

Walsham-le-Willows Church of England VC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124717
Local Authority	SUFFOLK
Inspection number	293086
Inspection date	15 May 2007
Reporting inspector	David Speakman

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	80
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Jenny Hill
Headteacher	Mrs Angela Hunter
Date of previous school inspection	28 October 2002
School address	Wattisfield Road Walsham-le-Willows Bury St. Edmunds Suffolk IP31 3BD
Telephone number	01359259319
Fax number	01359259319

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small Church of England school serving children mainly from Wattisfield and Walsham-le-Willows. About one eighth of the pupils come from outside the school's immediate area. Very few pupils come from backgrounds other than White British and none speaks English as an additional language. A small number come from Traveller families. The proportion of pupils receiving a free school meal is below the national average. The number of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is about average and there are no pupils with a statement of special educational need. Overall, attainment on entry is typical for children at this age. The school has gained Silver Eco School 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 in which pupils achieve well. It provides good value for money. Since the appointment of the headteacher just over a year ago, a number of new initiatives have been put in place and are already showing an impact in rising standards. There are clear signs of higher levels of attainment and, together with other recent improvements and those made since the previous inspection, the school demonstrates a good capacity for further improvement. Children achieve well in the Foundation Stage and attain the standards children are expected to reach by the end of reception. Attainment is above average at the end of Year 2 and above that nationally expected for nine-year-olds at the end of Year 4. However, at both key stages, assessment data shows that achievement in reading and writing is better than in mathematics.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils show extremely high levels of enjoyment in being at school and all say that they feel very safe. Behaviour in lessons and around school is excellent. For their age, pupils have a very high level of understanding of how to stay physically fit and how to eat healthily, enthusiastically taking part in a wide range of health promoting opportunities provided by the school. Pupils contribute well to both the school, local and wider communities. They develop good skills to equip them for the next stages of their education and future lives.

The quality of education provided by the school is good, including that in the Foundation Stage. Teaching and learning are good at all stages of the school. Teachers use assessments to match work to pupils' learning needs well so that pupils of all abilities and ages in the mixed-age classes are able to make good progress. They set targets for pupils' attainment, but these are at present too broad and long-term. Pupils do not clearly understand their targets because they are not written in sufficiently child-friendly language. The care shown for pupils' well-being and safety is outstanding. Curriculum planning makes sure that lessons are matched well to individual pupils' learning needs in the mixed-age classes and that there is a seamless transition from one stage of the school to the next. Extra activities such as clubs and visits add significantly to the quality and range of lessons. Good links with other local schools and with support agencies make a good contribution to pupils' well-being.

