

Whitefriars CE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121141
Local Authority	NORFOLK LA
Inspection number	313895
Inspection dates	28–29 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Martin Newell

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	317
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Christine James
Headteacher	Mr Tony Harvey (Acting)
Date of previous school inspection	5 December 2006
School address	Whitefriars Road Kings Lynn Norfolk PE30 5AH
Telephone number	01553 761001
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average sized primary school. Attainment when children start at the school is often well below national expectations, particularly in language and social skills. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above the national average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above the national average and the percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational need is much higher than the picture nationally. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds, with approximately 20 per cent of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds. Many of these pupils start school with little or no English. There is a higher than national average level of pupil mobility. The school has had numerous changes in leadership over the last four years. The current acting headteacher has been in post for approximately five weeks. Previous to this the deputy headteacher was the acting head. A permanent headteacher is to take up post at Easter 2008.

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 and improving school with some good aspects, which provides satisfactory value for money. In accordance with Section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools (HMCI), is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. Most parents expressed positive views about the school with a number commenting on improvements since the last inspection. There is a shared determination amongst staff and governors to keep the momentum of improvement going in order to fulfil their vision of a good quality of education for all pupils. They fully recognise that there is still a job to do to make this vision a reality but their successful track record on improvement indicates a good capacity for continued development.

From low starting points, children get off to an excellent start in the Foundation Stage and their progress is outstanding. This great start however is not systematically built on as pupils move through the school and progress overall is satisfactory. Over time, progress in Years 3 to 6 has been too variable and standards have been significantly below the national average when pupils leave the school. The current situation shows an improvement in standards to a broadly average level but with writing standards below average. These improvements are as a result of better teaching and assessment but there is still more to be done to ensure that good progress is the norm. Teaching and learning are now satisfactory with some outstanding practice, which captivates, enthuses and challenges pupils of all abilities. However, there is not yet enough of this quality of teaching to promote consistently good achievement. The school has rightly identified the need to ensure that teachers make better use of assessment data and the marking of pupils' work as tools for accelerating their progress.

Pupils' personal development is good because most pupils are well behaved and enjoy school. Most are keen and enthusiastic learners who have a good understanding of what is needed to live safe and healthy lives. Pupils currently leave school with skills that prepare them adequately for their future lives, although these are improving. The curriculum is satisfactory with good features and includes good enrichment, through many after school clubs, visits and visitors. The care and guidance on offer for pupils is satisfactory with pastoral care a strength. Academic guidance for pupils is satisfactory but lacks consistency across classes in helping to speed up pupils' progress.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. In his short time in post, the acting headteacher is continuing to keep the pace of improvement going well. Good improvements since the last inspection owe much to the deputy headteacher and senior teacher who have led and managed the school in a strong and effective manner and have set challenging targets. The push is now on to ensure that good quality initiatives introduced become firmly embedded and consistently applied and their impact evaluated on standards and achievement. The continually improving role of subject leaders and governors in monitoring the performance of the school is well set to contribute to this process.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is excellent because it is vibrant, innovative and fun. Children make outstanding progress because teaching strikes an excellent balance between child-initiated and adult-led activities. Teaching is animated but challenging and keeps children

hanging on the teachers' every word. A great emphasis is put on children developing as independent learners and it pays off. Children show high levels of independence, concentration and perseverance. All adults, who work extremely well as a team, capitalise every opportunity on to develop children's communication and social skills. Ongoing assessment is excellent and the information consistently used to inform future learning. Very good use is made of the available outdoor accommodation with plans in hand to develop this further. Excellent use is made of the locality and trips to bring another dimension to children's learning. The management of provision, including arrangements for induction, is excellent.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards, particularly in writing, by the time that pupils leave school by ensuring good progress continues.
- Increase the incidence of good and better teaching by ensuring that lessons are challenging and that all teachers make good use of assessment data to match work to pupils' differing abilities.
- Ensure marking is used as an effective tool for making clear to pupils what they need to do to improve.

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

Excellent teaching and provision in the Foundation Stage enable the children in the reception classes make rapid progress, resulting in standards being close to national expectations by the time children start in Year 1. Standards by the end of Year 2 are broadly average and all pupils in Years 1 and 2 make satisfactory progress. For some time, standards at the end of Year 6 have been significantly below the national average, particularly in English and progress has not been good enough. However, the picture now is more positive and standards are broadly average, apart from in writing which are below average. Pupils are making satisfactory progress overall in Years 3 to 6, because the quality of teaching has improved. Progress for some of the oldest pupils is at times excellent because of challenging teaching. The school aims to ensure that the progress made by the oldest and youngest pupils is the benchmark of success for all. Pupils with learning difficulties and those for whom English is an additional language make similar progress to their classmates.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are reflective, show concern for each other and have a good knowledge of cultural diversity. Pupils have good relationships with adults and with each other, and behaviour seen in lessons and around the school during the inspection was good. A minority of pupils present more challenging behaviour. The pupils are adamant that bullying, an issue at the time of the last inspection, is not a problem in their school. The pupils attend lessons with a willingness and enthusiasm to learn. Despite the continued and concerted efforts of the school, attendance is a little below average but improving. Pupils work well together and are keen to take part in the range of school activities offered. Pupils have a good understanding of how to manage risks in their lives and are well versed in what is needed to follow fit and healthy lifestyles.

