



The Cowbit St Mary's Endowed Church of England Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 120611
Local Authority LINCOLNSHIRE
Inspection number 295420
Inspection dates 5–6 March 2007
Reporting inspector George Derby

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Barrier Bank
School category	Voluntary aided		Cowbit, Spalding
Age range of pupils	4–11		Lincolnshire PE12 6AL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01406 380369
Number on roll (school)	72	Fax number	01406 380369
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Ms Sheila Woodham
		Headteacher	Mrs Maureen Martin
Date of previous school inspection	25 January 2006		

Age group 4–11	Inspection dates 5–6 March 2007	Inspection number 295420
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Cowbit St Mary's is a small village school in an area of mixed housing. The movement of pupils in and out of the school, particularly in Key Stage 2, is extremely high. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, at 38%, is very high, and extremely high in Years 5 and 6. All pupils are White British. No pupils are recorded as entitled to free school meals; in fact, no meals are provided at the school. Children's attainment on entry to Reception is quite variable. It is usually below average, sometimes well below average and very occasionally average. Some pupils who enter the school at a later stage have attainment which is very low.

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 which provides satisfactory value for money. This judgement matches the school's own view. Staff have worked particularly hard since the last inspection and improvement has been good. This is because the school is well led by the headteacher, who monitors and evaluates its work effectively. The school has a sound capacity to improve further; the school largely knows what it needs to do to improve and has satisfactory ways of checking its work. Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory overall. Senior staff's focus has rightly been on basic skills and science, but their monitoring does not yet extend to teaching. Governance is satisfactory. Governors continue to be supportive and the chair has made a good start to improving the challenge they bring to the school. Parents generally praise the school's work; one wrote, 'everyone at school is very welcoming and has succeeded in making my girls feel positive about school life'.

The children in Reception have generally got off to a good start in recent years. However, since the combining of the lowest three year groups this school year, Reception planning has become too focused on English, mathematics and science. Children's achievements are in too narrow a range of areas and, therefore, limited. A few parents are concerned about this. All this has been recognised by the school and support is being arranged.

Throughout Key Stages 1 and 2 pupils of all abilities make satisfactory progress. By the time they leave the school in Year 6 their attainment is in line with what is expected in relation to their abilities. Last year this was similar to the national average. The achievement of the current Year 6 pupils is satisfactory.

Pupils' personal development is good. They love coming to school, are enthusiastic and their attendance is good. They especially enjoy the practical nature of activities such as sport, French and music. Older pupils appreciate the effort that staff make to ensure lessons are interesting, and say their 'teachers make it fun'. Pupils behave well and those who find concentrating and listening difficult receive good levels of support. Pupils have a good understanding of the need to maintain a healthy lifestyle, and know how to keep safe in school and at home. They make a positive contribution to the community and are developing skills which will prepare them adequately for the next steps in their education.

Teaching is satisfactory and some is good. Teachers have worked hard to improve their practice and readily take on board advice from senior staff and the local authority. This willingness and desire to improve is a characteristic of the school at all levels. Teaching assistants play a good role in supporting pupils and contribute much to the achievement of those who find learning difficult. The curriculum is satisfactory and in Key Stages 1 and 2 the pupils have a varied range of interesting activities. However, not enough is done to make important links between subjects and especially how these can support pupils' writing skills.

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that children in Reception have a well planned, broad and balanced curriculum which fully meets their needs and enables them to make progress.
- Improve the curriculum by making effective links between subjects, especially to support pupils' writing skills.
- Expand the work of subject coordinators to include responsibility for development of other subjects and increase their monitoring and evaluation role.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards have improved well over the past year and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. The school's focus on raising these through intensive work on basic skills has clearly paid off and staff are now in a much better position to gauge how much progress the pupils make. In the 2006 Year 6 national tests, pupils' attainment was average in English and mathematics and above average in science. Progress, from pupils' starting points, was satisfactory in all three subjects and the greatest improvement was in science where an above average percentage gained the higher level (Level 5). There was a similar positive picture of improvement for pupils in Year 2. Teachers' assessments indicated that standards were average overall in reading, writing and mathematics.

Writing was generally an area where pupils did less well and girls did better than boys in most subjects. Both these issues have been soundly addressed by the school in its planning. Data show that children in Reception in past years have reached the goals expected for their age, although recent tracking information has revealed that their progress is more variable and not as expected for their abilities.

