

Great Witchingham Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121148
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	313897
Inspection dates	22–23 September 2008
Reporting inspector	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.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	52
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
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Karen Hall
Headteacher	Mrs Christine Livings
Date of previous school inspection	20 September 2004
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Lenwade Street Great Witchingham Norwich NR9 5SD
Telephone number	01603 872354

Age group	4–11
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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 primary schools. There are three classes. Children's attainment on entry fluctuates from year to year but is generally below average, especially in communication, language and literacy. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and several are from minority ethnic families. A very small number speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who enter or leave the school part-way through this phase of their education is above average. Just under a year ago the school entered into a partnership with a neighbouring school with one headteacher leading both. The school has been awarded the Activemark for its work in developing physical education.

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 emerging from a challenging period caused mainly by staffing difficulties. During a prolonged period when there was no substantive headteacher, school improvement faltered. The partnership with a neighbouring school and the good personal leadership of the new and highly experienced headteacher has, over the past year, resulted in substantial improvements on many fronts. New teachers have been appointed and the learning environment has been transformed. A new school hall and an outside learning area for the youngest children have been created. A good curriculum has been established. Pupils develop a good range of skills in information and communication technology (ICT). Music and physical education (PE) are particular strengths. There is a renewed energy about the school. Staff share a determination to accelerate the progress of all pupils and to raise standards and they are meeting with success. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Although standards are below average by Year 6, there is a groundswell of improvement that is now raising pupils' attainment. The results of assessments for pupils in Year 2 in 2008 showed that standards in reading, writing and mathematics were exceptionally high.

Teaching is satisfactory overall. Good teaching in the Reception class helps children to make good progress in all areas of learning. Good teaching in Years 1 and 2 helps pupils to make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Teaching in Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory and there are some good features but several teachers in these classes are very new to the school and have not yet had time to make a significant impact on raising standards. There is evidence that much of the impact is positive but there are inconsistencies in practice because policies, such as a marking policy and a handwriting policy, have yet to be agreed. Some of the marking of pupils' work gives such clear guidance that it leads to rapid improvement but sometimes marking is not so helpful. High levels of staff turnover have interrupted pupils' learning in Years 3 to 6 and this has been compounded by high levels of pupil mobility. As a result, progress in recent years has been erratic and standards in English, mathematics and science have been too low. The headteacher has now put in place systems to reverse this trend. She has introduced a good computerised system to measure progress. Leaders are now at the stage where they have enough data to use the system to make a start on setting challenging targets for all pupils to aim at in literacy, numeracy and science.

Pupils' personal development is good and is a strength of the school. Pupils are happy and well behaved. Good pastoral care helps pupils to feel safe and secure. Safeguarding procedures are robust. There are shortcomings in the guidance pupils receive about how to reach the next stages in their learning, particularly as target setting is at an early stage of development. Pupils know how to lead healthy lifestyles. Pupils' well-developed social skills, coupled with their broad range of achievements, gives them a sound basis for starting the next phase of their education and for their future economic well-being.

Parents are pleased with recent improvements and are happy with the education provided for their children. One comment was typical, 'I am extremely happy with how my children are progressing at school and have no issues at all. Thumbs Up!' Leadership roles are being reviewed with the aim of sharing leadership of subjects across the two partnership schools. Subject leaders are not yet monitoring provision systematically in order to pinpoint areas for improvement. The headteacher's self-evaluation is accurate and she has given the school clear direction. Morale is high. Governors have begun to monitor provision more thoroughly but many are new and have yet to have an impact on school improvement. Financial management

is sound and the school provides satisfactory value for money. The beginning of a new school year coincides with a new chapter in the school's history as the school realigns its management structure. The good leadership of the head teacher and the many significant improvements over the past year demonstrate that it has good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The three reception age children have only been in school for a few weeks. Already they have settled in extremely well and have a good understanding of classroom routines. They study the photographs that show the activities on offer and confidently choose which ones they would prefer to take part in. They join the older ones to sing number songs such as 'Six Fat Teddies Sitting on a Wall' and so learn about taking away as, one by one, the teddies fall off. They hunt for two-dimensional shapes in the school grounds and know the difference between a square and a rectangle. They enjoy the intensive programme that the teacher uses to teach the class about letters and the sounds they represent. The strong emphasis on developing language, literacy and communication skills gives these children a flying start in learning to read and write. Their welfare and well-being are given a high priority and high standards of care are maintained. Teaching is good and learning sessions are well organised to promote good achievement in all areas of the curriculum. Children's personal, social and emotional development is promoted exceptionally well through sensitive teaching which recognises and accommodates each child's individual differences. Activities are tailored to meet the learning needs of all. One over-arching strength is the way that children are encouraged to become confident learners.

What the school should do to improve further

- Set challenging targets for pupils in Years 3 to 6 in order to accelerate progress and raise standards in writing, mathematics and science.
- Distribute responsibility for monitoring provision, identifying areas for improvement and raising standards to subject leaders, and involve governors more closely in such monitoring.
- Make sure that marking of pupils' work shows them what they need to do to improve.

