

Freeman Community Primary

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124612
Local Authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	314983
Inspection dates	24–25 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Nick Butt

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	147
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr M Brenig-Jones
Headteacher	Mrs C Whyte
Date of previous school inspection	16 March 2004
School address	Church Road Stowupland Suffolk IP14 4BQ
Telephone number	01449 612067
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Age group	3–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This small village school serves a community of mixed housing. It caters for pupils from Nursery to Year 4. Almost all of the pupils are of White British backgrounds. A third come from outside the immediate catchment area by parental choice. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is low. The proportion of pupils who need extra support with their learning is broadly average. Many of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties. The school has the Activemark award for promoting physical education. There have been several changes of staff in the past 18 months, including the appointment of a new headteacher. Attainment on entry is generally below nationally expected levels.

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 that provides an effective education for all its pupils. Parents welcome the many improvements since the last inspection, and the new headteacher has continued to build upon these successes. One said, 'I think the school is everything and more that a school should be.' Pupils make good progress because the teaching is good and the curriculum interests and excites them. Standards are above average at the end of Year 2 and Year 4, and have risen faster than the national trend over recent years. The school's capacity to improve is good.

The headteacher has promoted a reflective culture and a strong sense of teamwork. Her calm purposeful approach has kept up the momentum of improvement. She has won the respect and support of the whole school community. However, her teaching load is too great and does not give her enough time to develop her long-term strategic vision for the school. She is ably supported by the deputy headteacher, who does not routinely have management time either to perform her duties. The impact of leadership and management on standards and achievement is good because effective structures are in place for reviewing the school's work. Staff are keen to hone their skills, and receive high quality training to refine their classroom practice. Teaching assistants, in particular, have benefited from the policy of giving each a different area of specialism so that they can provide pupils with consistently good support. As a consequence, care is good. All pupils are given individual targets in writing and mathematics, but not all can remember them. There is some variation in the extent to which staff refer pupils to their targets, so that they know how well they are meeting them.

Teaching and learning are good because teachers focus on what pupils need to know and understand, and find interesting ways to hold their attention. They use questioning well to develop pupils' thinking and conduct lessons at a lively pace. Occasionally, the work does not challenge the more able pupils, or suit the needs of pupils who are struggling. This is because the teaching does not take full account of pupils' levels of attainment. The curriculum is good and provides many opportunities for pupils to extend their writing across subjects. It includes all pupils and enables those with moderate learning difficulties or disabilities to make good progress. There is a wide range of clubs for pupils to enjoy, but they do not go on enough educational visits.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They behave well and support one another as sports leaders and friendship buddies. They have a good understanding of living healthily. A pupil said, 'You go to the gym to make your muscles stronger.' Pupils learn about keeping safe on the roads through cycling training sessions. They enjoy school and attendance is good. They are working with the community to plant an oak wood at the end of the school's enormous field. Pupils leave the school with a good set of basic skills and are well-equipped for the move to middle school.

