

# Weasenham Church of England Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	121064
<b>Local Authority</b>	Norfolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	313861
<b>Inspection date</b>	28 November 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	John Messer

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.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	34
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Jane Elphick
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Susan Lunnun
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 February 2005
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Common End Weasenham King's Lynn Norfolk PE32 2SP

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
<b>Inspection date</b>	28 November 2008
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**Telephone number**

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This school has two classes and is much smaller than most primary schools. In 2006 it joined in partnership with another local primary school and both schools share the same headteacher. The children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) are part of a mixed-age class with pupils in Year 1. There is a privately run pre-school playgroup on site. There is an exceptionally wide spread of attainment on entry, with some children showing advanced skills but most entering with attainment that is below the levels usually expected, particularly in communication, language and literacy. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and a very small number are from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. The school has the Healthy Schools and the 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. Prior to joining forces with the partnership school, it passed through a challenging period due to staffing difficulties, caused mainly by long-term staff absence as well as problems with retaining staff and recruiting a headteacher. This interrupted pupils' learning and their achievement deteriorated. The school has been transformed since joining the partnership. It has particularly benefited from the exceptionally good leadership of the experienced headteacher. Staffing is now much more stable. Pupils' achievement is good. They make good progress and do well to attain average standards.

Teaching is good and pupils learn well. Teaching is lively and pupils report that lessons are great fun. Interactive whiteboards and video photography are used well to enrich learning. Teachers have responded to the demands of coping with the exceptionally wide spread of age and ability in each class by complex arrangements designed to meet the learning needs of all. This complexity does not always lead to the most efficient use of teachers' time and the rate of progress for groups who are not being directly taught by the teacher sometimes falters. Pupils greatly appreciate all the help and guidance provided, 'The best thing about school is the teachers because they are always kind and teach us well with lots of fun stuff.'

Standards, as reflected in national assessments and tests in Years 2 and 6, are broadly average in reading, mathematics and science. Standards of writing are below average. Gaps in pupils' prior learning, caused by previous staffing difficulties, have had a particularly adverse impact on writing. Older pupils have not received rigorous training in letter sounds and this is reflected in poor spelling. Handwriting is not well formed. A programme designed to teach a joined script systematically has only recently been introduced. Information and communication technology (ICT) is developing well and pupils gain a good range of computer skills. Computers are used well to support spelling, pupils use programs to practise their tables and know how to use the Internet safely for research.

Pupils' good personal development, including their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, makes a strong contribution to their learning. They thoroughly enjoy school and attendance is above average. Pupils are self-assured, confident learners. They are sensible and capable of learning independently but there are sometimes too few opportunities for them to conduct research, to investigate and find things out for themselves. They are becoming good at helping each other to improve by thoughtful discussions with their partners. Pupils are courteous and sensitive to the needs of others. They have a good understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles. They are developing a good understanding of their responsibilities to the wider community and wholeheartedly support fund-raising events to help those less fortunate than themselves.

The good curriculum includes a wide range of after-school clubs and educational visits to extend learning. Pupils learn to appreciate and respect the diverse customs of different groups in our society. Links with another school in Europe and with a school in Kenya help to broaden understanding of the wider world. Good care, guidance and support help pupils to feel safe and secure in school and underpin their learning well. Safeguarding procedures are robust.

Good leadership and management have promoted tremendous improvements since the school joined the partnership. The buildings have been totally refurbished. The sharing of training, school visits and other economies, mean that finances are used more efficiently. All staff share a determination to improve provision and raise standards. The partnership and links with other

local schools provide good opportunities to share ideas and expertise. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and identifies the most pressing areas for improvement. The governing body is well informed and governors are closely associated with the school. Most are new but are already getting to grips with monitoring provision and the school's performance through frequent visits and analysis of data. Since the partnership the school has gone from strength to strength. It is well placed to improve further.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Children make good progress in the Reception class, often from low starting points, and standards by the end of the Reception year compare well with national averages in most areas of learning. However, standards in communication, language and literacy often remain below average. Good links with the pre-school playgroup that shares the site help smooth transition to school. The four Reception age children learn a great deal from the older pupils. Older ones read with them, show them how to use computer programs and help them to make models. The classroom is colourful and stimulating. As part of a project on animals, children enjoyed treating pets in the class veterinary surgery. They go on interesting visits, for example finding out a great deal of intriguing information about Horatio Nelson at the Kings Lynn Arts Centre. They visit the woods to make shelters and have picnics. The outdoor learning environment has been developed well. Children love whizzing around on tricycles as they learn how to steer accurately and avoid accidents.

