



St Edmundsbury Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 124762
Local Authority SUFFOLK
Inspection number 293106
Inspection dates 19–20 October 2006
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 address	Grove Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Bury St. Edmunds
Age range of pupils	4–9		Suffolk IP33 3BJ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01284752967
Number on roll (school)	227	Fax number	01284766770
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Rev Stephen Mitchell
		Headteacher	Mrs Anne Evans
Date of previous school inspection	8 May 2001		

Age group 4–9	Inspection dates 19–20 October 2006	Inspection number 293106
-------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© 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 two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Edmundsbury is an average sized primary school. It serves an urban community of mixed housing. Nearly all pupils are from White British backgrounds. Small numbers of a wide range of other ethnic groups are represented. These are mainly from other European backgrounds and speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational need, is a little lower than average. Attainment on entry is broadly average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Edmundsbury Primary School provides a satisfactory standard of education, which matches the school's own opinion. By the time pupils leave in Year 4, standards are broadly average and pupils' achievements are satisfactory. Many signs of good recent improvement point to a strong capacity to improve. The school's senior leaders share good ideas about how to manage future improvement. Already, a rich and varied curriculum helps pupils to enjoy learning. Provision and standards in the Reception classes are good. Strong teaching and learning through the school are increasing pupils' rates of progress, though it has yet to have a full impact on pupils' progress in literacy and numeracy. Good teaching is having a powerful impact on pupils' personal development, which is good. Despite all of this, standards of work are not as good now as they were in the past. For example, the results of national tests and assessments were nearly always above average and sometimes well above, whereas those of 2006 are simply average. In the year or so prior to this dip, the school passed through a difficult time, with many changes in staffing, including senior staff. Morale was affected and the school's reputation suffered in the locality. Pupils' work suffered. These important aspects are only just beginning to be rebuilt. Nevertheless, responses to pre-inspection questionnaires indicate that a clear majority of parents are pleased with what is happening now and refer to recent improvement. At the same time, a significant few still feel that not enough is being done to bring about a strong working relationship with them.

One of the most important contributory factors to the fall in standards was that good systems for tracking pupils' progress were not in place. In a situation of frequent changes of staff, the slow-down in pupils' progress was simply not picked up soon enough to respond adequately. Recently, new procedures have been introduced and staff are applying them conscientiously, although not enough time has passed yet for enough good quality information to emerge. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are supported with work that meets their different requirements and teaching assistants are deployed effectively to help them. As a result, these pupils make consistently satisfactory progress. Pupils with English as an additional language, including those who enter directly from overseas, are effectively catered for. A parent commented, 'The headteacher and staff did absolutely everything to make sure that my child could settle to work and make friends. They taught the other children, who have been wonderful, how to help as well.'

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The current leadership team works well together, knows what needs to be done and is communicating it effectively to the staff. However, action plans sometimes lack sharply written criteria on which to judge whether targets for improvement have been met. The governing body is led by an experienced, well informed chair, although aspirations for the future have not been fully translated into higher standards

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that as a result of the new tracking arrangements, teachers' planning and pupils' targets are supported by better quality information about pupils' progress
- Give parents a clearer understanding of how the school is working and improving, and encourage an effective partnership with them in children's learning
- Ensure that the school's actions for further improvement include clearer identification of the intended outcomes and how these will be checked.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Currently, standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science are broadly average. While it is satisfactory, pupils' achievement is picking up in response to good teaching, which includes pupils across the range of ethnic groups that is represented in the school. An initiative to improve reading has proved successful with many pupils through the school making progress at faster than normally expected rates. However, this outcome is more apparent amongst girls than boys. This is reflected in Year 4, where boys outnumber girls considerably, and standards in mathematics are higher than in English. Senior staff are responding well to such differences in achievement. In order to meet differing needs of pupils in different subjects, teaching in sets has been introduced in literacy and numeracy (sets are classes that bring together pupils with similar ability and learning needs). Over the past few years, national tests and assessments at the end of Year 2 have also reflected the school's difficult time. In the past, results were usually above average in the core subjects of reading, writing, mathematics and science. In 2006, they were average. Indications are that this situation is beginning to improve. Teaching and learning in the Reception classes are good, which is building strongly on broadly average attainment on entry. As a result, nearly all children are on course to meet expected goals at the end of the year. Several are likely to exceed them. Good teaching of a rich curriculum in Years 1 and 2 is also contributing to the improving picture.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Pupils enjoy school and get on well together, supported well by the Year 4 'Sunshine Crew' who are on duty at lunch time to help everyone have a good time. Behaviour is nearly always good in lessons and on the playground, although a minority of pupils need plenty of reminders about what is expected, so that they do not disrupt their own learning and that of others. Pupils feel their opinions are valued, particularly through the forum of the school council. They contribute well to the school and wider community through activities such as the Environment Club that keeps the grounds tidy and attractive. Pupils show their understanding of their responsibilities as young citizens through charity work. Currently they are involved in the Christmas 'shoe box' appeal. Pupils are developing a good understanding of what

