

West Earlham Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120954
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	313808
Inspection dates	4–5 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Cheryl Thompson

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	212
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	14
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Doug Gowans
Headteacher	Mrs Jane Miller
Date of previous school inspection	14 June 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Scarnell Road Norwich NR5 8HT
Telephone number	01603 451299
Fax number	01603 504963

Age group	2–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized school serving an area of considerable disadvantage. In the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) there are a pre-school for children aged two to three years, two part-time Nursery classes and two full-time Reception. Attainment on entry to the Nursery is significantly lower than is typical for the age group particularly in personal and social development and communication, language and literacy. Most pupils are of White British heritage but a small proportion come from minority ethnic backgrounds, mainly of Asian, Black or mixed race heritage. A small number are at an early stage of learning English. The proportions of pupils needing extra help with their learning or behaviour is almost three times the national average. The school has a nurture class for 10 pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Since the last inspection in 2005, the school has become an infant school rather than a first school. The school has been awarded the 'ActiveMark' for its high quality physical education and sports, Healthy School award and a BECTA award for the use of information and communication technology (ICT) within the curriculum. It is in the first of a five year project, 'Reaching Communities', funded by the national lottery. It is in the second year of a national pilot of a mathematics scheme 'Every Child Counts'. The school has strong links with the University of East Anglia and is part of the Global Voices project.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school that is valued highly by parents and their children. One parent wrote, 'this school is one in a million' and these sentiments were echoed by a very high number of parents. Leadership and management of the school are excellent. Central to the school's success is the headteacher's and deputy headteacher's clear vision, commitment and careful balance between high levels of care and sustained drive to raise pupils' achievement. Improvement since the last inspection is excellent, particularly in the drive to involve parents in their child's education and in raising standards in ICT. The headteacher's and governors' drive to provide a first class education for all pupils and to put the school at the centre of its community shines through all its work. The capacity for further improvement is excellent because the headteacher and governors are proactive in seeking extra funding and relevant initiatives to improve on what the school can offer pupils and their families. Examples of the success of recent initiatives are already evident in parents' pride in their qualifications in ICT and the significant drop in lateness since the start of the 'early start' breakfasts served by parents in each class every day. The school has recently taken over the running of the pre-school provision with the involvement of Sure Start. This is a good example of the highly profitable partnerships the school has with a wide range of outside agencies.

Pupils love school and demonstrate this with their excellent behaviour and keenness to learn. They make good progress and achieve broadly average standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2. Although achievement and progress remain good, this is due to outstanding teaching, that is underpinned by excellent relationships and high expectations for pupils to behave well, listen and learn. Lessons are planned meticulously to ensure pupils succeed, consolidate learning and build self confidence. Just occasionally, staff miss opportunities to challenge the more able pupils to extend their learning further. A key strength is the strong teamwork between teachers and highly proficient teaching assistants. This teamwork is of immense benefit to pupils needing extra help with their learning and ensures they make rapid progress.

The outstanding curriculum is organised to meet pupils' needs and interests extremely well. Links are made between subjects to make lessons both in and out of the classroom relevant and exciting. Excellent organisation for teaching basic literacy and numeracy skills, particularly in short intensive sessions, means that pupils have expert teaching in small groups and lots of opportunities to practise newly-learned skills.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. For their age, they have a very well-developed understanding of rights and responsibilities and demonstrate a high level of respect for one another and for people of cultures other than their own. Through an exciting and relevant programme of personal, social and health education, pupils develop an excellent understanding of how to keep safe and lead a healthy lifestyle. Parents are very appreciative of the excellent care, guidance and support the school provides. The school works tirelessly to improve the attendance rate and, with the help of the local authority attendance officer, the rate is currently satisfactory.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The EYFS provides a secure and challenging environment so that children settle quickly and happily into school. Staff look after children with utmost care and attention and children feel safe. The development of language skills and extending vocabulary is a high priority and children benefit from a high level of proficient adult support. From their exceptionally low starting points, children make excellent progress through the EYFS. Whilst standards are generally well below those expected at the end of Reception, importantly, children develop very positive attitudes and excellent behaviour. These qualities, together with the secure progress they make in learning letter sounds, prepare them very well for their start in Year 1.

Teaching is outstanding and children love learning because they are provided with a wide range of exciting opportunities to explore and discover for themselves. An excellent feature is the carefully planned outdoor learning experiences that children thoroughly enjoy; for example, making and flying kites and jumping in muddy puddles. Adults make careful observations of what children can do and plan work matched closely to their interests and learning needs. There is a very good balance between activities directed by adults and those chosen by children. The accomplished teaching of letter sounds and how to use these to read and spell is leading to particularly good progress in these areas. The EYFS leader manages staff extremely well so that all work very effectively as a team. Good links are established with parents through home visits prior to children starting school. Parents are welcomed warmly into school. They are helped and encouraged to contribute to their children's learning.

Since September 2008 the school has taken over the running of the on-site pre-school. It is developing very effectively under the guidance of the EYFS leadership and offers excellent provision for the 14 children currently on roll.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure consistent challenge for more able pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well. The very high proportion of pupils who find learning difficult and those who have high levels of physical or educational need have their difficulties identified quickly and receive expert support. Consequently, they make rapid progress and have good self-esteem. The small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language also make excellent progress. Pupils who attend the Acorn nurture unit make excellent progress in developing their personal qualities and basic skills so that they can settle happily and cope in mainstream classes.

