

Alderman Swindell First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120974
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	313817
Inspection dates	10–11 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Joanne Harvey

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–8
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	221
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sharon Duffield
Headteacher	Miss Alison Hopley
Date of previous school inspection	13 October 2003
School address	Beresford Road Great Yarmouth Norfolk NR30 4AB
Telephone number	01493842055
Fax number	01493330879

Age group	3–8
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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 a mixed social and economic area to the north of Great Yarmouth. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is higher than average. Children enter the Nursery with levels of knowledge and skills that are below those expected for their age overall; they are well below in some years. Most pupils are White British with only a small minority whose home language is other than English. The number of pupils with a learning difficulty or a disability, including those with a statement of special educational need, is much higher than that found in most schools. The school is part of a cluster group of schools that provides extended services to children and their families during and after the school day. It has achieved the Healthy Schools Award, an Activemark, Gold Travel Plan Award and an Eco School Bronze Award. The school will become an Infant School in September 2008.

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 outstandingly effective school. It has continued to go from strength to strength since its last inspection. Standards are high and children make outstanding progress. Provision in the Foundation Stage is also outstanding.

The school's success arises from the exceptionally clear vision and strong direction given by the headteacher. Other school leaders, governors and a committed and enthusiastic staff team support her extremely well. They all work effectively in partnership and with the support of parents, the local community and other agencies to provide outstanding levels of care, ensuring that all children are included in, and benefit from, everything it has to offer. Consequently, they achieve as well as they can both academically and personally.

All individuals, children and adults alike, are highly valued, nurtured and challenged to do their best and expectations for everyone are high. Consequently, children thrive and become exceptionally well-rounded individuals by the time they leave. Their personal development is outstanding and their behaviour is exemplary. Children are confident to express their opinions and keen to make a difference to school life by doing anything they can to help. Importantly, they maturely take responsibility for their own learning and recognise how this will help them to continue to be successful in the future.

It is not surprising that parents are highly appreciative of the school, particularly as they are included and valued as equal partners. Parental comments include: 'What an absolutely wonderful school. Every child definitely does matter at this school!' This comment echoes the views of many, including the children who greatly enjoy school. The high level of enjoyment is reflected in children's good attendance.

Teaching is outstanding because teachers know the children extremely well and plan meticulously to help them learn as well as they can. They inspire children with their enthusiasm and high expectations for success. They are flexible and skilful in how they deliver the outstanding curriculum, making changes where necessary so that it captivates the imagination and meets the needs of individuals. Children who find learning difficult get excellent support from class teachers and able teaching assistants so that they make outstanding progress.

Exceptional leadership at all levels spurs on staff to have high expectations that everyone will succeed. It keeps school improvement moving at a rapid pace and ensures that challenging targets are met. The school has successfully addressed issues from the previous inspection, maintained high standards and made significant improvements. There is no doubt that it has an excellent capacity to continue to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children get off to an exceptional start in the Nursery and Reception classes. This is because of the excellent support and knowledge of staff who have a deep understanding of how best to meet their needs. From the very beginning, children and their families are made to feel welcome and highly valued. Children make excellent progress because of the outstanding teaching and excellent curriculum. An array of carefully planned activities, based on thorough assessment, are taught well by teachers and teaching assistants, and often exceptionally so. Successful learning is achieved through beguiling topic themes that allow children to revisit and reinforce their experiences in a range of exciting ways. There are high expectations of what

