

Bacton First School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 120781 |
| Local Authority | NORFOLK LA |
| Inspection number | 313735 |
| Inspection date | 21 September 2007 |
| Reporting inspector | John Messer |

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

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| Type of school | First |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 4–8 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 38 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mrs Jacqui MacDonald |
| Headteacher | Mrs Sandra Humphreys |
| Date of previous school inspection | 25 November 2002 |
| School address | Walcott Road Bacton Norwich Norfolk NR12 0EY |
| Telephone number | 01692 650240 |
| Fax number | 01692 650240 |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

There are two classes in this very small first school. The attainment of most, but not all, pupils on entry to the school is below average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds but several are from minority ethnic groups and a small number speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is above average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. Children enter the school with standards that are below average and most leave with standards that are above average. This represents good progress. Children have a good start in the Reception class and consequently make good progress. Several pupils, some with learning difficulties and some of the faster learners, make outstanding progress. Teaching is good so that pupils learn effectively and achieve well. Classes are small and this helps teachers and support staff to develop a detailed understanding of each individual's learning needs. There is a wide age and ability range in each class. Teachers place pupils into ability groups and prepare detailed plans to cater for the needs of each. Pupils' widely varying learning needs are met well and this promotes good progress. Teaching assistants are well trained and work closely with teachers to support pupils' learning.

Pupils develop a wide range of key skills that provides them with a good foundation for transferring to the junior school. The school maintains high levels of care. Pupils understand what makes a balanced diet and appreciate the need for regular exercise. They receive good guidance on how to stay safe and look after themselves. They support a number of charities which helps them to appreciate their responsibilities towards the wider community.

The headteacher leads the school well. She has fostered a strong sense of teamwork so that all staff share a commitment to improving provision and raising attainment. There are good links with the village playgroup which promote continuity in children's learning. Parents are delighted with the education provided for their children. One comment was typical, 'The degree of care and individual attention to each and every pupil is excellent.' The governing body gives much good support. Many are new and are not yet sufficiently involved in planning how to help the school to reach even higher standards. The headteacher and governors have worked closely together to improve the learning environment. The classrooms and corridors are bright and colourful. The grounds have been developed well as a learning resource. There is a rich curriculum that provides pupils with a wide range of interesting activities. It is, in the main, divided into separate subjects, rather than being moulded into series of themes designed to capture pupils' imaginations. The school has just embarked on considering how to make the curriculum more stimulating and exciting. This is one of the main priorities for further development as governors are not yet fully involved in working with the school plan to develop the curriculum and raise standards further. Finances are managed well and the school provides good value for money. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and it is used well to create a good school development plan. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. The school is poised to make further advances and has good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children are given a warm welcome when they start school and settle happily in the Reception class. At the time of the inspection they had only just started school but were already confident about classroom routines. They know where things are kept and help to put equipment away tidily. There is a strong emphasis on teaching children the relationship between letters and the sounds they make. They are rapidly gaining the tools to develop early reading skills. They love listening to stories and are keen to learn to read for themselves. There is also an emphasis on teaching children about numbers and shapes so that their mathematical development is secure.

Activities excite them and they thoroughly enjoy school. Children achieve well in the Reception class and standards are in line with national expectations.

What the school should do to improve further

- Pursue ways of linking subjects together creatively to construct an exciting curriculum that is relevant to pupils' interests.
- Involve all governors in working with the school to plan how to develop the curriculum and raise standards further.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language, achieve well. This is largely because teachers prepare lessons carefully and set challenging tasks that are well matched to each individual's particular learning needs. Pupils achieve their targets in lessons because they learn successfully. One key feature of the school is the way in which all pupils are helped to achieve as much as they possibly can. Several of the faster learners make outstanding progress and attain standards that are exceptionally high in reading, writing and mathematics. They make good progress in Years 1 to 3 and by Year 2, and again by Year 3, standards are above average in reading, writing and mathematics. The number of pupils in each year group is very small, so comparative statistical data must be treated with great caution. However, an average of the school's performance in the national assessments for pupils in Year 2 over the last three years shows that results are above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils are developing a good range of skills in information and communication technology (ICT).

