

Empingham CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120177
Local Authority	RUTLAND LA
Inspection number	313545
Inspection date	12 November 2007
Reporting inspector	George Knights

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	29
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Margaret Markey
Headteacher	Mrs Clare Rowbotham
Date of previous school inspection	4 May 2005
School address	School Lane Empingham Oakham LE15 8PQ
Telephone number	01780460246
Fax number	01780460246

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a very small school with only 29 pupils on roll, serving a village community to the east of Rutland Water. All pupils on roll are from White British backgrounds. The number with learning difficulties or disabilities is below average, as is the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. Attainment on entry matches that expected of 4 year old children. The school has recently become part of a Federation, called 'Rutland's Primary Partners', combining with a neighbouring school some 3.5 miles away. The schools have the same headteacher and share a governing body. Pupils from the two schools work together for some activities. The school has reached the National Healthy Schools Standard and has been awarded Activemark.

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. Its success stems from membership of a local federation, led by a strong and effective headteacher. She has developed very good systems and structures that enable the sharing of resources and expertise to the benefit of all pupils. The school meets its aim of 'Achieving Together' very well.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher, her colleagues and governors, through rigorous evaluation, systematically identify areas where improvements are needed and take appropriate action. This has led to better results in mathematics. All pupils are now achieving well and reaching above average standards in English, mathematics and science by the time they leave, though the most able pupils do less well in science than they do in the other subjects. Ambitious targets provide a clear focus for further improvement. The school's own self-evaluation accords with inspectors' judgement that it is providing an effective education.

The headteacher has developed a strong team ethos across both schools. This has enabled joint planning, the sharing of ideas and improvement in the range of activities provided. The good curriculum enables pupils to study a broad range of subjects and the federation structure allows a greater range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities. Care, guidance and support for pupils is good. Because the school is small, pupils are known very well and hence teachers can meet their needs. The pupils' personal development is good; they enjoy school and talk enthusiastically about the activities and events in which they participate. Their attendance is good, as is their behaviour, both in lessons and around the school. They feel safe and are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles. Parents describe the school as having 'a happy atmosphere' where pupils are well cared for by 'a dedicated and very approachable staff'.

Teaching is good. Teachers have a detailed knowledge of individual needs and ensure that all pupils learn well. Careful planning, together with good individual support, means that those who find learning difficult make good progress. Assessments are accurate and good use is made of them to plan lessons. However, teachers do not always ensure that older pupils are given sufficiently detailed personal targets.

The headteacher and her staff are supported well by an able and increasingly effective governing body. They have encouraged joint working across the two schools wherever possible. They manage both budgets carefully to make efficient use of resources and hence the school gives good value for money. The headteacher and governors have worked well with the local authority to ensure that parents are well informed about the establishment of the federation. This partnership with the local authority makes an effective contribution to the federation.

The school has gone through many changes since the previous inspection, both in terms of leadership, management and staffing. Issues raised at the time of the previous inspection have, however, been dealt with well. All members of the school community have a strong commitment to further improvement in the school, and have the capacity to achieve this.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children progress well during their first year in school. They work in a stimulating classroom environment and benefit from spending some of their time with Year 1 and 2 pupils, with whom they share a class. They quickly develop good learning habits and routines and these prepare them well for further study. They feel safe and well cared for and develop good levels of