There are good opportunities for them to make choices and most quickly become confident learners. Teaching is good and children achieve well. There is a good emphasis on teaching children the relationship between letters and the sounds they represent. These phonics sessions are frequent and rigorous. This gives them a good platform for developing early reading and writing skills. Teaching is not always as imaginative as it could be and opportunities are sometimes missed to enrich learning through role-play. The leadership and management of the EYFS are good. The new EYFS guidance is being introduced effectively. The curriculum is geared to providing much enjoyment and a good range of learning opportunities. There are good procedures to promote children's health and welfare.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Give pupils more intensive guidance about the strategies needed to reach higher standards in writing.
- Make classroom organisation less complex and more manageable and give pupils more opportunities to learn independently.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Standards fluctuate from year to year due to the widely differing abilities of the very small year groups. In addition, pupils' achievement was adversely affected by many changes in staffing over a long period. Greater staffing stability has now been established and pupils achieve well. All groups of pupils, including those who find learning difficult, are supported well and so make good progress. The school's assessment data shows that the more able pupils make good progress and attain standards that are above average. By the end of Year 2, standards are average in reading and mathematics. Progress in writing is satisfactory but standards remain

below average. By the end of Year 6, most attain standards that are broadly average in English, mathematics and science.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school. They talk eagerly about their learning and about how well they are doing. They are delighted when their fellow pupils are selected for special praise in recognition of particular success. Older ones willingly help the younger ones. They enjoy taking on responsibilities and the school council used its budget wisely to purchase playground equipment. Pupils have a good understanding of how to eat sensibly and the need for plenty of exercise. They are good at sport and are proud that their little school does so well in local games tournaments, especially golf and hockey. The school has identified the need to extend 'personalised learning' so that learning programmes can be more closely tailored to individual needs. The use of residential visits and participation in school productions contributes much to pupils' confidence and well-developed social skills.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Now that there is greater stability in leadership and the teaching force, learning is more consistent. Teaching is lively and energetic and pupils are well motivated. Teachers plan lessons thoroughly and adapt tasks skilfully to match the widely varying range of age and ability in each class. Class sizes are small and there is a very favourable ratio of adults to pupils, which provides good opportunities for close individual attention. Teachers strive to give as much of their attention as possible to all groups. Consequently, opportunities are sometimes missed to combine groups so that the benefits of the good teaching are more concentrated and have more impact. Teaching assistants are well trained and make a strong contribution to pupils' learning. Newly introduced assessment procedures are helping to measure pupils' progress accurately and identify any areas of underachievement. Assessment information is used well to set challenging targets for pupils' performance.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teachers have worked alongside colleagues from the partnership school to plan a curriculum that matches pupils' interests well. A good start has been made on linking subjects together to create interesting topics or themes but there is scope for further development. The curriculum includes opportunities to learn French and German. Special events, such as the 'Tudor Day' and the visit to a Victorian school, stimulate learning effectively. There is a good emphasis on environmental issues such as recycling and saving energy. For such a small school there is a very good range of after-school activities, such as the gardening club and the orchestra at the partnership school. A specialist music teacher teaches in both schools and this adds to good links being forged. Pupils also benefit from using the partnership school's hall for physical education and dance. The partnership school and the high school have previously provided resources to support the teaching of science.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' welfare and safety receive the highest priority. They receive good guidance about healthy lifestyles, the misuse of drugs and on how to stay safe. Pupils have individual targets in English and mathematics that help them to understand what they need to do to reach the next stages in their learning, but the target setting process is still at the developmental stage. There is a good range of policies to guide the effective management of the school but the behaviour policy is not always applied consistently and this causes some unrest among pupils. They report that relationships with adults in school are so friendly that they would have no hesitation about sharing personal problems with any members of staff.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Since the establishment of the partnership, the headteacher has brought a renewed vigour and sense of urgency to the job of school development and there have been significant improvements in provision. She analyses the school's performance meticulously and accurately pinpoints the most important priorities for further improvements. The partnership with parents has also been strengthened particularly well. Parents are delighted with the education provided for their children. One commented, 'The school has improved out of all recognition over the past few years and it is now a wonderful little school where all the children flourish happily.' The school is well positioned to improve further because everybody is pulling in the same direction and responding positively to the challenges set for school improvement. Community cohesion is promoted well as the school reaches out to the local community as well as forging links with schools in Europe and Kenya. The partnership has had a major impact on school improvement.



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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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	2

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<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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
The extent to which 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	3

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

1 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Weasenham Primary School, Norfolk, PE32 2SP

What a good school. We thoroughly enjoyed the short time we spent with you. Thank you for being so friendly and helpful.

One of the main strengths of the school is the way that you are so caring of each other. The older ones are very sensitive to the needs of the younger ones and aware of when they need help and support. You all get on so well together and make great friendships. Your school is much smaller than most but you told us that is just the way you like it because its small size gives a family feel. You enjoy school and have lots of fun. You are polite and well behaved. You enjoy learning new things and finding out more about our world. We particularly liked the way you are learning to look after the planet through helping with energy conservation and recycling. You do so well in competitions with bigger schools. Winning the hockey tournament was great.

Your headteacher is a really good leader and has worked incredibly hard to develop the partnership with Rudham. Your school buildings are bright and cheerful places in which to learn. Because teachers make lessons interesting you make good progress. You are good at reading and you are developing a good range of computer skills. You enjoy mathematics and science. We agree with your teachers that standards in writing should be higher. Those of you who find it rather difficult to learn new things get lots of help and often do really well. You understand the need for a healthy diet and how important it is to keep yourselves fit by having plenty of exercise. You know how to stay safe and look after yourselves and others. You go on lots of fascinating visits to places of interest. You develop a good understanding of people's different customs and beliefs.

We think that there are two main things that would help to improve your school. In order to raise standards in writing we think that you should have more guidance on how to write well. We also think that you are so sensible that you should be given more opportunities to investigate and find things out for yourselves. We know that you want to do your best and we are sure that if you continue to work hard the school will go from strength to strength.

We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

John Messer

Lead inspector