Pupils take full advantage of the opportunities to take responsibility in the classroom, around the school and in the wider community. The house captains and school council all take their responsibilities very seriously. Pupils' development of workplace skills is satisfactory because of their progress in literacy and numeracy.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

There have been some weaknesses in teaching in Years 3 to 6, resulting in standards not being high enough when pupils leave the school. The picture is now more positive and although there is still ground to make up, teaching and learning overall are now satisfactory. However, this does not tell the full story. Although, no teaching is inadequate there is too much variability in its effectiveness. Teaching for the youngest pupils and for some of the older pupils is outstanding because it is pacy, challenging, fun and hooks and engages pupils for the whole lesson. Across the school, relationships between adults and pupils are good and pupils' behaviour is managed well. When teaching is satisfactory, it is because assessment information is not used well enough to match work to the differing abilities of the pupils or it lacks sufficient urgency or vibrancy to capture the interest of the pupils. Marking of pupils' work is also variable. There are some very good examples where clear pointers for improvement are given and acted upon by the pupils, but this practice is not yet consistent enough in all classes.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory with some good aspects. The curriculum is balanced and many pupils get the opportunity to learn modern foreign languages. The Foundation Stage curriculum is outstanding. However, the main school curriculum, in key areas such as literacy, numeracy and science only promotes satisfactory progress. The links to other subjects to ensure good progression through the school are not sufficiently well embedded. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is satisfactory although the targets for these pupils are not always sharp enough. Good support is provided for pupils whose first language is not English. An appropriate programme of personal, social and health education and physical education (PE) makes a telling contribution to helping pupils follow safe and healthy lives. A strength lies in the wide variety of visits and visitors which add significantly to pupils' enjoyment of learning. There is also a wide range of extra-curricular activities including those to support academic work and homework as well as music, PE and drama.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Staff go the extra-mile to ensure all pupils benefit from good levels of pastoral care. Good systems are in place for safeguarding of pupils, child protection and risk assessment. Pupils feel safe in school and importantly they say 'We have a voice that is listened to.' Good links with outside agencies and the school's internal support mechanisms means that help can be called on quickly for pupils experiencing learning or emotional difficulties or for pupils arriving from overseas. Academic guidance is satisfactory. Good procedures are in place for assessing pupils' progress but teachers do not always use the information to set challenging work. There are however some examples of very good practice for the youngest and some older pupils.

Many pupils are aware of their individual targets but in some classes, they are not reviewed frequently enough.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The acting headteacher already has a good grasp of the school's strengths and tackles weaknesses rigorously. Prior to his appointment, the deputy head and a senior teacher played a pivotal and significant role in moving the school forward through difficult times. They helped to improve standards, teaching and assessment. However, they are realists and know that there is still much to be done to further raise standards and to improve the consistency of teaching to enable consistent good or better progress. The school's self-evaluation is effective in bringing about improvement. The role played by subject leaders, particularly in key areas, in monitoring standards and provision is much improved but this is work in progress in terms of the impact on pupils' achievement. The governors are supportive and are now playing a more proactive role in how they evaluate the work of the school. However, these practices are not yet firmly embedded enough to give them a sufficiently sharp awareness of how well the school is doing.

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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	1
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	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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
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

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?	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	3
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	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	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

1 March 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Whitefriars CE Primary School, Kings Lynn, Norfolk, PE30 5AH

You will probably remember that we visited your school not too long ago and I am now writing to let you know what we found out. Before I do, I would first like to say a big thank you for making us feel so welcome. I have told your teachers how you were polite and helpful and that you said many positive things about your school. We managed to talk to lots of you, it was good to hear how much you enjoy school, and that bullying is not an issue.

We found that staff care for you well and make learning enjoyable through the after-school clubs and the visits and visitors to school. The school is good in helping you to keep fit, safe and healthy. Mr Harvey, Mr Tuckwood and Mrs Vanderloo are working together well to make the school a better place to learn and they are succeeding! There is a strength of the school that I have not talked about yet and that is you! We were pleased with your behaviour, your enthusiasm and your knowledge of how to keep fit, healthy and safe. Well done!

We have talked to your teachers about how they can help make the school a more exciting place for you to learn. They are going to help you reach higher standards, particularly in writing, make teaching more challenging and fun to help you make good progress and to give you clear pointers as to how you can improve your work.

The staff and governors want the school to improve. I know you will want to play your part by continuing to work as hard and behave well. We wish you every success in the future. It was a pleasure to meet you.

Martin Newell

Lead inspector