self-confidence. Close links between the school and a nursery that meets on the school site help to make children's transfer into Class 1 effective. The development of children's communication skills is good and this supports good progress in other aspects of their learning. Leadership of the Foundation Stage is good, with the headteacher supporting the class teacher and her teaching assistant well.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the level of challenge in science so that older pupils do as well in this subject as they do in English and mathematics.
- Make better use of assessment information to give older pupils clearer targets to work towards.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well as they move through the school, building on good progress in the Foundation Stage. Those currently in Years 1 and 2 are achieving well and are gaining in confidence in their learning. Results at the end of Year 2 in 2007 were above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. This represented an improvement on the previous year, when results were a little below average. Older pupils also achieve well. Results in Year 6 tests have been improving in recent years. In 2007, pupils reached above average standards in English, mathematics and science, though fewer gained higher levels in science than in other subjects. Action is being taken to ensure that, in future, pupils do as well in science as in other subjects. Careful planning and good support for individuals means that all pupils make good progress. The school met its targets in 2006 and has set equally challenging targets for the coming year.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are becoming aware that they are growing up in a society characterised by cultural diversity. They enjoy school life and establish good relationships with one another and with their teachers. They behave well, both in lessons and around the school. They say they feel safe in school and are confident that there is always somebody to help if they have a problem. They also enjoy working alongside pupils from the other school in the federation. They are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles and to value the many opportunities to take part in sporting activities. Pupils have a strong sense of belonging to the school community and express their views and ideas through the work of class and school councils. They are proud of what they achieve, for instance, in the decisions they took regarding the recent refurbishment of the toilets. They develop a good understanding of life in the wider community through a range of visits, links with organisations, such as the local church, and through fund-raising activities. Good attainment in basic skills and participation in a range of activities effectively prepares pupils for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils benefit from working in small classes, where teachers are able to ensure a good match of tasks to individual pupils' needs. This ensures that all pupils learn effectively, both when working individually and in groups. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to ensure that pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities join in all activities and make good progress. Joint planning with the partnership school ensures a good variety of activities is available. Pupils are increasingly encouraged to develop independence in their learning and to engage in investigations and experiments, providing clear evidence of improvement since the previous inspection. Teachers assess pupils' work well and use this information to guide their planning of future activities, but do not always use the information well in setting targets for older pupils. Teachers share the purposes of lessons and encourage pupils to evaluate their progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils are provided with an interesting and varied range of subjects and activities. The federation enables specialist teachers to be employed for subjects such as French and music. From Year 3 upwards, pupils from the two schools work together on one afternoon each week and this provides the stimulus of working in larger groups. Membership of the federation and strong links with other small schools in the area means that residential trips and a good range of other extra-curricular activities are provided. These cover sport and other interests and pupils participate in these enthusiastically.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The effective pastoral care and support for pupils contributes significantly to developing their confidence and their personal development. Parents are confident that their children are safe and well cared for at school and are very pleased with the overall support they receive. They value the information provided for them and there is good evidence of teachers and parents working in partnership to provide care and support. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are good, as are procedures to encourage pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are well cared for so that they make good progress towards the targets set for them. However, older pupils are not given sufficiently clear guidance on how they can improve their work, or specific individual targets to aim for. Good links with the neighbouring secondary school help prepare pupils well for the next stage of education.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

After a period of instability and rapid change, leadership and management of the school are now strong. The headteacher has established a well-structured model of collaborative leadership and management across both schools and has developed a strong team ethos. In this, she has received good support from both the governing body and her colleagues. The sharing of

management roles has enabled the strengths of both teacher teams to be used to support effective learning in both schools. The joint governing body has become very effective, both in providing critical friendship and in rigorously monitoring all aspects of the school's work. Very effective self-evaluation in the school has been crucial to identifying strengths and areas where further improvement is necessary. This has created a strong sense of purpose and means that plans for further improvement are pertinent and well structured. Detailed analysis of pupils' performance has enabled the identification of areas where improvement is necessary and effective action has resulted. Good use is made of resources, efficiently balancing the needs of both schools to meet the requirements of the pupils.

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Annex A

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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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	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	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
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

13 November 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Empingham C of E Primary School, School Lane, Empingham LE15 8PQ

I would like to thank you all for making me really welcome when I came to inspect your school recently. I really enjoyed coming to your lessons, joining you in assembly and watching you play together. Thank you for talking to me about your work and telling me what you like about the school.

Because you told me how much you enjoyed being a pupil, you will not be surprised that I think yours is a good school. Your very good attendance shows how much you like coming to school. Your teachers, and their assistants, help you to get off to a good start in Class 1 and then ensure that you continue to make good progress when you are further up the school. I have asked them to continue the work they are doing to make sure that you all do as well in science as you do in other subjects. I was pleased to hear that you like working with pupils from your partner school in 'Rutland's Primary Partners'. Your teachers use the link with the partner school well to provide you with a good range of activities, both in lessons and at other times. They plan your lessons well, but I have asked them to make sure that older pupils have clearer targets to work towards. You obviously feel very safe in school and this is because your teachers and their assistants get to know you well, care for you and make sure that you get the support you need.

Your school is well run. Your headteacher works really well with the staff, governors and your parents to ensure that the school does the best it can for you. There have been many changes in the school recently, but things are settling down well now and I think that, with your help, the school will continue to get even better.

My very best wishes to you. I hope that you all do very well in the future.

Yours sincerely

George Knights

Lead inspector