

Harpley CofE VC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121092
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	313871
Inspection date	25 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Geof Timms

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	45
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Jerry Brown
Headteacher	Mrs Ann Beardall
Date of previous school inspection	27 April 2004
School address	Nethergate Street Harpley Norfolk PE31 6TN
Telephone number	01485520274
Fax number	01485520274

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school is much smaller than most schools. It serves the villages of Harpley and Houghton. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is broadly average. All pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who start at the school at times other than normal is very high, as is the percentage that have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The attainment on entry to the school varies widely due to the very small year groups but is usually broadly in line with that expected. The school has an 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

The school is providing a satisfactory education for its pupils. This supports the school's accurate self-evaluation. The headteacher has put in place a number of improvements that are beginning to have a positive impact on provision and on the satisfactory standards achieved. The staff, although small in number, work together well and form a strong team, and they have a good capacity to improve still further in the future. There is a shared desire to do the best for the pupils and a willingness to try new ideas and to look beyond the school for support and advice when necessary. The vast majority of the parents support the school strongly. One wrote: 'The excellent pastoral care provides a happy environment in which pupils thrive both educationally and socially.'

The very small numbers of pupils in each year group make comparisons about standards from year to year unsafe. However, most pupils who are in school from the Reception class make at least satisfactory progress and achieve average standards by the end of Year 6 in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Currently the Year 6 pupils are achieving well. They are a higher attaining group and are likely to reach standards that are better than those expected by the end of the year. However, progress made is inconsistent from year to year, and standards by the end of Year 2 in 2007 were below those expected in reading, writing and mathematics. Throughout the school, standards are still too low in mathematics and science, particularly those aspects requiring the use of pupils' skills to solve problems and carry out investigations. Pupils who join the school at times other than in Reception often have a range of learning difficulties. Even so, these pupils are well supported and they make good progress.

Since her appointment, the headteacher has worked hard to improve the quality of teaching and learning, and to develop the curriculum, especially in the Key Stage 1 class. Her leadership is appreciated by the other staff who are developing a useful system for mutual support and spreading good practice through evaluating the success of their teaching. More links are being made between subjects to make learning more meaningful. Better systems are in place for the tracking of individual pupils' progress, and these are beginning to have a positive impact by enabling teachers to address individual needs. Teaching is satisfactory, but has a number of strengths and is improving rapidly. Teachers' knowledge of individual pupils and their families is a particular help in supporting their learning.

The school provides good pastoral and academic care and this aids pupils' good personal development. Pupils have good attitudes towards school. This is evident in their above average attendance and in their excellent behaviour. Pupils talk about how much they enjoy school and that they feel safe and secure as there is no bullying. They have confidence in the staff to deal with any problems. They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves healthy and the school is giving them satisfactory skills to help prepare them for their future lives. The school ensures the requirements regarding pupils' safeguarding and child protection are met.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The very small Reception group works as part of the Key Stage 1 class. However, these children have tasks planned and prepared specifically for them to address their needs. They have appropriate opportunities to take part in practical activities and to develop their skills through play. Teaching is satisfactory and supports the progress made. They are well supported by a

teaching assistant, but are also able where appropriate to work alongside the older pupils. The buildings make it difficult currently to provide easy access to outdoor learning and not enough opportunities to do this are built into their activities. Even so, the Foundation Stage is satisfactorily led and managed. Overall, the children make satisfactory progress in the knowledge and skills that they need, to achieve the expected learning goals.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics by ensuring pupils have sufficient opportunities to use their number skills to solve problems.
- Raise standards in science by developing the tracking of pupils' progress and ensuring sufficient opportunities to develop their investigative skills.
- Provide all pupils, especially the youngest, with better opportunities for outdoor learning.