Although the impact of leadership and management is good overall, the leadership shown by the headteacher is outstanding. She has made an impressive start and with the excellent support of governors and staff quickly established an extremely clear vision for school improvement and implemented well-planned initiatives that are showing early impact in a number of important areas of the school's provision and outcomes. Good monitoring of performance, which includes governors and staff and takes account of pupils' and parents' views, enables leaders to effectively evaluate how well the school is doing and what needs to be improved. These are carefully prioritised into a good quality school improvement plan which effectively guides the school's drive for constant improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make sure that pupils achieve as well in mathematics as they do in English.
- Improve pupils' targets for learning so that they are more clearly understood by pupils and are more specific in providing them with information on the next steps in their learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Although attainment on entry is typical of children for this age, assessment soon after entry to Reception has identified some weaknesses in children's early reading and writing skills and in their independent learning skills. They progress well in Reception and by the time they transfer into Year 1, most have achieved the levels nationally expected in each of the areas of learning. Pupils continue to achieve well in Years 1 and 2 and by the end of Year 2 attainment is above average, although there was a dip in 2006, when standards dropped to broadly average because of the high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities. This year's predicted outcomes for this age group indicate overall attainment which is above average. It is above average in reading and writing but broadly average in mathematics. A similar picture emerges in Years 3 and 4 and by the end of Year 4 attainment is above that nationally expected for pupils of this age. Assessment data shows that pupils make better than predicted progress in reading and writing. Progress in mathematics is broadly satisfactory but not as rapid as in English. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities progress as well as other pupils in the school and those from Traveller families achieve well through focused support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils confirm they really enjoy coming to school and because behaviour is so good, they agree that they are free from any form of harassment and feel safe whilst there. Staff and visitors to school help pupils develop a very good sense of personal safety outside school. Break times are very pleasant occasions with pupils fully engaged in a wide range of traditional playground games, using the extensive range of playground apparatus to occupy them fully and keep them exercised. They have an excellent understanding of healthy eating. This is further supported through a wide range of activities including work in the school garden, where pupils grow a good range of vegetables which they eat. Attendance is good for the vast majority of pupils. Pupils make suggestions about any school improvement they envisage or any concerns they have through a suggestion box or the School Council.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is consistently good throughout the school. Teachers' planning is thorough and takes close account of both pupils' ages and ability in the mixed-age classes so that pupils are provided with challenging activities that move them on well and build effectively on what they have already achieved. Teaching assistants make significant contributions to pupils' academic achievement. In lessons they are deployed effectively and know pupils well. They are skilled and work closely with teachers. Teachers who have special skills in art, design and technology and science teach their subjects throughout the school and the work displayed through the school and in pupils' work books shows that standards in these subjects are good. Lessons are conducted at a brisk pace and this, combined with interesting and engaging activities, sustains pupils' concentration and enthusiasm for learning. Pupils are so enthusiastic about learning that many choose to continue research for lessons and do extension work out of school hours.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and is carefully planned to ensure a progressive development of skills for pupils of different ages and at different levels of ability in the mixed-age classes. It is planned so that there is a smooth transition between different key stages. Links with the middle schools ensure that the Key Stage 2 curriculum is fully provided for between the two phases in a structured and progressive way. There are meaningful links between different subjects, which help to make learning significant and stimulating. Themed weeks and days and whole-school topics are particularly enjoyed by pupils who, for instance, found great pleasure in constructing a rain forest in one corner of the hall and then meeting some live animals that inhabit rain forests. Curriculum enrichment is good. There is a good range and variety of trips out of school and of visitors, linked to different subjects or topics in order to widen pupils' experiences further or to effectively promote their personal development. Pupils are enthusiastic about the good range of extra-curricular activities, which are linked with a wide range of subjects so pupils are able to take part whatever their preference.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The overall care, guidance and support provided is good. The school shows excellent care and guidance for pupils' well-being. Child protection and health and safety procedures are fully in place and comprehensive safety checks and risk assessments are carried out by governors and staff on school activities. Pupils are confident that the staff will look after them exceedingly well if ever they should need support. Pupils copy the strong role models of care provided by all staff and look out for each other, understanding fully the importance of the 'friendship stop' on the playground. The school does all it can to encourage good attendance, including calling parents of the first day of absence and offering a range of rewards and initiatives to pupils with good or excellent attendance rates. Pupils receive good levels of academic guidance to help their learning. Marking of work is helpful in letting them know what they do well and what they need to do to improve. Pupils are often involved in the assessment of their own work and consequently have a good idea of how well they are doing. Targets are less informative as they are often written in complicated language that pupils do not fully understand and are too broad to be meaningful to pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Although the overall quality of leadership and management is good, that of the headteacher is outstanding. She is focused, clear in what she wants for the school and is a determined leader who has quickly enabled significant improvement to take place. She soon gained the confidence of staff, governors and the overwhelming majority of parents. She enjoys the excellent support and challenge of the governing body. Since appointment she has, amongst other important initiatives, led the broadening of the curriculum by introducing a personal, social and health education scheme of work and other curriculum enrichment initiatives. Assessment of pupils' work has been fine tuned and additional procedures to track pupils' progress have been introduced. The monitoring roles of the subject leaders have been extended and they are

effective in their work. A strong sense of teamwork has been established. These improvements have had significant impact on pupils' enjoyment of the school and on rising standards.

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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?	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	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	2
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	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?	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	1
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	1
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

16 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Walsham-le-Willows Primary School, Walsham-le-Willows, Bury St Edmunds, IP31 3BD

Thank you for making me feel welcome in your school when I visited you recently. I had a lovely day and thoroughly enjoyed finding out about you, your school and how well you are doing. You have a good school and I am pleased to say that you make a significant contribution to making it as successful as it is. Your behaviour is excellent, both in lessons and on the playground; it was delightful to see you all enjoying the playground apparatus. It was impressive to see how well you all get on together. Your outstanding behaviour and attitudes help you to learn well and make good progress.

Teachers, teaching assistants and governors think very highly of you and go all out to do their best to make the school an enjoyable place for you to learn and play. Lessons and other activities are interesting. Adults in the school know you very well and plan tasks that you can manage, but which are still challenging and interesting. Some of you I spoke to showed real pride in your work.

Although the school is good and still improving, there are one or two things that can be done to improve things even further. I have therefore asked your teachers and governors to think about how they can;

- make sure that the progress you make in mathematics is as good as that in English
- make your learning targets easier for you to understand.

I wish you all well in the future. You can help the headteacher and staff to improve the school further by continuing to cooperate with them as well as you do now.

Yours truly

David Speakman

Inspector