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

These are strengths of the school. The very small size of the school helps pupils to feel comfortable and secure. They make good friends and parents confirm that they love coming to school. The school does all it can to improve attendance but it remains only average because of a very small number of pupils who are frequently absent due to minor ailments. Pupils are confident and become self-assured learners. Good attention is paid to safety and pupils develop a good understanding of how to look after themselves, keep fit and lead healthy life styles. Playing as shop keepers and customers helps them to understand the function of money and helps to lay the foundations for an appreciation of the world of work. Pupils make decisions about which charities to support and this gives them a good understanding of their duty to the wider community. Pupils confirm that behaviour is nearly always good but that 'sometimes one or two get carried away'. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural developed is good. They enjoy quiet, thinking times and say that the school is 'a peaceful place'. They have a keen sense of fairness and know what is right. The small number of pupils from ethnic minorities are encouraged to share their customs and beliefs and this supports pupils' understanding of our multi-cultural society well. Pupils are polite and sensitive to the needs of others.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers and skilled teaching assistants work closely together to support pupils' learning. The number of adults per pupil is high and so each individual receives good support. Pupils are well motivated. One boy expressed this succinctly, 'Maths is wicked'. Teachers assess pupils' achievement thoroughly and keep careful records of progress. These are used well to provide all groups with appropriate challenges that lead them on to the next stages in their learning. The leadership of the school has been successful in establishing a learning environment that helps each individual pupil to learn as much as might reasonably be expected. The faster learners are well provided for and learn rapidly. The particular needs of those with learning difficulties are identified accurately and good programmes are devised to meet specific needs. The school is developing stronger links with parents in order to foster the partnership in learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Staff are busy implementing new national guidance on literacy and mathematics and have already begun to study new guidance on the Foundation Stage, although this is not due to be implemented until next year. Pupils receive a well-rounded education. The school provides an interesting and varied curriculum. Sport, drama, music, art and design feature strongly. Pupils enjoy swimming and compete in swimming galas with another first school. There is a good range of visits to places of interest, including a residential visit for the older pupils. Sleeping away from home is a big adventure for such young pupils. Visitors, such as a local life boatman, promote a sense of community. Staff have started to link subjects together to form absorbing topics but it is still working towards developing a more stimulating curriculum designed to fully meet the interests of all pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care and support are especially strong features of the school and underpin learning particularly well. The good support they receive helps pupils to develop into confident learners. Great emphasis is placed on ensuring the safety of pupils. Child protection procedures are in place and are understood by all staff. Pupils say they feel secure in the school. They receive clear guidance about how to stay safe and lead healthy lifestyles. They know, for example, that if there is a fire practice they must leave the school through the door with the green label. Pupils discuss their work with teachers who give them good guidance about how to improve. They feel well supported by all school staff and would have no hesitation about sharing problems or concerns with teachers or support staff. Parents are very pleased with the high levels of care.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher gives clear direction and calm, carefully considered leadership. There is a strong focus on raising standards. Pupils' attainment is assessed and challenging targets are set for them to reach in literacy and numeracy. Their progress is checked frequently to make

sure that they are on course. The headteacher takes a lead in identifying exactly what needs to be done to improve provision. A good school development plan includes appropriate priorities and sets clear targets for improvements. A top priority is to raise standards in literacy and numeracy. Another is to adjust timetables so that there is a more flexible approach to subject teaching. The governing body has been effective in improving the learning environment but has not fully explored what needs doing to improve the curriculum and raise standards further. Governors are closely associated with the school and some assist teachers by offering their services to help in classrooms. Finances are managed well. The school is an orderly community and good management ensures that it runs smoothly on a day to day basis.

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Inspection judgements

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| 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

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| 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

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| 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

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| 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 | 3 |
| 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

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| 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

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| 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 | 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 | 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

22 September 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Bacton First School, Bacton, Norwich, Norfolk, NR12 0EY

I really enjoyed my short visit to your school. Thank you for being so friendly and helpful. I thought that you might like to hear what I thought of Bacton First School. There are lots of good things that make your school so lovely. Here are some of them.

- ¶ Your headteacher, the staff and governors have worked very hard to make your school bright and colourful. They just got rid of the horrible outside lavatories. Good!
- ¶ You work hard in the apples class to learn your sounds each day and you are getting really good at reading, writing and spelling.
- ¶ You said, 'The teachers help us to go as far as we can in our learning.' This is great because it means that all of you are encouraged to do your very best.
- ¶ The teachers and assistants take good care of you and look after you extremely well.
- ¶ You love using the computers and are getting good at ICT.
- ¶ You do interesting things, like going to Kingswood for an exciting residential visit.
- ¶ You are full of fun and enjoy laughing.
- ¶ Your behaviour is good and you enjoy learning new things.
- ¶ You know how to stay safe, look after yourselves and keep healthy.

I think that there are two things that could help you in your learning.

- Mrs Humphreys and the teachers are thinking hard about how they can join different subjects together to make learning more fun and interesting. I think that this is a good idea and perhaps you could add your ideas about how to make what you learn even more exciting.
- The school governors should think hard about how they can help to make your learning exciting and make sure that you become even better learners.

I wish you every success in the future. Continue to enjoy your learning.

All best wishes

John Messer Lead inspector