

St Edmund's CofE (C) Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122741
Local Authority	NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Inspection number	292493
Inspection dates	14–15 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Rajinder Harrison

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	285
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Corina Brown
Headteacher	Mrs Clare Middleton
Date of previous school inspection	15 September 2003
School address	Church Hill Avenue Mansfield Woodhouse Mansfield Nottinghamshire NG19 9JU
Telephone number	01623 646624
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average sized primary school takes pupils from a wide area in the town. A very small number of pupils are from minority ethnic groups but most are from White British backgrounds. A few pupils do not speak English at home. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is higher than in other schools. Children's attainment on entry to the Foundation Stage is generally lower than the levels expected at this age.

The school was placed in special measures in 2003 and was then subject to a number of monitoring visits from HMI. During this period it faced many disruptions in staffing that included key managers leaving and new staff being appointed. After substantial improvement, the school came out of this category in 2005.

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 school with good features. Pupils' personal development is good. A warm, friendly environment helps them feel happy and secure at school, form good relationships and trust the adults who work with them. Most pupils enjoy school. A very large majority attend regularly but the low attendance of a few hampers their progress. Pupils are confident young learners and this, together with their sound academic progress, prepares them satisfactorily for the future.

Children start in the school with knowledge and skills that are below those typical for their age, particularly in their literacy skills. Through good provision, they progress well and at the end of the Foundation Stage most reach the expected levels in all the areas of learning. Recent improvements in literacy and numeracy have resulted in pupils' progress being satisfactory in Years 1 to 6 and overall standards are broadly average. In Year 2, standards are broadly average in reading and writing and above average in mathematics. Year 6 pupils are working at broadly average standards in English and mathematics and below average standards in science. Although the overall curriculum is good, in some classes pupils have insufficient opportunities to practise their investigation skills. Teaching and learning are satisfactory resulting in pupils' satisfactory achievement. While teaching is frequently good in many classes, it remains inconsistent in Years 3 to 6 where expectations of what pupils can do are not always high enough and this limits what they can achieve. In addition, the noise levels in the open plan classrooms sometimes detract from effective teaching, particularly during practical activities or when pupils are engaged in discussion. With good support, pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities achieve well. Additional activities and experiences enhance learning well. Care, guidance and support are good. Parents are confident that if problems arise then these are dealt with promptly. All pupils have personal and academic targets that show them what they need to do to improve their work and this is helping to raise achievement.

Good leadership and management have secured good improvement since the last inspection. The underachievement highlighted in that inspection has been eliminated by improving the teaching and checking pupils' progress more carefully. Standards are rising, although more rapidly in Years 1 and 2, where teaching is stronger. Governors are very supportive and challenge senior managers well regarding the school's performance. However, despite persistent effort to address the issue, the school's open plan classrooms still hamper teaching and learning. The school judges itself as satisfactory and this is accurate. In light of recent improvements and a good understanding of what still needs to be done, managers have good capacity to improve the school further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in science, in particular by improving pupils' investigation skills.
- Make sure expectations are high and teaching consistently good in Years 3 to 6.
- Eliminate the adverse impact on learning caused by the school's open plan classroom arrangements.
- Work more closely with parents in looking at ways to raise pupils' attendance.

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 the Foundation Stage, good provision, including interesting activities and detailed assessments, helps children progress well, particularly in their literacy skills. They leave the Reception class having reached the levels expected for five year olds.

Pupils in Years 1 and 2 make satisfactory progress and reach broadly average standards in reading and writing. Better teaching and additional support for specific groups have improved standards in mathematics, which are now above average. Pupils in Year 6 attained below average standards in English and mathematics in 2006, and exceptionally low standards in science. The current Year 6 pupils are making satisfactory progress and are working at broadly average levels in English and mathematics. Despite recent improvements, standards in science remain below average. Strategies to improve writing are helping more pupils achieve at the higher levels but inconsistent opportunities for pupils to investigate hampers pupils' higher attainment in science. Good individual guidance helps pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those new to learning English to achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They enjoy school, behave well and show respect and care towards others. They play together well and 'playground pals' make sure no-one is lonely or upset. Through residential visits and other social events, pupils learn how to work with others successfully. Assemblies and a good programme for personal and social education help pupils understand their role in society. They work with the local community and the church to raise funds, for example to provide 'goats for Africa'. Through various cultural events, pupils develop a good awareness of their heritage. Work in various subjects, and visits to places of worship promote pupils' satisfactory awareness of other cultures and traditions.

