

# Magdalen Village School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	120892
<b>Local Authority</b>	NORFOLK LA
<b>Inspection number</b>	313783
<b>Inspection dates</b>	31 October –1 November 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Joanne Harvey

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	53
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Ted Gray
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Alison Hughes
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	29 October 2001
<b>School address</b>	Park Crescent Wiggenhall St Mary Magdalen King's Lynn Norfolk PE34 3BU
<b>Telephone number</b>	01553810326
<b>Fax number</b>	01553811964

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This is a small school serving the village of Wiggenhall St Mary Magdalen and surrounding villages in a rural area of Norfolk. The school recently federated with St Germans Primary School, sharing a single headteacher and Governing Body. An average number of pupils are entitled to claim free school meals. There are very few pupils from minority ethnic groups. More pupils have a learning difficulty and/or a disability and a statement of special educational need than in most schools. The school has an Activemark for PE and a Healthy Schools Award.

## 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 and improving school with some important good features and some areas for further development. A period of staffing turbulence resulted in a fluctuation in standards and progress over recent years. However, the headteacher has been highly effective in tackling this by maximising the opportunities offered by federation, not shirking difficult decisions, and bringing together a hardworking staff team who are working well together to achieve their stated aim of 'Learning together; Aim High; Achieve Well'.

The school provides good care and guidance for pupils. Pastoral needs are met particularly well. Keeping pupils safe, happy and enjoying their time at school are central to its ethos.

Consequently, pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and they say they enjoy all the experiences the school has to offer. Pupils show a good sense of how to keep safe. An emphasis on physical activity and work to achieve the Healthy Schools Award has resulted in pupils making healthy lifestyle choices. They enjoy helping others. They take the lead in fund-raising and are proud to take on responsibilities in school, including the School Council or tending the school garden. Academic guidance is less strong. Good systems track pupils' progress well, but individual targets introduced for writing are not used consistently. However, well developed personal skills, along with sound basic skills prepare pupils satisfactorily for the next stage of their education and future lives.

Leaders' emphasis on improving teaching and learning has ensured that it is now satisfactory and in some cases better, particularly in Years 3 and 4. Consequently, for an increasing number of pupils, progress is quickening. Teachers promote positive relationships and attitudes. In the best lessons, pupils are active, given work that challenges them whatever their ability and are clear about what they have to do and about how well they have done so that learning is good. However this quality of teaching is not consistent across the school so in some lessons learning slows and the leadership is working hard to address this. The curriculum is satisfactory. It promotes good personal development and offers enrichment and enjoyment. A new framework encourages 'learning by doing' and makes it easier for teachers to link subjects in creative ways but this is not being consistently implemented. Provision is now satisfactory in the Foundation Stage though not enough opportunities are taken for pupils to enjoy the curriculum outdoors or to initiate their own learning.

Good leadership has ensured that issues from the previous inspection have been successfully addressed. Standards are average overall. In information and communication technology (ICT) they are now high, and they are above average in mathematics, science and art. In English standards in 2006 at Year 6 were exceptionally low and the effect of the swift action taken to tackle this underachievement is shown in the improved standards of work in pupils' books. Consequently, pupils are making satisfactory and sometimes better progress and are on track to achieve the standards expected of their age. The leadership recognises the importance of continuing to drive up standards and achievement in English of the oldest pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress.

The improvements that have already been made and the determination to do even better demonstrate that the school has good capacity to improve further. It offers good value for money.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 3

Reception children settle quickly into the class which they share with Years 1 and 2 and make satisfactory progress to achieve the standards expected of them. The safe environment is bright, stimulating and well resourced. Each child is made to feel valued, secure and confident. Adults get to know children well and plan activities conscientiously, based on careful assessment. Children enjoy topic themes, like 'Three Little Pigs'. They benefit from a themed approach which gives them the opportunity to apply their knowledge and understanding of the world gained from building houses for the pigs, whilst developing their communication and language skills when writing stories about them. Positive partnerships are promoted with parents and other agencies in the interests of the children. School leaders have worked successfully to improve provision since the previous inspection. However, there is further scope to improve the balance between teacher led and meaningful child initiated activities and to improve the quality of the experience of the six areas of learning offered to the children outdoors.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards and progress in English further so that they are in line with mathematics, science and ICT.
- Make consistently effective use of assessment and target setting to plan challenging tasks for all pupils and give them more opportunities to practise what they have learned and evaluate their own success.
- Ensure the consistent implementation of the school's integrated and creative curriculum and develop further opportunities for children in the Foundation Stage to direct their own learning and to experience all areas of learning outdoors.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged to be satisfactory but who have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

