

Wimbotsham and Stow Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120893
Local Authority	NORFOLK LA
Inspection number	313784
Inspection dates	16–17 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Roderick Passant

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	88
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Derek Barnes
Headteacher	Mrs Louise Ward
Date of previous school inspection	16 May 2005
School address	Chapel Lane Wimbotsham King's Lynn Norfolk PE34 3QH
Telephone number	01366382336
Fax number	01366382336

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This small school has higher than average pupil mobility. Virtually all pupils are from White British backgrounds. Free school meal eligibility is low. The percentage of pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational need, is broadly average. Attainment on entry to the Reception class is typically below that expected for children's ages, particularly in relation to their language skills. An increasing number of children have pre-school experience. In addition to the Reception class, there are three mixed age classes.

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 which has significant strengths. Pupils make good progress and achieve well over their time in school. Year 6 pupils are on target to attain standards that are at least in line with national expectations. Their personal development is good. Pupils enjoy school a very great deal and this is reflected in their good attendance. They develop positive attitudes to learning, although some have limited academic aspirations that the school works hard to challenge. Behaviour is excellent. Pupils are extremely supportive of one another. Year 6 pupils described it as being 'really friendly' and 'other children cheer you on.' They feel safe in school and bullying is not an issue for them. They are confident that they could approach a member of staff if they have a problem. Pupils are justly proud of their school. The school has a very warm ethos because of the high quality of relationships that exist between staff and pupils and the commitment of staff to providing high quality care. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall although cultural development is the weaker element.

Pupils make good progress because teaching is good. Pupils said, 'Teachers make lessons as fun as they can,' and 'they help you'. Mixed age classes are managed well because of the quality of planning and the close teamwork with teaching assistants. Marking is diligent and supportive, but does not always give a clear enough indication of what pupils can do to improve and targets are sometimes too broad. There has been good improvement since the last inspection in the key issues which related to the quality of the curriculum. Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of taking care of themselves through, for example, the road safety programmes and work on a healthy lifestyle in personal, social and health education. There is a good enrichment programme. The curriculum provision for expanding pupils' cultural horizons is currently satisfactory. The school is planning more opportunities to foster pupils' imaginative and creative opportunities and to extend their view of the world. Nevertheless, the cumulative impact of these initiatives in broadening pupils' cultural horizons has yet to work through.

Leadership and management are good and there is good leadership at all levels across the school. The headteacher has managed to recruit and retain a relatively large, skilled team of staff who bring a range of expertise to the school. Under her very effective leadership, there is strong teamwork, a sense of common purpose and commitment to the pupils. Her evaluation of school strengths and what is needed to develop it further is extremely accurate. She plans her staffing strategically to achieve these ends very well and ensures their deployment in a creative and extremely effective fashion. Money is spent very carefully to best effect. She was described by a governor as 'the glue' that holds the school together. The school has made significant improvement since the last inspection and has the good capacity in terms of leadership and staff expertise to become an outstanding school.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Most children make good progress in most areas of learning so that they are working securely within national expectations and some beyond this by the end of Reception. This is the result of consistently good teaching and carefully planned experiences. Children display a bubbly enthusiasm, gain in independence, confidence and enjoy learning because of the high quality of relationships between adults and children. Resources are good, although imaginative play requires further investment in the role-play area and the outdoor area that is partially covered to extend its all weather use. The school's investment in the Reception class provides the

children with a good springboard to their education which is seen in the smooth transition to the infant class and the improved standards at the end of Year 2.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend the cultural, creative and imaginative opportunities within the curriculum.
- Ensure that pupils are clear about how they can improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Current standards in English and science in Year 6 are at least in line with expectations and above them in mathematics. Year 6 test results fell in English in 2007 because some pupils misunderstood one of the test questions in English. Standards in mathematics and science were above average. Pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities make good progress because of the high quality of care they receive.

In Year 2, standards are above expectations. In 2007, standards at the end of Year 2 jumped to above average. They were exceptionally high in mathematics and above average in reading and writing. This sudden acceleration in standards is the result of the investment in creating a separate Reception class three years ago, work on enhancing standards in reading and the consistency of high quality teaching over their time in the infant years. The improvement is sustainable rather than the result of a particularly able group and it provides a very strong foundation for higher standards later in the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The very good take-up of the healthy fruit and vegetable snacks and the well-used playtime boxes of play equipment reflect pupils' good understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle. They play safely and are protective towards vulnerable pupils. Pupils develop in confidence because they feel they are listened to and valued as individuals. There are, however, no formal ways of seeking pupils' views or ways pupils can influence school life such as through a school council. Pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. Through developing class codes of behaviour, they develop a mature understanding of their responsibilities within the school community and are able to demonstrate initiative in their fund-raising and charity work. Through acting as 'buddies' they demonstrate particularly mature consideration towards others. The foundations for pupils' future economic well-being are laid well because they are mature and socially adept.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers meet the wide range of needs in the mixed-age classes well because lessons are thoroughly planned with clear objectives and there is seamless teamwork with teaching assistants. Lessons are taught with energy and enthusiasm. Because of the positive relationships, classrooms have a very safe feel so that pupils gain in confidence and are not afraid of making a mistake, answering a question or expressing a point of view. The transition from the Reception, through the infants to the more formal setting of the upper school is managed very well. Feedback to pupils, in the form of marking does not always identify what pupils need to do to