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

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

All groups of pupils receive appropriate support and are helped to make at least satisfactory progress. Children's achievement is good in the Reception class and most attain average standards by the end of the Reception year. Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 1 and 2. In the national assessments for pupils in Year 2 standards have generally been above average in reading and mathematics but below average in writing. In 2008, standards were exceptionally high in reading, writing and mathematics because the group of pupils being assessed had a higher than usual proportion of more able pupils and teaching focussed strongly on raising standards in writing. Pupils' progress in Years 3 to 6 has been patchy and standards are currently below average in English, mathematics and science. This is due to several factors. Pupils' learning has been interrupted by staffing difficulties, and the school has been slow to set challenging targets for the amount of progress that pupils are expected to make each year. However, staffing difficulties have now been resolved and a good system for measuring progress

and for setting challenging targets has been introduced. Standards are rising because progress in Years 3 to 6 has improved and is now satisfactory but there are still many gaps in pupils' prior learning.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils develop good social skills. They are eager to please and sensitive to the needs of others. They willingly contribute to charities that help those less fortunate than themselves. Pupils are sensible and well behaved. Spiritual development is supported strongly through the school's links with the church which runs a popular after school club that helps forge valuable relationships. The school has good links locally and supports a weekly mother and toddlers group. Pupils write articles for the parish magazine. The school has yet to foster community cohesion more fully by reaching out to communities further afield. Pupils learn about different religions but they have limited understanding of the cultural diversity in our society. Pupils understand the need for regular exercise and a balanced diet. They are bursting with enthusiasm and relish opportunities to explore and investigate. Their good personal development supports learning well.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory overall and there are particular strengths. Relationships between staff and pupils are good. Most of the classes are taught by two teachers under job-share arrangements. This works well as pupils benefit from the particular strengths of both partners. Teaching of PE is supported well by a higher level teaching assistant who has become a specialist sports teacher. Teaching is further enhanced by specialist science teaching through the partnership with the local secondary school. Many of the new teachers are still finding their feet and have not yet had time to demonstrate how much impact their teaching is having on pupils' achievement and standards.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Leaders have remodelled the curriculum by grouping subjects together and developing a thematic approach. The aim is to provide stimulating activities that capture pupils' interests and are relevant to their needs. Staff have made a good start and interesting projects have been planned. Staff have particular expertise in modern foreign languages and this is becoming a key strength. Sports and the performing arts are well represented. The new school hall and new mini gym equipment have revitalised the curriculum for PE. Musical productions, such as the recent performance of 'Joseph and his Amazing Technicolour Dream Coat' enhance learning and make a good contribution to personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils' welfare and safety receive the highest priority. Risks associated with activities, such as educational visits, are carefully evaluated to minimise the possibility of danger. Governors make appropriate safety checks on school premises and adults are thoroughly vetted before starting

to work with pupils. Pupils receive good guidance about healthy lifestyles, the misuse of drugs and on how to stay safe. There are some shortcomings in academic guidance as pupils are not exactly sure what they need to do to reach the next steps in their learning. The target setting process is still at the developmental stage. Pupils with particular gifts or talents receive good support and encouragement. Pupils report that relationships with staff are so friendly that they would have no hesitation about sharing personal problems with their teachers.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher, the staff and the governing bodies of both partnership schools have worked well together to give a renewed impetus to school improvement. Teachers, teaching assistants, clerical personnel, governors and caretaking staff all come together to share expertise and gain from each other's knowledge and experience. All share the vision and direction that the headteacher has set and everybody is pulling together. Consequently the school is in a good position to improve further. The partnership has helped to bind the school communities together as all associated with the schools are committed to doing their very best for all the pupils. However, the roles of subject leaders from both schools are still to be defined in order to share leadership responsibilities in the most effective way possible. Many of the school governors are new and have not yet established systems to monitor the school's performance and hold it to account. The partnership has already had a major impact on school improvement and the school is now poised to make further advances.

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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 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?	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/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 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

How good are 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
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	3
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 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

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	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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	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

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

24 September 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Great Witchingham Primary School, Norwich, NR9 5SD

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when I came to visit your school. I enjoyed talking to you and particularly liked the courteous and confident way you behave.

This is what I found out about your school:

- The partnership with Easton School is great and is helping grown ups and children to make new friends and help each other.
- Children in Orange class get off to a good start in school.
- You are sensible, eager to learn and willing to please, and this is helping you to make better progress in lessons.
- Standards in English, mathematics and science were too low but are now beginning to rise.
- You sing well and the video of 'Joseph' shows that you are good at performing in public.
- The new hall and the PE equipment are helping you to keep fit and become good at sports and games.
- Your teachers and other adults take good care of you and keep you safe.
- Mrs Livings has done a lot in a short time to make your school better.

In order to help, I have suggested three things that the school should do:

- Set challenging targets in literacy, numeracy and science for pupils in Green and Blue classes to help them to make better progress.
- Work in partnership with staff at Easton School to share out responsibilities for leading the school and for checking that everybody is making good progress.
- Make sure that when teachers mark your work they make it clear what you need to do to improve.

School councillors said that they wanted to make the school better too. You can all do your bit by passing on your ideas and helping them to do a really good job.

John Messer

Lead inspector