Subject leadership is much more effective than it was at the time of the last inspection, when it was deemed unsatisfactory. Leaders have a good grasp of the strengths and priorities for development in their areas of responsibility and monitor pupils' performance closely. Governors are committed to supporting the school, and are now monitoring its progress more effectively as they fulfil their statutory responsibilities.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children start at the Nursery with particularly poor speech and language skills. However, because staff take every opportunity to encourage children to talk about what they are doing and there is a stimulating range of exciting activities to promote children's learning, they make good progress overall. Teaching is consistently good in both the Nursery and the Reception class and the children get a good mixture of adult-led and child-initiated activities. Nevertheless, the Reception classroom is too small and lacks an adequate outdoor area or canopy for inclement weather and this inhibits children's freedom to pursue their specific interests. Staff use spontaneous observations to gain an idea of how well children are progressing, but the process is not systematic enough to enable them to accelerate the rate of learning even faster.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure all teaching sets tasks to suit pupils' abilities and the work challenges and develops their learning.
- Frequently remind pupils of their targets for improvement and ensure that they know how well they are meeting them.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Whilst children make good progress in the Foundation Stage from relatively low starting points, many do not reach the expected early learning goals by the time they enter Year 1. Pupils achieve well in Years 1 and 2, so that by the end of Year 2 standards are above average in reading, writing and mathematics. This has been maintained for several years. Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 3 and 4, leaving the school with above average standards. All groups of pupils achieve well, including those with moderate learning difficulties. The school has evidence to show that the longer pupils spend in school the more the gap between how well boys and girls are doing narrows. This is because the lively curriculum engages all pupils equally well, and especially suits boys in developing their writing skills.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, social and moral development is good. They have a strong sense of right and wrong and assemblies reinforce the school's positive values. Their cultural development is satisfactory. There are stand-alone events that help pupils appreciate other cultures such as World Book Day, and they are establishing links with a school in Kenya, but these events are not fully reflected in the curriculum or resources. The school council have been involved in making lunchtimes more sociable affairs, aided by the sports leaders, who have been especially trained in organising games for the younger children. Pupils have a strong presence in the village, helping out with the Best Village competition, and singing to the elderly. By the end of Year 4, pupils are starting to develop a love of learning and are becoming independent and confident young citizens.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers use a good range of strategies to engage pupils in their learning such as talking with a partner and role-play. They plan lessons that are imaginative and enjoyable and have a clear purpose. Year 4 pupils returned from assembly to discover their classroom had become a crime scene, with mud on the floor, books asunder and a very sheepish looking teaching assistant. Who had purloined the bar of chocolate? Pupils set about writing reports and drawing up hypotheses. The arrival of a visiting police officer to fingerprint everybody proved most helpful in establishing where the guilt lay. Teachers make good use of technology including interactive whiteboards and laptop computers to involve pupils in their learning. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' good progress, especially when working with groups and individuals. Occasionally teachers do not take sufficient account of what pupils know and understand to set work that challenges them. When this happens, the pace of learning slows.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The varied curriculum takes a thematic approach that adds to pupils' enjoyment. Two recent successful projects include Florence Nightingale in years 1 and 2 and World War Two in years 3 and 4. Pupils were proudly able to recite Miss Nightingale's dates, and add facts such as, 'She had a pet owl!' The provision for literacy and numeracy is good. The introduction of a new phonics scheme has helped boys in particular to become more confident readers. Technology is used well across the curriculum. Attractive displays of artwork create a colourful learning environment. A range of clubs are well attended. Special events and themed weeks are popular. During the inspection, a teddy bears' picnic in honour of Paddington Bear, was a great success. Pupils rarely visit places of educational interest, limiting the curriculum and their personal and social development. A good number of visitors come to them, including two former evacuees, who recounted wartime experiences to bring history alive.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides a good variety of support that meets the full range of pupils' needs, including the use of a gym trail before school each day to improve pupils' coordination. There is good support for pupils with learning difficulties, such as those with speech and language needs. The school meets all safeguarding requirements. Consistently helpful marking of writing shows pupils how they can improve. All pupils have targets, but only those in Year 2 and Year 4 can readily recall them. Teachers do not consistently indicate when targets have been set, or indeed when they have been met.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

A new tracking system put in place by the headteacher effectively measures pupils' performance against national benchmarks, and highlights any pupils at risk of not reaching the expected standards for their age. However, it does not easily show progress from their starting points.

Leaders use the information they gain about performance to form an accurate picture of how well the school is doing and to set priorities for improvement. A regular programme of monitoring measures the effectiveness of the provision. Lesson observations tend to be too descriptive and do not evaluate in sufficient depth the particular strengths and areas to develop. Action plans are concise and well written. Parents are full of praise for the school. One, speaking for many, wrote, 'My children run to school and have done so ever since they started.' Governors take a great interest in the school and have become more efficient in their work. They join staff for training days and visit to check how things are going. Governors do not currently have a formal structure for recording their findings, apart from verbal feedback at meetings.

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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

26 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Freeman Community Primary School, Stowupland, IP14 4BQ.

Thank you very much for making me so welcome at your school. I did enjoy my visit. I agree it is a good school. Here are some of the things that are good about it.

- Those of you in the Nursery and the Reception class get a good start to your education.
- You make good progress and reach above average standards.
- You enjoy school and are very seldom away.
- The lessons are interesting and enjoyable.
- Your behaviour is good and you help one another well.
- There are plenty of clubs for you to enjoy at lunchtime and after school.
- The school cares for you well, especially if you are having difficulties.
- The school is well led by the headteacher and the deputy headteacher.

You all have targets to help you to improve, but some of you have forgotten what they are. I have asked your teachers to remind you so that you can tell when you have met them and are ready for some new ones. Most of you say the work is just right for you, but occasionally it is either too easy or too hard. Mrs Whyte is going to make sure that lessons challenge you to perform to your best, so that the school can get even better.

Thank you once again for your help. I do like your wonderful grounds. It was exciting joining you for the teddy bears' picnic.

My very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mr. N. Butt Lead inspector