Pupils start school with broadly average levels of knowledge and skills. They make satisfactory progress whilst at the school. A pattern of decline in standards at the end of Year 2 has been halted and pupils are now on target to reach average standards. In Years 3 to 6, progress is quickening in some areas, successfully tackling a tailback of underachievement and achieving more challenging targets. Standards are average overall by the end of Year 6. In mathematics and science they have been maintained at above average. Standards in English, specifically in writing, were exceptionally low last year. However, senior leaders have put effective measures in place to address this. Evidence suggests that pupils are now on target to achieve average standards in English and more able pupils may exceed them. Pupils with a learning difficulty and/or a disability are supported well to make good progress.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Pupils leave visitors in no doubt that they enjoy school. As a result, they develop positive attitudes and work hard. The behaviour of the majority is good. A very few find it hard to sustain appropriate behaviour without adult support but the school ensures that others are not

affected. Positive role models provided by adults and a programme of assembly and topic themes ensure spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils show that they have a good understanding of healthy eating, though this is not always reflected in the contents of their lunch boxes. They have been taught successfully how to keep safe and demonstrate a love of physical activity. They raise money for charities and help around school through the school council and 'fruit tuck'. The school works extremely hard to improve attendance, which is now satisfactory.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teachers promote positive relationships and appropriate behaviour through careful management and good care. Consequently pupils enjoy learning and work hard. Some good teaching was seen. These lessons featured practical activities that really engaged pupils and encouraged them to learn for themselves and develop problem solving skills. There was a good pace and structure to activities which challenged pupils of all abilities. However, these principles are not consistently applied across school. Occasionally, planning does not result in focussed learning objectives which pupils understand or activities which challenge pupils of all abilities. Too much teacher talk slows the pace of learning and pupils do not get enough opportunities to practise what they have learned or to evaluate their success, particularly against their writing targets which are not referred to often enough. Marking celebrates what they have achieved but does not always help pupils to improve.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

Curriculum strengths include an effective programme for personal, social, health and citizenship education which ensures pupils make healthy and safe choices. It is well enriched by themed days and weeks, such as a multi-cultural book week, enjoyed by all. A good range of extra-curricular activities, particularly in sport and the arts is well supported. French, visits out, a residential, and visitors to school bring learning alive. The 'portable planetarium' provided lasting memories and has encouraged a love of science. Many activities involve parents and help to place the school at the centre of the community. Participation in a 'Molly Dancing' festival helped develop an understanding of local cultural traditions. The school has recently introduced a more active and creative approach so that teaching is across subjects, often in topics. This is new and is not being consistently implemented across school. The Foundation Stage curriculum is much improved but there is further scope to improve the balance between teacher led and child initiated activities and to ensure the quality of the curriculum outdoors matches that enjoyed inside.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

Pastoral care is a real strength of the school. It helps to ensure that barriers to learning are reduced and that the school includes everyone successfully. Procedures are rigorous in making sure that pupils' safety, health, welfare, personal and particularly their emotional development are good. Effective partnerships with a range of agencies also help. Transition arrangements are carefully planned so that pupils settle quickly and happily. This is valued by parents,

particularly those who have moved their children into the school other than at the normal times. Vulnerable pupils are identified early and supported well. Pupils with a learning difficulty and/or disability are supported to achieve well. Academic guidance is not yet as strong as pastoral care. Clear messages are given to parents about how well their children are progressing and individual pupil's progress is tracked carefully. However, new systems for setting pupils' individual targets in writing and involving them in a meaningful way in assessing their own work are not consistently applied and embedded across school.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher provides highly effective leadership. Supported by her able deputy and governors she ensures a clear vision and strategic direction for the school. Falling standards and underachievement have been successfully tackled, despite a period of staffing turbulence. This success is helped by the effective management of the process of federating with a nearby school. This has enhanced the impact of leadership and management at all levels due to the expertise of effective leaders and resources being shared across both schools. Some curriculum leaders are new and their impact is yet to be felt although they know the school well and what needs to be done to improve. The headteacher, supported by staff and community partners, demonstrates a passion for placing the school at the heart of its community. Staff and parent volunteers tirelessly and successfully pursue additional funding and access to additional events and opportunities that extend the opportunities available to pupils and their families. These include workshops, visitors, sports, arts and social events. The Governing Body offers good support and challenge. It has a good knowledge of how well the school is doing and its priorities for development and ensures good value for money.

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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?	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	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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	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	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	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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

2 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Magdalen Village School, King's Lynn, Norfolk PE34 3BU

I was pleased to meet you and all the staff recently and enjoyed the time I spent with you. Thank you for making me feel so welcome, talking to me, and helping me to find out about you and your school. I especially enjoyed hearing you sing in assembly and watching you proudly and politely carry out your jobs which help to make your school such a pleasant place.

Your school is satisfactory and improving. The headteacher, teachers and all the other grown-ups do their best for you. They look after you and care for you well. Your good behaviour in class, around school and in the playground helps you to learn well. It is clear that you are happy at school. Your teachers and your friends help you to feel important and safe there.

The school is keen to find ways to help you do as well as you can. You do well in mathematics, science and information communication technology but need to do better in English, especially in writing. I have asked that all your teachers make it clear to you exactly what they want you to learn and how you will know if you have achieved it. I have asked that they also make sure that you always have work to do which challenges and interests you and that you have targets that you know really well in writing, reading and mathematics. I have asked that the way lessons are taught are always as active and interesting as the best ones I saw and that in Reception you get more chances to learn outside.

I am sure that Mrs Hughes and all the other adults will continue to do all they can to help you. You can play your part by continuing to work hard, behaving well and by coming to school every day.

I wish you the very best for the future.

Joanne Harvey

Lead inspector