School council members are involved in improving the school environment by carrying out 'waste audits' and developing playground facilities. Pupils understand well that they should eat healthy lunches and take regular exercise. The many sports clubs on offer help them to stay fit and healthy. They know the dangers of drugs and who to go to should they feel threatened or bullied. Visits and many visitors introduce pupils to the wider world of work. Most pupils attend school regularly but attendance remains below average largely as a result of parents taking holidays in term time. Pupils' lively interest in learning and their satisfactory progress in academic skills prepare them satisfactorily for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is generally well organised and lessons are managed well. Teaching assistants work closely with teachers to help all pupils participate fully in lessons, particularly in supporting those who need individual help. Children in the Foundation Stage are encouraged to explore new situations independently and they enjoy puzzling things out. Similar good practice extends to Years 1 and 2 and this is helping raise attainment. Pupils are challenged well and, because relationships are good, they work sensibly with each other, discussing findings and solving problems confidently. Pupils particularly enjoy practical tasks and 'learning through doing'.

While some teaching in Key Stage 2 is good, particularly in Years 5 and 6, it is not consistently so between Years 3 to 6. In planning lessons, work is not always matched well enough to every pupil's needs. Expectations are not high enough of some of the middle ability pupils and this hinders their achievement. In addition, some pupils do not have enough opportunities for practical activities, such as investigations in science. Noise levels from neighbouring classes distract those who find it hard to concentrate or express their ideas.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. In the Foundation Stage there have been improvements in learning resources, planning and staffing that have contributed to children's good achievement. In Years 1 to 6, the skilful interweaving of subjects using themes, such as the local environment, has made learning interesting and easy for pupils to follow. Themes are used well to develop pupils' writing skills through other subjects, and hence standards are rising. Pupils say they enjoy practical tasks but not all teachers promote investigation skills in science consistently and this limits pupils' achievement. Facilities to promote pupils' computer skills are now good and these are having a positive impact on standards. Effective early intervention programmes help lower attaining pupils make good progress, and more able pupils are suitably challenged. A good personal, social and health education programme underpins pupils' personal development well. Many additional activities including trips, sports clubs and visitors enrich learning well and help pupils explore life beyond the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care arrangements are good. Procedures for child protection, health and safety, reporting racial incidents and safeguarding pupils are all secure. Pupils trust the adults that work with them and know they can ask for help if problems arise. Recent strategies to improve pupils' behaviour and attitudes have been effective in supporting their good personal development. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress towards their targets because their needs are identified early and effective action is taken to support them. Despite the school's good efforts to improve attendance, it remains below the national average.

Pupils' progress is checked carefully and the information gathered is used well to set individual and group targets that have contributed to a rise in standards. However, these procedures are relatively new and their impact is less evident in Years 3 to 6 than in Years 1 and 2. While there is good practice in advising pupils through marking, this practice is also inconsistent.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

With the headteacher's astute recruitment of new staff, the school now has an effective leadership team that is focused on raising standards. Good support from the local authority has been instrumental in improving pupils' performance in English and mathematics. As a result, the underachievement in Years 3 to 6, noted in the last report, has been mostly eliminated. Improved teaching means that pupils now leave the school prepared satisfactorily for the next stage of their education. Although a few parents express concerns about the many staff changes, most are very satisfied with the school.

Systems to check the quality of teaching and measure pupils' progress are good. Where individual pupils or teachers need support, immediate action is taken. Assessment data is analysed carefully in order to set pupils challenging targets. Governors carry out their duties well and financial management is good. They check the school's performance closely and are pursuing ways to improve accommodation, attendance and weaknesses noted in previous reports. Nevertheless, most issues have been addressed well. Pupils now behave well and enjoy school. The quality of teaching and pupils' attainment are improving. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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?	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	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	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?	2
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.

Annex A

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	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	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

18 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Edmund's C of E Primary School, Mansfield Woodhouse, NG19 9JU

I am writing to tell you what we found out about your school when we visited recently to look at your work and talk to you and your teachers. It was lovely meeting such friendly and polite young people; you made us feel very welcome. Please thank your parents for completing the questionnaires about their opinions of the school. It was good to learn they are happy with the school. We particularly enjoyed having lunch with you and talking to you about all the interesting things you do.

The school on the whole is satisfactory but some things are good and some need improving.

- You try your best and get the results we expect from children of your age. Your results are improving but we think some of you could do even better.
- The work you do in all the subjects is good but we feel you would benefit from more investigation work in science. The many clubs and visitors help you learn.
- The school takes good care of you and your teachers listen to you and help you if you have problems.
- You behave well, look after each other and know how to stay fit and healthy.
- We were particularly impressed by how much you do to help other people, for example by buying goats for Africa and in re-cycling waste materials.

These are the four things we have asked your teachers and governors to do to improve your school.

- They should help you get even better results in science and give you more practical investigations to do.
- They should make sure that teachers set you challenging work and that your lessons are always good especially in Years 3 to 6.
- They should improve the classrooms so that the noise from other classes does not disturb you when you are working.
- They should ask your parents to take fewer holidays during school terms so that you spend as much time as possible in school and learn more.

There are things you could do to help too, for example you could make sure you come to school as much as you can.

We are pleased that you are happy at school and have good friends; we hope that you continue to enjoy school and make progress.

Yours sincerely

Rajinder Harrison

Lead inspector