Pupils make good progress through Years 1 and 2 due to the excellent teaching, so that by the time they leave the school, standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science are broadly average. The school's assessment data and pupils' work show that they have good skills in ICT and make good use of them in a range of subjects. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. The school recognises that it has to add more challenge for a few more able pupils to help them do even better and already has strategies underway to do this.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils have a wonderful sense of community and enjoy school a great deal. Attendance is satisfactory despite a number of pupils having health issues that prevent regular attendance. Working with regular visitors from many different countries through the Global Voices project gives pupils an excellent knowledge and understanding of a wide range of other cultures. Their spiritual, moral and social development is equally outstanding. Pupils are courteous and polite. They are very positive about learning and their behaviour is excellent. Outside learning is very beneficial to their good development of qualities such as resilience, independence and an awareness of personal safety. Hence, they look after themselves and one another very well. They enjoy and readily take on many responsibilities and make an excellent contribution to their school and their wider community through such things as recycling, organising fund-raising for charities and traffic calming measures in roads around the school. The good progress pupils make in developing literacy and numeracy skills together with their well-developed social skills and awareness of citizenship prepare them well for their future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Pupils learn consistently well because teachers provide many first class opportunities for 'hands-on' learning and plenty of activities to allow pupils to practise new skills. Staff take every opportunity to extend and develop pupils' vocabulary through dialogue. Very effective use of 'talk partners' yields new ideas and further discussion. Excellent questioning is also used to challenge pupils to think and reason why something is as it is. When they find it difficult, there is always an adult close by to give them extra help and guidance. Teachers have many 'tips' and techniques to help pupils master different processes. Teaching assistants are highly effective, particularly in teaching small groups of pupils who need extra help with literacy and numeracy.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Extensive links with outside agencies, visits and visitors broaden and enrich the excellent curriculum and promote excellent community cohesion. Senior citizens from the community help bring history alive. Themed weeks, like the 'Environment Week', deepen pupils' understanding through more extended study. Outside learning in school and Forest School activities in a rural location, fascinate pupils and add much to their enjoyment and personal development. The curriculum is modified to meet the needs of all pupils, for example an imaginative writing task involving boys, their parents and Norwich City Football club. Parents are regularly involved in learning alongside their children, to the benefit of all. The good range of extra-curricular activities extends and enriches the curriculum further.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pupils and their parents have great confidence in the excellent care the school provides. Within a trusting framework, pupils are gently guided to succeed in their behaviour and relationships.

Pupils also receive excellent guidance to help them improve their work. The school works hard to encourage parental involvement in their children's learning, for example providing an instructional DVD about phonics. Whether training parents in new skills or providing a study centre for homework, care and guidance also extends to working closely with families. The Acorn nurture group is excellent provision that enables pupils to succeed, become more self confident and return to mainstream classes. Safeguarding procedures meet government requirements and child protection procedures are robust.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Through her inspirational leadership and attention to detail the headteacher has encouraged and enabled excellent leadership and management at all levels. The senior leadership team provide excellent role models through their own teaching therefore they are well equipped to monitor teaching throughout the school and support teachers if improvement or help is needed. A key feature of the senior team is their efficient evaluation of data and their monitoring of the views of pupils, parents and staff. As a result, the headteacher and senior team have an excellent understanding of the quality of education the school provides. Governors are knowledgeable and act confidently as a critical friend to the school. There is a very strong commitment to making sure teachers and teaching assistants have good opportunities to extend their skills and knowledge. Consequently, they are confident and always seeking to improve their practice. Community cohesion is excellent because it is very effectively promoted throughout the school and leaders are aware of the success of this work. Links with parents to support them as co-educators of their children and providing opportunities for them to learn new skills together, such as in ICT, are very successful.

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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?	1
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

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/or disabilities make progress	1

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	1
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**

8 December 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of West Earlham Infant School, Norwich, NR5 8HT

Thank you so much for welcoming us to your school. Like you, we think it is a very friendly place to be and you get on well together. Our particular thanks to those of you who kindly gave up part of your lunchtime to talk to me. I found what you had to say very helpful. In return, I now want to share my findings with you.

This is an outstanding school. You told me that you like school and I could see why, particularly when I saw the interesting lessons you have and the exciting activities you have outside. Your parents also told me how much they like the school and how they know the teachers will always help them. You told me that one of the best things in the school are the teachers and you are right! Teaching is excellent and all the adults care about you a great deal and work hard on your behalf. We could see that standards are around average and you make good progress because teachers and teaching assistants keep a close eye on how well you are getting on.

Your headteacher, governors and senior teachers provide excellent leadership and are always working hard to make your school such an exciting place to be. I have asked them to do one thing to make your school even better:

- just in case you find your work too easy, to make sure there are always questions or work to make you think hard.

This is an outstanding school, not only because of what the adults bring to it, but also because of your contributions. You are very positive about learning and we were very impressed with how welcoming and polite you are to visitors.

Thank you again for your help.

Yours sincerely

Cheryl Thompson

Lead inspector