

East Ruston Area Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121016
Local Authority	NORFOLK LA
Inspection number	313838
Inspection date	20 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Helen Ranger

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	33
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Gail Adams
Headteacher	Mrs Penny Steward
Date of previous school inspection	2 November 2004
School address	School Road East Ruston Norwich Norfolk NR12 9JD
Telephone number	01692 650225
Fax number	01692 650225

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- how well pupils achieve in English and mathematics;
- the quality of the curriculum;
- how the school plans its development and monitors initiatives.

The inspector gathered evidence from observations of lessons, samples of pupils' work, discussions with pupils, staff and governors, and from questionnaires and letters from parents. The main documents used by the school in planning and in its monitoring and strategic development were examined. 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

This two-class rural school serves East Ruston and nearby villages, an area which includes some social disadvantage. It changed from being a first school to an infant school in September 2007. All the current pupils come from White British backgrounds. The proportion with learning difficulties or disabilities varies considerably from year to year; it is average at present but has been much higher in recent years. Children start Reception with a wide range of attainment and are often below the nationally expected levels in key social, language and mathematical skills. The school holds Eco-schools, Healthy School and Activemark awards.

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 is valued greatly by the families it serves. A very high proportion of parents contributed their views to the inspection and they were overwhelmingly positive. A typical comment was, 'The school offers my child a secure, caring learning environment in which he thrives both academically and emotionally.'

The committed staff team works in a highly effective partnership with families, the local community and other schools. Pupils achieve well because the quality of teaching is good and the curriculum has been developed in innovative ways over the past few terms. The teachers work effectively with the teaching assistants in planning, organising and running activities. The outstanding curriculum combines an appropriate focus on basic academic skills with an ever-increasing range of interesting activities that promote pupils' personal and social development. Together these provide the building blocks pupils need for successful learning and prepare them well for the future. As one parent put it, 'They leave as confident and able pupils ready for their next school.' Teachers plan lessons that closely match the needs of individual pupils, including the ones who find learning easier and those needing extra support. For example, the most able mathematicians in Year 2 work on challenging activities at the junior school. Pupils apply their literacy, numeracy, science and computer skills well across the full range of subjects. A good example is the regular cookery sessions. These include discussions of healthy eating, using number skills to make accurate measurements in recipes, choosing correct vocabulary to talk and write about the work, and understanding the science involved.

The impact of the curriculum can be seen in the school's good academic performance. Pupils make good progress throughout Reception and Key Stage 1, including those who need any extra support with learning. Since the last inspection, pupils have mostly achieved above average standards in the Year 2 national assessments. Writing has been particularly strong. The current Year 2 pupils are well on track to reach above average standards again by the end of this school year. The school's detailed tracking information indicates that standards in mathematics in particular are likely to be higher than last year.

Pupils enjoy school enormously. Attendance has improved and is above the national average. Pupils find a great deal of pleasure in learning. They say that one reason why they are so keen to attend is the high priority given to outdoor, environmental and practical activities. During the inspection, pupils were continuously occupied and engaged in interesting activities. Many lessons took place outdoors and pupils were physically active with regular opportunities to be independent and involved in planning their learning. The 'Forest School' initiative makes exceptionally good use of adjoining woodland and meadow. Pupils speak with great enthusiasm of projects such as building bridges, tree climbing, studying wildlife and completing outdoor art and sculpture projects. They contribute greatly to the school and wider community, for example, through the school council and their very good awareness of environmental issues. They are determined recyclers. They learn to respect others, such as when dressing up for 'Aliens' Day' to discuss difference and diversity. Pupils have an extremely good understanding of how to be healthy. This is promoted by the outdoor activities, guidance on diet and exercise, the provision of popular extra-curricular clubs, and the good range of sports provision. Pupils behave well, though occasionally their enthusiasm becomes boisterous so that they lose concentration and the pace of learning dips as a result. Adults generally manage behaviour well but sometimes do not always insist that pupils listen carefully enough when others are speaking.

Pupils are cared for and supported effectively. They are known well as individuals and there are appropriate procedures to safeguard them. In lessons, they receive good oral feedback on their achievements. Written guidance for the older pupils, for instance through marking, is generally good in literacy. In mathematics, work is marked but pupils are given less regular written guidance about how well they are doing or what to concentrate on next. Pupils are not always expected to respond to adults' marking or to reflect sufficiently on their own learning.

Leadership and management are good. Accurate self-evaluation is used to build on strengths and eliminate weaknesses. The headteacher's enthusiasm and her clear vision for further improvement are shared by staff and governors. There is an efficient collaborative approach to how individual subjects and the overall curriculum are managed. Key factors in the school's success are the arrangements for assessing and tracking pupils' progress. These systems have recently been made more rigorous so that teachers can ensure that pupils build efficiently on their achievements. Staff and governors analyse assessment information well to determine what needs to be focused on next. This analysis forms part of the main development plan. The plan clearly outlines priorities for action but is less clear about how any intended improvements for pupils will be checked. As a result, the plan does not work as efficiently as it might as a management tool for evaluating the success of initiatives. Nevertheless, the school has continued to improve well since its last inspection and it is well placed for the future.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Reception children do well. Detailed tracking of each child's progress is used very effectively to plan activities that match individual needs. This tracking information shows that the current group of children have already made good progress in all areas of learning. As in previous years, they are on course to reach or exceed the nationally expected levels by the end of the year. Sharing a class with Year 1, both age groups mix well and are catered for separately or together as appropriate. New children settle quickly and parents are delighted with the provision. The staff work together well. The extent to which indoor and outdoor learning are linked in a 'free flow' system is excellent. Activities promote children's independence, confidence and self-esteem very effectively. The class teacher works closely with the headteacher to manage the provision and both are experienced early years practitioners.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend the ways that marking guides the older pupils' progress, especially in mathematics, and how pupils use this feedback to improve their learning.
- Ensure that initiatives for development include clear criteria for monitoring their impact on pupils' learning.

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?	1
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	2
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	1
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	2
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	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?	1
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	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

21 February 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of East Ruston Area Infant School, East Ruston NR12 9JD

This letter is to thank you for all your help on my recent visit. I had a really good day meeting you all and seeing how much you enjoy school. Many of your parents wrote to tell me how good your school is and I agree with them. You do well in your work, behave well and get on well together.

The staff and governors make sure your school runs well. A very special part of the school is how the staff plan lots of exciting and interesting activities, many of which take place outdoors. It was good to see how fit and active you are. I enjoyed my time with the Forest School group who were working in the meadow. I was also pleased to hear about your recycling and environmental projects. You told me about all the clubs and visits that you are offered - you certainly keep busy!

I have asked the teachers and governors to do two things to make your school even better. First, I want them to make sure that the children in Year 2 know how to make their numeracy work even better. If you are in Year 2, you can help by really trying hard to improve your work in the ways your teachers tell you. Second, I would like the teachers to make sure that, if they plan any changes to your school, they check that these are helping you to learn even faster.

I hope you keep on enjoying all that your school offers you.

Best wishes

Mrs Helen Ranger

Lead inspector