children can achieve and they are expertly given an appropriate balance of adult direction and opportunities to explore for themselves. The outdoor area is not used as effectively as it could be but there is no complacency and leaders are looking forward to further developing the opportunities for all children to experience and extend their learning outdoors. Children achieve very well and reach many of the expected goals by the end of the reception. The outstanding provision in the Foundation Stage ensures children are well on their way to catching up with others of a similar age by the time they enter Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Further develop opportunities for children in the Foundation Stage to experience and extend their learning outdoors.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Standards reached at the end of Years 2 and 3 have been rising steadily year on year since the last inspection. Having been exceptionally low in some areas, they are now consistently above average in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 2 and above expectations by the time children leave the school at the end of Year 3. This represents outstanding progress for all children, including for those who find learning difficult and those who are in the early stages of learning English as an additional language. High standards of work were also seen in religious education, information and communication technology (ICT), art and design technology.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children enjoy school enormously and develop extremely positive attitudes to learning. They make full, eager and thoughtful contributions to many activities, such as assemblies and class discussions. There are no shortages of volunteers for the many roles they proudly take on and which make a real difference to life in school. They say that what they like most about the school is that everyone gets involved. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is excellent because it is central to everything that the school does. They work and play together extremely well. They share ideas, listen to one another and celebrate each other's differences and achievements. Consequently, they grow in confidence and self-awareness and reflect upon their feelings and actions with a level of maturity beyond their years. They show a remarkable understanding of how to keep themselves and each other safe and of how to make healthy lifestyle choices.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teachers inspire children to learn. High expectations and outstanding relationships promote positive attitudes, hard work and exceptional behaviour. Teachers use comprehensive assessments to plan work which often results in individualised learning programmes that are well matched to children's needs. Children are very clear about what they need to learn. Individual feedback given by teachers is highly effective in helping children to move their learning forward. Teachers focus on encouraging them to work together to develop thinking, questioning and problem solving skills. This means that children become independent and

confident learners who are given space to explore their ideas. From the start, they are encouraged to ask challenging questions such as 'Where does the sun go at night?' Teaching is often energetic and uses lots of exciting language and practical activities in imaginative ways to engage children.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum has been planned extremely well by thoughtful staff not only to meet national requirements but to ensure interest and excitement and progress from year to year for each individual child. Inspiring cross curricular topic themes benefit children's knowledge and understanding across several subjects, helping them to learn extremely well and providing them with lasting memories. A strong emphasis is given to developing children's basic skills. Excellent provision for personal, social and health education results in children's outstanding personal development and in them becoming individuals who are prepared exceptionally well for the next stage of their education and life. Enrichment activities, including trips out, are particularly impressive in how they are always relevant and tailored to meet the needs and interests of individuals and groups including those who have been recognised as having a particular gift or talent.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Central to the school's ethos is the provision of excellent pastoral and academic care and support. As one teacher explained, 'The headteacher has a burning belief that she can reach the unreachable'. Everyone shares this 'can do' culture which helps to ensure that children are given individual care and guidance. Children's needs are identified quickly and their progress is monitored closely so that their academic and personal needs are exceptionally well met. Much is done in partnership with parents and other agencies to ensure that children settle quickly and look forward to learning. This is at the heart of the school's excellent approach to learning which contributes to outstanding achievement and personal development. Children are very clear about the next steps in learning. They take responsibility for playing their part in making sure that they get there, confident that it is in their power and the key to their future success. Children say they feel extremely safe in school and that there is always someone to turn to if they have any worries. The school meets current requirements for safeguarding them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher makes an outstanding contribution to school improvement through her crystal-clear vision and by giving a strong strategic steer. Leadership and management has been distributed and is outstanding at all levels, including governance. As one member of staff volunteered, 'The headteacher has empowered us to lead and shine', so they have the best possible impact in each of their areas of strength. Everyone has a clear picture of how well the school is doing because of rigorous procedures for checking this. The shared understanding of the school's performance and the commitment to continuous improvement ensures that all staff and governors are involved in school development planning so that there is no complacency. For example, high levels of commitment are shown to developing the many and varied partnerships which have great impact on pupils' learning. Most impressive of these are the

partnerships with parents and the extended services offered to families. Staff work tirelessly to develop these partnerships further because they quite rightly recognise them as the key to securing even better opportunities for the children.

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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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is 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
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	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 the 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

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?	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 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	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

14 July 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Alderman Swindell First School, Great Yarmouth, NR30 4AB.

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school recently. This letter is to tell you what we found out.

There are lots of things that we like about your school. Some of them are:

- You achieve higher standards and make much better progress than most children in other schools.
- You behave extremely well and get on very well with each other.
- You really enjoy school because the school is very good at organising lots of interesting things for you to do.
- All of the adults in your school make sure that you are really well looked after.
- Your headteacher and all of the other people who help run your school are extremely good at making sure that you get an outstanding education.

We agree with your parents that you go to an outstanding school. All of the adults in your school want it to be even better. To help them to do this we think that the most important thing to do next is to make sure that they give you even more opportunities to learn outside when you are in the Foundation Stage and throughout the school.

We certainly enjoyed talking with you and finding out all about your school. Keep on working hard, doing your very best, enjoying your time at school and coming to school every day.

Yours sincerely

Joanne Harvey

Lead inspector