately.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is effective in meeting the needs of all groups of pupils. Good adaptations have been made to national guidelines to enrich learning. Teachers plan work to draw in many subjects, as in the history unit in which pupils study Remembrance Day. Work is made exciting by including art, geography, information and communication technology and literacy work as well as helping pupils to develop social and empathetic skills which are beyond the national curriculum. The provision for additional activities is good. Although pupils are provided with only limited opportunities for visits to enrich the curriculum, a wide range of visitors, particularly in the arts and music, enhances the provision. There is a good range of after-school activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care and support are outstanding. Pupils feel secure because they are in an environment where procedures for ensuring their safety are rigorous. Every pupil is known and treated as an individual by the exceptionally caring and supportive staff. The school environment is immaculate and spacious and the high quality of display provides a very stimulating learning environment. Links between home and school are excellent because the staff build extremely supportive relationships with all the families. The well-being of pupils is paramount and this is recognised unanimously by parents. The specific needs of the more vulnerable pupils are met effectively. The systems for checking pupils' progress in core subjects are good. They enable staff to identify those who are at risk of underachieving and to provide prompt and effective support. In consequence, pupils' achievement is satisfactory.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher provides strong, effective and positive leadership. She has successfully created an intense sense of teamwork amongst all the staff so that there is a very purposeful atmosphere in which all adults' views are valued. She is keenly aware that there is a need to strengthen the quality of leadership and management of the teaching staff. Systems for checking how well the school is doing are bedding down well and ensure that all have an accurate grasp of improvements that need to be made. However, teachers with subject responsibilities do not currently make sufficient use of this information or seek out information for themselves. In consequence improvement planning in the subjects for which they are responsible is inadequate. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are well organised and committed to their role. They make regular visits to the school and classes but, at present, do not have a detailed understanding of the school's areas for development. Nevertheless, there has been good improvement in the areas identified as weaknesses in the last inspection, and there is satisfactory capacity for further improvement, notwithstanding the weaknesses in subject leadership.

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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	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?	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	1
The behaviour of learners	1
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	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?	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?	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	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	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

15 November 2006

Dear Children

The Norman C of E Primary School, School Lane, Northwold, Thetford, Norfolk, IP26 5NB

Thank you for helping me when I visited your school. I enjoyed talking to you and watching you learn. I would like to tell you what I found.

I think that your school provides you with a satisfactory education. There are some things that are particularly good! Both you and your parents told me that you love school, enjoy lessons and take pride in helping your older and younger friends in your families. I think your behaviour is outstanding and you all get on exceptionally well together. You generally have interesting things to do in lessons and lots of visitors to your school and exciting clubs after school. All the grown-ups look after you extremely well and help you to learn. If you find learning hard you get lots of help. Your headteacher is always looking to see how well you are doing and finds ways to help you do even better. All the teachers and support staff make sure that your school is a pleasant place to be.

There are some things that I have asked your teachers to do to make the school better. At the moment you are not progressing as well as you can, and the school needs to make sure that more of you do better in English, Mathematics and Science, both at the end of Class 2 and, particularly, by the time that you leave school. Your teachers need to make sure that they always check that your lesson objectives have been met at the end of lessons. Also they need to check how well you are doing in the subjects that they are responsible for. You can help by continuing to try as hard as you can to do your best.

I hope you carry on enjoying your time at The Norman C of E and do well in your next school.

Best wishes

Keith Sadler

Inspector