

Exning Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124544
Local Authority	SUFFOLK LA
Inspection number	314956
Inspection dates	1–2 November 2007
Reporting inspector	John Godwood

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	88
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Bimson
Headteacher	Mrs Angela Covey
Date of previous school inspection	15 September 2003
School address	Oxford Street Exning Newmarket Suffolk CB8 7EW
Telephone number	01638 600123
Fax number	01638 600124

Age group	4–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school is much smaller than average. It is popular and takes some pupils from outside its immediate catchment area, but it has decreased in size due to changes in the local population.

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. Pupils' attainment on entry to the Reception class is in line with national expectations. The percentage of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average, as is the percentage with a statement of special educational need. These numbers have increased in recent years. The proportion of pupils who come from minority ethnic backgrounds or who speak English as an additional language is much smaller than average.

Over the past year the school has had some long-term staff absence.

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. Its friendly atmosphere and good provision enable pupils to enjoy their education and achieve well. It has a strong community ethos. The adults care for pupils well and provide good support for those with particular needs. They communicate well with parents, who are very appreciative of what the school offers. One parent's comment was typical, 'We have been impressed with the caring attitude towards children and the quick, positive response to any concerns.' Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They show a strong commitment to the school and are usually very considerate to one another. Attendance and behaviour are good. Many pupils contribute positively to the school and wider community through their actions and their responsibilities. Parents agree that their children are given a good start to their education.

Pupils make good progress and attain above average standards. They get off to a good start in the Foundation Stage, and, by the end of Year 2, are above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards in Year 4 are also above average. Progress in Key Stage 2 has improved in each of the past three years. It remains, however, less rapid than progress in Key Stage 1.

Teaching and learning are good, but not consistently so. Teachers plan work carefully to match pupils' abilities. Pupils enjoy lessons because they are engaged actively and are encouraged to use their initiative. They work well with others. Teaching assistants provide good support for those with learning difficulties. Pupils have learning targets for each lesson, and find these helpful. In a minority of lessons, however, pupils do not link their work well enough to the targets or get enough feedback on whether they have met them, and hence their activity is less well focused. The school provides a good range of subjects and other activities. Subject plans are adjusted effectively on the basis of good assessment and guidance to meet pupils' individual needs. Teachers' planning is becoming increasingly creative, which makes lessons more interesting and stimulates pupils' creativity. Teachers are beginning to link learning in different subjects. However, pupils in Key Stage 2 do not have enough opportunities to consolidate and deepen their literacy and numeracy through applying them in other subjects.

The school's success is due to good leadership and management. The headteacher provides enthusiasm and a clear direction based on the school's values. Good teamwork among the teachers and support staff has minimised the impact of long-term staff absence. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. This is seen particularly in the work of the subject coordinators, who monitor and lead their subjects well, and in the improved systems for monitoring pupils' progress and setting them targets. The staff have an accurate knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses and take well planned action that has led to higher standards in writing and steadily improving achievement. Governors oversee the school's work effectively. The school provides good value for money and has good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Through good links with parents and the pre-school settings, children settle quickly and are ready to learn. They make good progress because effective planning enables them to gain skills through all their activities. There is a good balance of structured and free activity. Children's interests are incorporated into each topic, which increases their enjoyment and their independence. Assessment is regular and used in planning new targets. Resources have improved

significantly over the past year, although the outdoor area is still being developed. By the end of the Foundation Stage, children's achievements are above national expectations, although their writing and calculation skills are closer to average.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve progress in Key Stage 2 through giving pupils more opportunities to develop their literacy and numeracy skills in their learning of other subjects.
- Make teaching more consistently good or better by ensuring that learning and assessment activities enable pupils to understand their targets and have feedback on how far they reach them.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress in the Foundation Stage, and by the time they enter Year 1 are above average in most areas of their learning. They continue to make good progress through the rest of the school, although progress is faster in Key Stage 1 than in Key Stage 2.

Year 2 test results are above average in reading, writing and mathematics. The 2007 results showed a distinct improvement in writing, which had been a weak area in 2006. The school is aware that boys do less well than girls, and has made changes to its approach to literacy that are beginning to have a positive impact.

Progress in Years 3 and 4 has improved steadily over the past three years. Pupils sustain their high standards, which by the end of Year 4 are above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and make good progress. The few pupils with English as an additional language achieve as well as others.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school is a strong, supportive community and hence pupils are happy and enjoy learning. They relate well to one another and to adults. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. It is promoted well through assemblies, an ethos of mutual respect, and teachers' encouragement to reflect on their own learning.

