

Mulbarton Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120990
Local Authority	NORFOLK LA
Inspection number	313823
Inspection date	6 March 2008
Reporting inspector	David Wynford-Jones

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4-7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	133
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Peter Nicholls
Headteacher	Mr Stuart Beard
Date of previous school inspection	28 February 2005
School address	The Common Mulbarton Norwich Norfolk NR14 8JG
Telephone number	01508570326
Fax number	01508570326

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector in one day.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: standards and achievement in the Foundation Stage and in Year 2, and the effectiveness of teaching and leadership and management in raising standards. Evidence was gathered from observations of lessons, sampling of pupils' work and discussions with them, the staff and chair of governors and a scrutiny of school documentation. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than most of its type. It serves a mixed residential area. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. There are no pupils learning to speak English as an additional language. The socio-economic circumstances are favourable. Very few pupils are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils identified as having learning difficulties is below average. The school was re-organised from a first school (age range 4 - 8) to an infant school (age range 4 - 7) in September 2007. As a result, the size of the school has reduced by approximately 40 pupils. The proportion of pupils joining or leaving the school other than at the usual times is smaller than the national average. The headteacher was appointed in January 2007.

The school has gained the Sports Activemark 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 school. It provides sound value for money. Amongst its strengths are the provision in the Foundation Stage, the care provided for all pupils' physical and emotional needs and the strategies to support their personal development. Parents are supportive of the school and appreciate the level of care. One parent wrote, 'the teachers are delightful, easy to talk to and care about our children'. Pastoral care is strong. Teachers know their pupils well and relationships between them are good. As a result, pupils are friendly, polite and behave well. They want to please their teachers. They enjoy coming to school and their attendance is above the national average. Pupils know what to do if they are worried or injured in the playground. Consequently, they feel safe in and around the school.

Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage and their attainment on entry to Year 1 is above national expectations. They make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1 and by the end of Year 2, the standards they reach are usually above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards in reading and writing tend to be higher than those in mathematics. Their achievement is satisfactory.

In 2007, standards at the end of Year 2 were not typical of the school's performance. In reading, writing and mathematics standards were similar to those found nationally. Nevertheless, all pupils made satisfactory progress from their starting points. Pupils in the current Year 2 are on track to achieve above average standards. However, standards in mathematics are again likely to be lower than in reading and writing. This is because there are shortcomings in pupils' problem solving skills and in their ability to use and apply their mathematical skills and knowledge. Current standards are higher than in 2007 and progress continues to be satisfactory. Pupils with learning difficulties also make sound progress. This is because they receive satisfactory support and work that matches their needs.

Teaching is satisfactory overall. Although some of the teaching is good, it is not consistent enough to ensure that pupils make good progress. Teachers are adapting well to the teaching of mixed age range classes. They meet regularly to plan and share ideas to promote good practice, but there is inconsistency between classes. Nevertheless, there are strengths within the teaching. Teachers are using the electronic whiteboards confidently to add interest to lessons. They use questioning skills effectively, to probe pupils' understanding and encourage them to join in with discussions. They promote the pupils' social skills well by giving them the opportunity to take part in paired or group activities.

Teachers have worked hard to review the curriculum, but these revisions have yet to have an impact on the standards pupils achieve. Nevertheless, the curriculum is good. There is an appropriate focus on English and mathematics with a gradual introduction of the revised national guidance. The two-year rolling programme of topics is carefully thought out and builds on the pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding. Theme weeks, where pupils are encouraged to develop their investigation and communication skills, support learning successfully. The curriculum supports the pupils' personal development effectively. Their knowledge of other cultures and ways of life are developing well. They are gaining an outstanding knowledge of living a healthy lifestyle. All the pupils can identify foods that are good for you, and those that should be eaten in moderation. They know about the importance of keeping fit and taking regular exercise. Several spoke enthusiastically about the opportunities for sport. Pupils make a good contribution to the community and raise funds for charity. They are keen to be members

of the school council and to undertake the role of 'playground friend'. They want to ensure that all pupils can enjoy friendships and feel happy at school. Pupils are prepared well for the next stage in their education. Their personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding, is good.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has a clear view of how to improve the work of the school. This includes the use of an assessment and tracking system to monitor pupils' progress and to challenge teachers to ensure that the pupils make progress. It also provides more opportunities for teachers to share good practice. Issues arising from the reorganisation to an infant school were handled well. The recent systems and structures that have been implemented to help the school to move forward have resulted in the improved curriculum and good teaching in the Foundation Stage. They provide a good basis for future initiatives. Development planning is good and identifies the correct areas for improvement. However, the school's evaluation of its own effectiveness is in places generous. Nevertheless, the school operates smoothly on a day-to-day basis. Leaders and managers ensure that the pastoral care the pupils receive is good. There are rigorous procedures to ensure that all health and safety requirements, including the latest government requirements on safeguarding, are met. Academic guidance is satisfactory; systems for recording assessments have only recently been put in place. Although some marking is good, pupils do not receive sufficient guidance to ensure they make good progress.

Governors provide a good balance between advice, support and challenge. This has been particularly helpful in the reorganisation to an infant school. There are good systems in place to monitor the work of the school. As a result, the school has good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Attainment on entry to the Foundation Stage is marginally above expectations. The children settle quickly because induction procedures are effective and staff place significant importance on providing a good level of care. As a result, relationships are positive. Children feel safe and develop a positive attitude to learning. They make good progress because the curriculum is well organised to incorporate all areas of learning. Teaching is consistently of a good standard and teaching assistants are deployed well to support learning. By the end of Reception, the vast majority are working above the levels expected for their age in all areas of learning. Effective use is made of the outdoor area to promote the children knowledge of being healthy, staying safe. This provision is also used well for their physical development, and understanding of the world. Good opportunities are provided for the children to develop their independence by being able to choose well-planned activities that meet their needs well. The Foundation Stage is led and managed well. The coordinator is rightly looking to refine the already thorough assessment procedures and seeking imaginative ways to deploy teaching assistants and volunteers to support children's learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Challenge all pupils to make good progress and attain higher standards through the effective use of assessment procedures.
- Ensure greater consistency in the quality of teaching by consolidating the initiative of sharing good practice.

- Provide more opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in problem solving and applying their mathematics knowledge.

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

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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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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	3

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	1
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?	3
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?	3

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?	3
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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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

7 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Mulbarton Infant School, The Common, Mulbarton, Norfolk NR14 8J

Thank you very much for making me so welcome when I visited your school. I enjoyed my visit and talking to you. I was very pleased to hear that you like coming to school and to see your attendance is above average. Throughout the day, you behaved well and showed me that you are keen to take responsibility. You have an excellent understanding of healthy living. You know about the foods you should eat to keep healthy and about being safe. It was very nice to hear that you think your teachers and the other adults care about you. I agree with you they do look after you well, but they could give you more guidance on how to improve your work

Your school provides you with a satisfactory education. You get off to a good start in the Reception class where you make good progress. By the time you start in Year 1, nearly all of you are attaining standards above those expected for your age. Well done! You make satisfactory progress in Year 1 and 2. By the end of Year 2, the standards you reach in reading, writing and mathematics are above those reached in most schools. However, I think they could be higher, especially in mathematics. To help you, I have asked your headteacher and teachers to check that you are making good progress. I also want your teachers to share their expertise with each other and concentrate on helping you to solve mathematical problems.

I know they have already started to work on these things. I am certain you will enjoy the many things they have planned for you, such as the science week.

I hope that you will continue to enjoy your education at Mulbarton Infant School.

With best wishes for the future.

David Wynford Jones

Inspector