The pupils' abilities and levels of attainment vary from year group to year group, often because of the very high number of pupils with learning difficulties. Year 6 pupils' standards are currently below average but given their starting points, some of which were very low, this represents satisfactory achievement. The school has worked hard to ensure that all groups of pupils, and particularly those who are high attaining make the progress they are capable of.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school and take part enthusiastically in their lessons. Attendance is good. Behaviour is also good because pupils are well managed and there is a great deal of mutual respect. The school works hard to help pupils to think and reflect on the impact on others of what they do but also to develop a compassion for the plight of others at home and in other countries. As a result, they have well developed spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. They know how to keep healthy and the good range of activities in and out of school aids this well. Not all bring fully healthy lunches though! They know about keeping safe, especially with regard to agricultural safety and undertake a good range of fundraising and charity work in the school and locality.

The school council and friendship group give children a voice and they influence well aspects of the school's work. They feel that the school listens well, although on occasions they do not think their requests are dealt with quickly enough. Pupils' improvement in basic skills, and the enterprise work they undertake results in them being adequately prepared for their future placements.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and are occasionally good. The school uses its teaching assistants well and they make an effective contribution to pupils' learning. All staff work hard to make the school a vibrant learning environment.

Pupils are enthusiastic about learning and a key strength is the way the school turns pupils on to learn, especially those who find learning a struggle. A considerable change over the past 12 months is the way staff thoroughly plan their lessons and now ensure that learning and activities mostly meet all pupils' needs. This was evident in nearly all lessons although occasionally, work was not extended far enough for some pupils. Support for pupils with learning difficulties is generally good, although for pupils working at quite low levels, work is occasionally too advanced and assessment not accurate enough. Good use is made of information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance learning, and pupils thoroughly enjoy this aspect.

Assessment is satisfactory and pupils are much more involved in identifying what they have learned and by how much. The challenging individual targets and group targets also help pupils to take greater responsibility for their learning. Pupils really like them! Checking what pupils have learned and responding to this is now at the heart of learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and is enhanced by a good range of activities in and outside lessons, especially sport. Enterprise activities have helped standards to rise in science, particularly for the most able pupils, as well as supporting pupils' economic understanding. Links with the church are effective and also enrich pupils' opportunities for learning.

While links are made between subjects, the focus on raising standards in English, mathematics and science and the significant strengthening of the curriculum in these subjects has meant that the curriculum has been somewhat weighted towards these. Thought about how aspects such as writing could be supported through other subjects has not been sufficiently at the fore of the school's thinking. In the class where Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 are taught together, planning does not cover all areas of learning sufficiently. The School has sound plans to improve its links between subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

This is a school where staff are vigilant about safety and security and where pupils are safeguarded well. Pupils feel positive about the way they are looked after and the support they get. Improvements in tracking and assessment have resulted in much better guidance and accuracy of what the next steps in pupils' learning should be, although at this stage the enhanced tracking data covers only one year. Nevertheless, the information from this is used well to adapt programmes and work. Pupil progress interviews have made real in-roads in helping staff understand what pupils have learned, where they have difficulty and the support they need further. This is making a real difference and is one of the reasons why pupils now make better progress. Close attention is given to pupils with learning difficulties and the school works closely with outside agencies to secure the extra help that some pupils need.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has helped move the school forward at a good pace to ensure that all pupils make satisfactory progress. She has been well supported by the senior staff team who have all worked incredibly hard to make the school what it is today. Subject leader roles have developed satisfactorily. However, they have not had the opportunity to monitor the quality of teaching in their subjects. The headteacher's focus has clearly been on the need to raise standards in the externally tested subjects and the thrust of the school's efforts has been in this direction. She has been successful to this end. This has meant, though, that other developments have taken a back seat for the moment and she recognises that a much broader focus is required from now on.

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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	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
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?	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?	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	3
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

8 March 2007

Dear Pupils

The Cowbit St Mary's Endowed Church of England Primary School, Barrier Bank, Cowbit, Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE12 6AL

Thank you for spending time to talk with me. I learned a lot about you, your work and your school. I enjoyed the visit and looking at the good displays of your work. The staff certainly value what you do. You are all working hard to make things better and clearly like school life. Mrs Martin, teachers, assistants and governors have also put a great deal of effort to improving the school in the last year and they have succeeded! Your school gives you a satisfactory education.

I was impressed with the way you get on well with each other, behave well and are sensible around the school. You help one another and do well at raising money for others less fortunate than yourselves. You have a good knowledge of how to keep healthy and safe, although a few do not always have 'healthy lunchboxes'. You try hard in lessons and really enjoy practical activities. Your teachers make your lessons interesting and you especially like it when they use the interactive whiteboard.

I have asked Mrs Martin to do a few other things to make the school even better.

- For children in Reception to learn through a wide variety of well planned activities.
- For all pupils to practise their writing skills in all subjects and that even greater links are made between subjects.
- Staff have worked hard to improve your learning and achievement in English, mathematics and science; they now need to expand their role and develop other subjects.

Good luck for the future.

George Derby

Lead inspector