

Walpole Highway Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120887
Local Authority	NORFOLK LA
Inspection number	313780
Inspection dates	4–5 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Martin Newell

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	45
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Christine Baldwin
Headteacher	Mrs Carolyn Howard
Date of previous school inspection	10 November 2003
School address	School Road Walpole Highway Wisbech Cambridgeshire PE17 7QQ
Telephone number	01945 880329
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average sized primary school. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational need are both similar to the picture nationally. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and, of the small number of pupils from minority ethnic groups, none is at an early stage of acquiring English. The school achieved Artsmark in 2005 and Investors in People award in 2007. The school works in partnership with two other local primary schools. The three schools have the same headteacher, separate governing bodies and a senior management team that works across the schools.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This good school provides good value for money and rightly deserves the reputation it has locally. Inspection findings fully endorse the school's view of its effectiveness. Many parents speak highly of the school and appreciate the quality of education it provides. A comment by one parent, echoed by others, was, 'The school provides a nurturing and caring environment where children make good progress.' Under the very good leadership of the headteacher, the school has made good progress since the last inspection. The rigour with which weaknesses have been tackled has seen improvements in standards, pupil achievement, teaching and assessment. The school is not one for resting on its laurels and all staff share a commitment to moving the school on to the next level. This winning combination illustrates the school's good capacity for continued improvement.

Attainment when pupils start school is below national expectations. The standards that pupils reach by the time that they leave school are currently above average, although writing standards are only satisfactory and lag behind reading. National tests and the school's own data paint a picture of fluctuating standards from year to year. This is due to the small number of pupils in each year group and factors such as high pupil mobility. However, the important fact is that across the school all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make good progress and achieve well. Much of this is due to the good quality of teaching that consistently pushes pupils' learning on at a speedy rate, ensures work is matched to individual pupils' ability and makes lessons fun and enjoyable. The robust assessment procedures that are in place mean that teachers have an accurate grasp of exactly what pupils can and cannot do. The information is used well to inform teaching and to set targets that help pupils to improve.

Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils are well-behaved and enthusiastic learners who love coming to school, a fact that is reflected in the above average attendance rates. Pupils demonstrate a good commitment to following healthy lifestyles and a good sense of their own and others' safety. They make an important contribution to decision making, to creating a sense of community spirit within the school and develop key skills that equip them well for their future lives. The curriculum is good because it helps pupils to enjoy learning and to achieve well. While some aspects of curriculum enrichment are good, the school has accurately identified the need to increase the range of visits and visitors in order to widen pupils' horizons of the wider world. Care and guidance are good. Pupils' pastoral care is afforded a high priority, equality is actively promoted and pupils are well informed about their progress through helpful marking and assessment.

Leadership and management, including governance, are good. The headteacher provides strong and effective leadership, which is firmly rooted in providing good quality of education for all pupils. All staff work together very well to make this a reality through effective monitoring, rigorous self-evaluation and the use of challenging targets to bring about and sustain improvements in standards and pupil achievement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Foundation Stage provision is good. Pupils start at the school with attainment levels that are below expectations. The good teaching and varied learning activities help all pupils to make