Pupils usually act safely and are considerate of others' feelings. They have a good understanding of how to keep healthy. Behaviour is good, although a few pupils with behavioural difficulties find concentration difficult in some lessons. Attendance is above average, reflecting pupils' enjoyment of school. Pupils feel at home in their school community and take on responsibilities well, for example as monitors, class helpers or school councillors. Their good personal qualities and academic skills give them a good grounding for middle school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall, but not always consistently good. Teachers plan well structured lessons, with tasks that are well matched to pupils' varied abilities. All lessons have learning targets, which teachers outline clearly and refer to during the lesson. A common

strength is that pupils are involved actively and expected to use their initiative, which promotes their enjoyment and their independence. Pupils respond well when discussing ideas in pairs or evaluating others' work. They make good use of resources such as laptops or video cameras. Teachers manage behaviour effectively, using positive encouragement. Teaching assistants provide good support for pupils with learning difficulties or other needs.

In a minority of weaker lessons, the activities are not matched closely enough to the learning targets, so that although pupils are busy, their work is not well focused, which sometimes results in a few pupils losing concentration. Marking includes helpful comments, but these are not always expressed clearly enough for pupils to understand their next steps.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Learning activities are planned carefully and promote pupils' enjoyment and their achievement. Provision for literacy and numeracy have been improved systematically and are good. Increasingly subjects are linked together, which makes learning more meaningful. Teachers plan creatively and develop pupils' creativity. However, older pupils do not yet have enough opportunities to consolidate and deepen their literacy and numeracy skills through applying them in learning other subjects. Computers and other electronic equipment are used flexibly to support learning many subjects.

The curriculum is adjusted well to meet pupils' individual needs, with additional support provided on the basis of regular assessments. Pupils with learning difficulties have clear targets and appropriate programmes to meet them. There is satisfactory provision for gifted and talented pupils. Pupils' learning is extended well through regular visitors and visits. For a small school, there is a good range of extra-curricular activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Teachers and other adults create a caring community and respond consistently well to pupils' needs. Procedures for safeguarding pupils and ensuring health and safety are rigorous. The school is inclusive and provides good support for pupils who have learning difficulties or other needs. Teaching assistants play a key role in providing additional support. Good use is made of specialist services when needed. The school has developed a strong relationship with parents, who appreciate the opportunities to participate in their children's learning. Very good links with the pre-school settings and middle schools ensure pupils have a smooth transition.

Teachers regularly assess pupils' attainment and monitor their progress. This is an important improvement since the last inspection and a key factor in the recent rise in writing standards. Target setting is generally used well to guide pupils' learning, both within each lesson and over longer periods of time.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides a clear vision and a passion that guides and motivates the staff. Teachers and support staff share a strong sense of common purpose. As a result, the school has coped well with the added pressure of long-term staff absence and minimised the impact

on pupils. Subject coordinators are expected and empowered to take a lead in monitoring and developing their subjects, which is a further key improvement since the last inspection. The headteacher has established a culture that is reflective and self-critical. Planning is based on an accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses and involves all staff in establishing clear priorities. Teaching has improved through regular monitoring, coaching and training. These factors have led to good improvement since the last inspection.

Governors provide good expertise and links with the community. They are involved in planning and reviewing the school's work. They provide good support with the finances and building developments.

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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 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	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	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	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?	2
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

5 November 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Exning Primary School, Exning, Newmarket, CB8 7EW

I very much enjoyed visiting your school. Thank you for your friendly welcome and for sharing your thoughts with me.

You told me that the school is happy and safe. I could see that this is true. You usually behave well and are kind to each other. The teachers and other staff take good care of you. Many of you help each other and the school as monitors, classroom helpers and road safety officers. The school council does a good job in discussing ideas for improving the school and raising funds for charity.

You enjoy most of your lessons because the teachers make them fun and you have lots of activities to help you learn. You are good at thinking up your own ideas and you work well in pairs. You told me that you find your targets helpful. I have asked the teachers to make sure you always understand the targets and get enough feedback on whether you reach them

The youngest children make a good start in Robins Class. You also make good progress in the other classes and do well in tests. I am pleased to see that writing has improved recently in all classes. I have asked the teachers to help you get even better at using your literacy and maths skills when you are learning other subjects.

Mrs Covey and the other teachers run the school well. They work very hard to make sure you are happy and to keep improving the school.

I know that you are pleased to attend the school. I agree that it is a good school. It has improved recently in several ways. I think that it will continue to improve. You can help by working hard to keep it a happy place and to meet your targets. I wish you well with that.

Yours sincerely

John Godwood

Lead inspector