

St William's Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 120859 |
| Local Authority | NORFOLK LA |
| Inspection number | 313768 |
| Inspection dates | 28–29 January 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | Richard Cheetham |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 568 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mrs Sandra Whitney |
| Headteacher | Mr Nigel Wood |
| Date of previous school inspection | 13 June 2005 |
| School address | Williams Loke St Williams Way Thorpe St Andrew Norwich Norfolk NR7 0AJ |
| Telephone number | 01603434128 |
| Fax number | 01603439206 |

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|--------------------------|--------------------|
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a very large primary school. The number on roll is planned to reduce to 420 over the next five years with the opening of a school nearby. St William's is a popular school and an increasing number of pupils come from outside its catchment area. Nearly all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The school serves a largely suburban community of above average socio-economic circumstances. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average as is the percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Most pupils start school with above expected attainment. Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher has taken up post. The school has several awards including the International Schools Award, the Healthy Schools Award and has received the Active Mark.

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: 3

This is a satisfactory school, which is how it sees itself. Pupils enjoy school and parents think well of what it does for their children. It has made sound progress since its previous inspection and has a satisfactory capacity to continue improving. It gives sound value for money because it enables pupils to make satisfactory progress overall. Pupils start in Reception with above expected levels of attainment and go on to make sound progress thereafter to reach above average standards in Year 6. However, there is some slower progress in written English and in the skills of applying mathematics and in investigative science. Boys tend to make slower progress than girls especially in writing.

School leadership is effective because it has recognised the need to improve pupils' progress and has started to do the right things to bring this about. Responsibilities have been re-organised to lead change and there are signs of improvement in practice. The senior leaders have made a good start on recent initiatives and these are beginning to have an effect in some classes but are not yet improving the overall quality of teaching and learning. Leadership is setting a clear direction for school improvement for the current year through these initiatives but does not plan beyond this in any detail, for example in arranging to manage all aspects of the reduction in pupil numbers. Governance is satisfactory because although governors support the school well and manage their work competently, they do not challenge the school to do better.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good because the school provides good quality pastoral care so that pupils feel safe and looked after. It is effectively promoting their well-being by effective links with outside agencies such as the local authority and the feeder secondary school. The school is beginning to put in place effective systems for checking on pupils' academic progress but these are not working consistently in all year groups and pupils' progress is uneven. The current system enables the school to look back at what pupils have achieved but not to pre-empt possible underachievement.

Pupils' progress is directly linked to the quality of teaching and learning. While this is satisfactory overall, it ranges from outstanding to inadequate. In the less effective lessons, expectations of pupils are too low and the range of teaching strategies too narrow. Teachers' marking is usually up to date but only the most effective helps pupils understand how to improve their work. This contrasts sharply with other lessons in which teachers build on pupils' willingness to learn by challenging them with demanding questions that deepen understanding. School leadership is bringing about improvements to its curriculum so that pupils can practise basic skills in all subjects. It is too early to judge the impact of these changes on their academic progress but the curriculum is supporting pupils' personal development satisfactorily.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children have a sound start to their education. They settle quickly and happily into school routines and the provision enables them to make satisfactory progress in all the Areas of Learning (the Foundation Stage curriculum). Progress is no better than this because, while pastoral support is good, planned learning activities do not always encourage children to extend their skills particularly in speaking. The outdoor area has no covered section and is not always used effectively as a necessary extension of classroom learning. Adults are supportive and encouraging, which develops children's confidence and independence.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise pupils' achievement in written English and in applying mathematics and scientific investigation skills through more effective use of information on pupils' progress.
- Improve the overall quality and consistency of teaching and learning by raising expectations of what pupils can achieve and using a wider range of teaching strategies.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by planning for sustained school improvement over more than one year and including plans to manage the reduction of the number on roll.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted Inspector before the next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Although attainment at the start of Reception is above average, in communication, language and literacy it is below that of other aspects. Most reach above expected levels of attainment by the start of Year 1 but with a relative weakness in writing. Generally sound progress is maintained throughout both Key Stages although boys make slower progress in writing than girls. By the end of Year 6, pupils reach above average levels of attainment in most respects. Their attainment is relatively lower in writing and in applying mathematics and scientific skills. As a result of the school's recent efforts, progress in writing is improving and in reading it is good. Pupils with behavioural or reading difficulties are supported well and make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school and grow in confidence because they are given responsibility in class and around the school. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils behave very well and their attendance is above average. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy. They choose healthy snacks at playtime and know to drink water regularly. Many take part in a wide variety of physical activities. The school council plays an important role in the school. It organises a 'jam busters' to encourage pupils to walk or cycle to school and sends reminders to parents about safe parking. Pupils independently organise charitable events well. Pupils' good basic skills and growing independence mean that they are prepared well for their future education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The teaching and learning strengths are not consistent through the school. This means pupils' progress varies between classes. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good, encouraging positive attitudes towards learning. Pupils take part willingly in the best lessons, answering questions and working well together. Most teachers share learning objectives with pupils but many describe the tasks rather than make clear what is to be learned. Some teachers ask searching questions to extend learning and assess progress but this is not usual. Teachers' expectations of what the pupils can achieve are not always high enough. Sometimes teaching