good progress. Adults work together very well in striking a balance between the teaching of key skills and opportunities to learn through practical and child initiated tasks. Good use is made of the outdoor accommodation. From the outset, there is a big commitment to developing pupils as good independent learners. Effective ongoing assessment provides all practitioners with a clear picture of how well pupils are doing. Occasionally adults' questioning is not sharp enough in capitalising on opportunities to improve pupils' speaking and listening skills, which are not well developed. Pupils enjoy their learning, and the good induction procedures enable them to settle quickly into school routines. Partnership with parents is good and the good management of Foundation Stage provision contributes much to its effectiveness.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing by providing more opportunities to write in different subjects and develop drama and speaking skills as stimuli for writing.
- Broaden pupils' awareness of the wider world and cultural diversity through a wider array of visits and visitors.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Across the school, pupils achieve well. Attainment when pupils start at the school is below national expectations, particularly the level of pupils' communication skills. Pupils get off to a flying start in the Foundation Stage and by the end of the Reception year standards are close to national expectations. This good start is systematically built on as pupils move through Years 1 to 6. The small number of pupils in each year group, the high levels of pupil mobility and the varying number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities mean that standards fluctuate from year to year. Standards are currently close to the national average in Year 2 and above average in Year 6. However, the very good systems that are in place for assessing and tracking the challenging targets set in the core subjects, alongside strong and effective teaching, provide compelling evidence of good progress and achievement for all pupils. The weaker aspect is that writing standards lag behind reading standards and although the school is tackling the issue, this is work in progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Pupils behave well and add much to the high quality of relationships that wrap around the school. Pupils are keen learners who enjoy all the school has to offer. Attendance rates are consistently above the national average. Pupils are thoughtful, reflective individuals who show a genuine concern for the well-being of others and understand well how their actions can affect others. Pupils' knowledge of Britain as a culturally diverse society is patchy. They have a good understanding of what is needed to follow a healthy, fit and safe lifestyle. Through the school council and the plethora of tasks they carry out around the school, pupils contribute significantly to the sense of community that is a tangible feature of the school. Pupils organise fund-raising activities such as 'bikeathons' and 'walkathons' as well as fun activities like pet days and talent contests. Such tasks, alongside the development of pupils' key literacy and numeracy skills, help to prepare pupils well for their future lives, although scope remains for greater pupil participation in exciting enterprise initiatives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good and contribute much to pupils' achievement. The two classes in school cover a wide range of ages and abilities but teachers are effective in ensuring that work is demanding and well matched to the individual needs of all pupils. Teaching assistants also play an influential role in supporting pupils' learning. The result is often lessons that are packed full of pace and fun that keep pupils motivated and on their toes. Problem solving, practical and investigative learning are regularly on offer. Writing skills are increasingly taught well. However, staff have recognised the need to make more use of drama, writing across the curriculum and less adult-dominated discussion in their initiatives geared to raising standards and improving pupils' desire to write. Assessment is good. The rigour with which pupils' progress is tracked in the core subjects is a significant strength. The information is used very well to set challenging targets and to guide and inform teaching. Marking of pupils' work is a strength because it consistently gives pupils clear pointers for improvement. Although developing well, assessment in the foundation subjects is not fully embedded in school practice.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and adds much to pupils' enjoyment of school. Good provision is made for developing pupils' reading, numeracy and computer skills alongside the broad and balanced coverage of other subjects. The school has accurately identified the need for writing skills to be better tested out across different subjects. The school provides pupils with the opportunity to learn a foreign language and many pupils play a musical instrument. Good provision is made for pupils with learning difficulties, as is the range of activities that are on offer for pupils with particular talents or skills. For a small school the number of after-school clubs on offer is good but the range of visits and visitors is more limited and this restricts pupils' knowledge of the diversity of the wider world. The curriculum is effective in promoting pupils' capacity to stay healthy and safe and to value the local community as an important learning resource.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support for pupils are good. Staff work together well in ensuring that the pastoral needs of pupils are met and encourage enjoyment and achievement. The rigorous systems that are in place for safeguarding pupils, child protection and risk assessment are examples of the school's fervent commitment to the safety and well-being of pupils. Pupils feel safe in school and importantly they say that, 'We have a voice that is listened to'. This safe and supportive environment lies at the heart of helping pupils reach challenging targets. The very good links with outside agencies means that help can be quickly called on for pupils experiencing learning, language or emotional difficulties and are supplemented well by the school's own internal support mechanisms. Academic guidance is good because it impacts well on how pupils achieve. Pupils have a good awareness of their individual targets for improvement but are less aware of the curriculum levels they are working at or towards. Older pupils increasingly assess their own work and many pupils are involved in setting set their own targets for improvement. There is scope for these arrangements to be extended even further.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good and the headteacher leads and manages the school very well. She has played a pivotal role in the good improvement of the school since the time of the last inspection and continues to set the bar higher in the pursuit of higher standards and achievement. The school is in partnership with two other schools and the headteacher has to spread her time between three separate sites. She has forged a strong senior management team which operates across the three schools. The collective expertise is used very well to tackle issues that are either pertinent to all the schools or to an individual school. Good procedures are in place to monitor teaching and learning through lesson observations, work sampling and moderating pupils' work. This format is more established in literacy and numeracy than in science. Analysis of test and assessment data is good. Key to the school's success is the effectiveness of its self-evaluation. It is accurate and sets ambitious, challenging but realistic targets and goals for raising standards for all pupils. Governance is good because governors are very supportive but also play a proactive and effective role in questioning and evaluating the work and performance of the school. Although governors follow a rota of planned visits, these are not always formally recorded to aid communication and accountability.

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	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	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

6 October 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Walpole Highway Primary School, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire, PE14 7QQ

You will probably remember that I visited your school not too long ago and I am now writing to let you know what I found out. Before I do, I would first of all like to say a big thank you for making me feel so welcome. I have told your teachers how you were all so polite and helpful and that you said many positive things about your school. I managed to talk to lots of you and it was good to hear how much you love school and that bullying is not an issue.

Many of you said that Walpole Highway is a good school and I agree. Teaching is good and keeps you on your toes! All staff care for you very well and make learning fun and enjoyable through the different activities that are on offer. The school is good at helping you to keep fit, safe and healthy. Mrs Howard is a very good headteacher and all the staff work together very well to help provide a good quality of education for all pupils at the school. There is another strength of the school that I have not talked about yet..... and that is you! I was impressed with your behaviour, your enthusiasm and good attendance rates. I found the way you add to the sense of community in the school and the way you help to make decisions, through for example, the school council, are good! Well done!

Even good schools can improve and I have talked to your teachers about how they can help make the school even better. They are going to help you to improve your writing skills and to make learning more fun by arranging more visits and visitors so that you find out more about the wider world.

Your headteacher and all the staff and governors want the school to be one of the best! I know you will want to play your part by continuing to work as hard and behave well. I wish you every success in the future. It was a pleasure to meet you.

Martin Newell

Additional Inspector