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.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Although attainment on entry to the Reception year is broadly average, a significant number of pupils join the school at other times and a number of these have moderate learning difficulties. Although this has an impact on the school's national test results, and progress is satisfactory overall, the good provision made for them helps these pupils make good progress and achieve standards at least in line with, and sometimes above, similar pupils nationally. Progress in writing was recognised by the school as a weakness last year. A number of improvements to the provision have been made and these have quickly resulted in better standards. Standards in mathematics and science require further improvement, especially through giving pupils opportunities to use their skills in more practical and investigative activities.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

This aspect is good because the school has a very positive ethos that parents and pupils support and appreciate. Excellent behaviour by the pupils helps the school to run smoothly and they talk about how well they all get on together. In particular they enjoy being at school to meet friends and for their lessons. They were unable to find anything about the school they did not like, and they appreciate having their views heard in the whole school council meetings. Pupils are positive about the adults in the school and how well they get on with them. They are clear that they can rely on them for support and advice. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall, although the efforts to help pupils appreciate the range of cultures and faiths that make up our society do not have a sufficiently high profile.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Although teaching is satisfactory, it is improving rapidly and this is evident in the current Key Stage 2 standards and the new curriculum planning in Key Stage 1. Teachers are enthusiastic and willing to seek out support and training where appropriate. This has already had an impact

on the quality of teaching, leading to higher standards in writing. Relationships between staff and pupils are good, and the teaching assistants have a positive impact on pupils' progress. They work closely with the teachers so that they have a sound understanding of their role in helping pupils. Teachers work very hard to plan lessons that are suitable for the wide age ranges in each class. New technology is used effectively to make lessons lively and interesting.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The staff work hard to provide a curriculum that is appropriate to the ages of the pupils. They are developing meaningful links between subjects so that pupils can use the skills they have learned. Recent work to improve writing skills has resulted in some good writing, especially on historical themes. The accommodation makes it difficult to provide room for a range of practical work, and the school does not make sufficiently effective use of the outdoor resources and its extensive site. The provision for those pupils with learning difficulties is good and this has a positive impact on their progress. Provision for the most able pupils is improving and they have good opportunities to work with older pupils on more challenging tasks where appropriate.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school's self-evaluation underestimated this aspect of its work. Improvements have been made to the academic guidance and support offered to pupils so that care, guidance and support are now good. For example, the marking of pupils' work is good at explaining what they have done well and it often tells them how they can improve their work in the future. The management team has introduced a new tracking system, which clearly highlights the progress made by individual pupils, although this is yet to be fully embedded in day-to-day practice. Targets are set for pupils although this is also at an early stage. Pastoral care is good and pupils appreciate the caring nature of the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school has moved a long way in the last two years. The headteacher demonstrates a secure understanding of the school's needs. She has worked effectively to put in place a range of new policies and initiatives. Together with the staff, she has created a strong team who show a good capacity to improve through the rising standards in writing and other improvements made since the last inspection. For example, since that time the curriculum time is better managed and the provision for the most able pupils has raised their levels of attainment. The accurate self-evaluation is used to create a good school improvement plan. The governing body provide satisfactory support for the school and they have recognised the need to improve their involvement. They have a good, detailed action plan in place which is likely to support their role in the future. Staff have developed a system for monitoring and evaluating learning, teaching and the progress made in different subjects. Although new, this is beginning to help staff learn from each other and to spread good practice. Teachers are increasingly involved in promoting whole 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?	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?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

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

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?	3
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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
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	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

28 April 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Harpley CofE Primary School, Harpley, Norfolk, PE31 6TN

I am writing to thank you for making me welcome when I visited your school recently. I enjoyed watching you at work and play, and you quickly helped me feel part of the school. I also want to thank those of you I met at lunchtime. Our discussion was very helpful to me. You are certainly very happy with your school.

One of the best things about Harpley is your excellent behaviour. This helps the teachers to teach and helps make the school such a nice place to be. I especially like the way older pupils help younger ones. It is a very caring school and the teachers help you learn to work and play together well. They are good at helping you understand what you need to do to improve. You need to get better at remembering your targets!

You learn new things in most lessons and you make progress that is similar to most children of your ages. To help the school get even better, and to help you learn even more, I have asked the teachers to do three things:

- help you get better at mathematics by giving you more opportunities to solve problems
- help you get better at science by tracking how well you are learning and giving you more investigations to do
- make better use of the school's grounds so you can do more work outside.

You can help by continuing to be so well behaved and by working hard in lessons.

Thank you again for your help. Carry on enjoying your time at Harpley and keep working hard.

Yours sincerely

Geof Timms

Lead inspector