assistants are not used effectively at the start and end of lessons but they work well with small groups to help them make good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets statutory requirements and has improved since the last inspection. Staff have recently redesigned the curriculum to ensure pupils have more opportunities to use their skills across a range of subjects. Through this theme-based approach, the school is ensuring that knowledge and understanding in different subjects are included. However, this work is recent and yet to have a significant impact on the pupils' learning. Good enrichment activities such as visits, visitors and after school activities help extend pupils' experiences. The provision for pupils who find learning difficult is good and this helps their good progress. Although the school accurately identifies pupils who have specific talents or abilities, there is little extra provision for them, apart from in sport.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

A good range of robust procedures is in place that reflects the school's high regard for pupils' welfare and safety. Procedures for safeguarding and child protection are firmly established and meet current requirements. Pupils are confident that there is someone at school they can go to if concerned. There are good links with other agencies to provide additional support for pupils who need it.

Guidance and support for pupils' academic development are appropriate. Strategies have recently been introduced to encourage pupils to be more involved in their own learning but these have yet to contribute to raising achievement. Target-setting systems are not effectively motivating all pupils to achieve well. Consequently, the school is setting up a better system to analyse pupils' progress termly.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has methodically set about school improvement by appointing and closely involving the senior leadership team. This year they have set pupils targets that are more challenging. They are developing systems and processes to monitor more effectively pupils' progress, teaching and learning quality as well as improving the curriculum and managing the reduction in pupil numbers. These are the right priorities for the school and some good progress is being made, such as in the better teaching of writing. However, the impact of the changes is emerging rather than evident because many of the initiatives are recent.

Senior staff regularly review progress but the school improvement plan does not show how their efforts will be sustained beyond one year and how any provision changes will be evaluated against pupils' achievement. Some systems, such as the analysis of teaching and learning, yield information but lack rigour. Governors support the school well by allocating resources wisely for incremental improvements. They seek to improve their work through their action plan but do not challenge the school to do better through checking on pupils' achievement.

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.

Annex A

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? | 3 |
| 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 | 3 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 3 |

Achievement and standards

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|--|---|
| How well do learners achieve? | 3 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 2 |
| 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 | 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 | 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

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|--|---|
| 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? | 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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

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| 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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 3 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 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

30 January 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of St William's Primary School, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich, Norfolk, NR7 0AJ

Thank you for making us welcome to your school when we inspected it recently. Although we did not meet all of you in such a big school, we appreciated those we met telling us that you enjoyed school and its different activities. This letter is to tell you what we learned during the two days with you.

Your school does some things well. Staff keep you safe and look after you well. We know that you trust the adults to help you if you need it. You behave very well and get on with your lessons without any fuss. You listen carefully and try to please. You carry out your jobs around the school well. You keep yourselves healthy through lots of exercise and eating sensibly and we enjoyed the school dinners too.

Most of you learn what everyone expects of you by the time you leave St William's but we feel you can do even better. So we have asked the school to help you, especially the boys, to improve your writing and to help most of you in using your skills in mathematics to solve problems and in carrying out science investigations. We also want the school to make sure that all the teachers make your work interesting and challenging. Finally, we would like the school to extend its plans for making the school better over a longer period than it does now.

It was a pleasure to meet you all and we wish you well for the future.

Yours truly,

Richard Cheetham

Lead inspector