improve and thus engage them as learners. Criteria for success are not always explicit and targets, such as 'to use more connectives' although relevant are sometimes too broad to be really useful.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The long-term curriculum 'map' has been redesigned to strengthen the links between subjects and to provide additional contexts to extend basic skills. There is good provision for literacy and numeracy. More investigation and practical work is undertaken in science. All staff are now making greater use of information and communication technology as part of their teaching because the school has invested in interactive whiteboards and associated resources. The curriculum encourages most aspects of pupils' personal and academic development well. The weaker element in the curriculum relates to extending pupils' cultural development. The school has introduced more opportunities to explore other cultures and faiths by integrating the New Agreed Syllabus for religious education into its schemes, has developed a language unit in Spanish and is proposing to introduce French. It has also raised the status of, and standards in, music and is proposing to introduce drama work across the curriculum. However, the cumulative impact of these actual or proposed initiatives have still to work through.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Parents reported how caring and very approachable the staff and headteacher are. One parent wrote, echoing many, how the 'brilliant relationships' had enabled her child to go from 'strength-to-strength'. All staff know all the children pastorally very well. Teaching assistants work effectively with the pupils. The progress of pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities is tracked carefully and regularly reviewed. Pupils requiring additional boost or support are identified by coordinators and specific programmes put in place to support them. The school identifies pupils who are particularly talented or gifted and provides them with appropriate challenge, through for example, joining an older class for specific lessons such as in mathematics. Child protection and safeguarding systems are robust. Current arrangements for tracking other pupils' academic progress over time is fragmented in that it is shared between coordinators rather than centralised. This means that it is not easy to gain an overview of a class's progress nor to compare or evaluate pupils' progress between subjects. The school is in the process of adopting the local authority's tracking system.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Governance is good. Governors' self-evaluation identified the need for a sharper understanding of their role, strategically and as a critical friend; they have introduced an induction pack and mentoring process for new governors as a result. There is a good spread of expertise and governors are supportive.

The senior leadership team are developing their whole-school role and responsibilities well. The headteacher leads the school very well. There is extremely careful investment to achieve value for money and very careful recruitment of staff with specific expertise to take the school

forward. Staff are used flexibly and deployed very effectively for the benefit of pupils to ensure that they progress well.

The headteacher makes good use of target setting data in planning improvements and as part of the school's performance management. There is not yet the concerted whole-school focus on achievement that comes when all staff make sophisticated use and evaluation of assessment data. The annual review of the school's improvement plan and future priorities by governors, staff and the local authority means that there is a clear and shared sense of direction for the school.

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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	3
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	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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

18 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Wimbotsham and Stow Community School, Wimbotsham, PE34 3QH

I am writing to say how much I enjoyed visiting your school. Thank you for making me so welcome. A special thanks to those Year 6 pupils who gave up their lunchtime to talk to me. I found what you said extremely helpful. In return, I thought I would share with you my findings.

This is a good school and you are right to feel proud of it. You clearly enjoy everything that it offers. The school does have a special feel, which stems from the fact that everyone, adults and pupils, are very friendly. The adults care about you a very great deal and keep a careful eye on you. It was really good to hear that you feel safe and if you had a problem you could turn to an adult for help. I agree with you that teachers work hard to 'make lessons as fun as they can' and they 'help you'. Because teaching is good, you all make good progress and achieve well. One of the things that I asked the school to think about is to make sure that you know what you need to do in order to improve your work. I also asked the teachers to think about how they can develop more opportunities for you to find out about the wider world and to have more creative and imaginative opportunities. I think the headteacher leads the school very well. She plans carefully, knows what needs to be done and spends money carefully so that you get the best deal. You also told me that she is very fair!

This is also a good school because of what you bring to it. Your behaviour is excellent. You show real consideration for others and take your responsibilities for contributing to the school community very seriously. You support and help each other and other pupils 'cheer you on'. Impressive! As Year 6 said, 'a great school!'

Good wishes for your future school careers.

R Passant

Lead inspector