constitutes a safe and healthy lifestyle. They know, for example, that '...too many chips are not good for you, but it's all right to have them for a once a week treat on Friday'. Satisfactory academic standards, including the use of information and communication technology (ICT), linked with good social skills, give them a sound basis for involvement in the world beyond school. Attendance is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning have recently improved and are now good, resulting in better progress than has been the case in recent years. One of the main reasons is that assessment procedures are improving fast. Although their use to track progress adequately has only recently begun, teachers' ongoing assessment and marking of work are already strengths. These aspects are providing a strong basis for ensuring that pupils' work matches their immediate learning needs. As a result, progress is now good. Teaching is good in the Reception classes. At the beginning of the year, children's personal, social and emotional development is being promoted very strongly, and children have settled very effectively. This is reflected strongly in comments from parents of newly admitted children. Teaching is particularly effective in boosting pupils' achievements in Year 4. Lessons in this age group are imaginatively planned and cater extremely well for the wide range of attainment. ICT is used effectively to engage pupils in their learning. Teaching assistants work well alongside the teachers and ensure that individuals and small groups do well, especially those who need extra adult help.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. In the Reception classes it is very well planned. Activities are based on themes that help children to make progress across the whole range of areas of learning simultaneously. In older age groups, the National Curriculum is enriched with plenty of visitors and visits to enhance learning and arouse interest. During the inspection, for example, Year 1 pupils visited the cinema, as part of National Schools' Film Week, to see 'Over the Hedge', supporting work in literacy, geography and art and design. Out of school clubs also enrich learning well. Activities range widely to include, for example, Latin, French, sports, country dancing, work with ICT and several others.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Pastoral care is good and ensures that pupils feel safe and happy in school. Arrangements to ensure health and safety are good, including those for child protection. Parents are happy with the day-to-day care

of their children. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities are supported well, but their individual education plans do not consistently include enough small steps in learning that these pupils need if they are to improve. Academic support and guidance are satisfactory. Pupils are increasingly aware of their learning targets and recent successful initiatives to improve teachers' marking give pupils better ideas about how to improve their work. Many improvements to track and report their progress are quite recent and have not yet had time to make a full impact on improving standards.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school is emerging from an unsettled period characterised by a considerable number of staff and governor changes. Effective steps have now been taken to promote improvement, following a dip in standards since the last inspection, so value for money is currently satisfactory. The headteacher has a good overview of the school's strengths and weaknesses. She and subject leaders monitor teaching and the curriculum effectively. Information from the new tracking arrangements is just beginning to help in planning work to raise academic standards. Arrangements for self-evaluation are improving and current action plans mean subject leaders and governors are more involved in the school's continuing development.

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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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	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 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?	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?	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.

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	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
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

21 October 2006

Dear Children

St Edmundsbury C of E Primary School, Grove Road, Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk, IP33 3BJ Thank you for being very helpful and polite when Mrs Ranger and I visited your school. It was really good to have so many of you tell us that you like your school. We enjoyed speaking to you and coming to your lessons. Lots of you said that your teachers look after you well and that they are willing to listen to you about things that are important to you. We agree with you about these ideas. Overall, we believe that what your school provides is satisfactory. It passed through a difficult period, when lots of teachers left. Despite that, there are several good things about it. Many of you told us that the new teachers, including your headteacher, are looking after you well and that their lessons are good. You are correct about this and it means that your work is starting to get better, which is another good thing.

Here are some other things that are good

- Nearly all of you behave well in your classrooms, in the playground and around the building
- Many of you are good at helping to run the school smoothly: for example, Year 4 enjoy what they do in the 'Sunshine Crew' and the school councillors do a good job
- There are lots of interesting things about what is taught, such as visits and extra clubs and activities for you after school.

Here are some things that we have asked your headteacher, teachers and school governors to do

- Use the information that they are now gathering about your progress to plan your work and set you even better targets
- Give your parents or carers a clearer idea of how your school is improving and how they can help you more with your school work - you can help with this, by telling them all the good things that you told us
- Make sure that it is easy to check whether and when new ideas are working.

I hope that you will always be proud of your school and will help your teachers to make it even better.

Yours sincerely,

John William Paull

Lead inspector