

Sir Robert Hitcham's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124775
Local Authority	SUFFOLK LA
Inspection number	315054
Inspection date	17 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Alan Lemon

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	364
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Graham Owen
Headteacher	Mrs Jenny Elphick
Date of previous school inspection	28 February 2005
School address	College Road Framlingham Woodbridge Suffolk IP13 9EP
Telephone number	01728 723354
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Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The following issues were investigated: the pupils' achievement, with a particular focus on mathematics, teaching and learning, and the school's leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from the observation of lessons, the pupils' work, discussions with them, members of the senior leadership team, three governors and a scrutiny of school documents and parent questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own evaluations, as given in its self-evaluation form, were not justified.

Description of the school

The school is larger than most primary schools and the great majority of its pupils live in circumstances more favourable than average. Pupils are from Framlingham and five surrounding villages. Almost all the pupils are White British, a few are from various minority ethnic backgrounds, and nine are at an early stage of English language acquisition. The proportion of pupils identified by the school as having learning difficulties is below average. The Foundation Stage has 66 children including 25 in the Nursery. When they first start school the attainment of most, but not all children, is slightly below the level expected for their age.

The school has a Healthy School award and is in a Schools Sports Partnership.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Sir Robert Hitcham's is a good school. In several ways the school is exemplary, although it needs to raise pupils' achievement in mathematics further before it can be judged a wholly outstanding school. It is popular with parents as a choice for their children's education. The majority of parents give wholehearted praise for the school's work in supporting their children's progress and personal development. A few parents have some reservations about the school, mostly regarding the level of supervision for pupils at playtimes, but inspection evidence shows their concerns are not well-founded. The school's own surveys of parents give it an accurate assessment of their views and it takes appropriate action in response to concerns.

All of the staff share a common sense of purpose and work determinedly to meet the high expectations of the headteacher and senior leaders. Governors are closely involved in the life of the school and committed to its continuing success. They manage their responsibilities effectively and stay well informed about the school's work. The exceptionally good features, including the school's ethos, the curriculum and the care, guidance and support of pupils are the result of strong, clear leadership.

Pupils' academic standards are currently above average, overall and achievement is good. Children get off to a flying start in the Foundation Stage. In the Nursery and Reception Year, children make good progress, achieving or exceeding most of the early learning goals. Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 1 and 2 and by the end of Key Stage 1, the standards reached in reading and mathematics are above average and average in writing. By the end of Key Stage 2, standards are above average, overall. In English, they are exceptionally high: a reflection of the school's outstanding provision in literacy. Standards improve in science between Key Stages 1 and 2 and are well above average. However, standards are not as high in mathematics. Over Key Stage 2, pupils achieve extraordinarily well in English, make good progress in science and satisfactory progress in mathematics. All pupils are supported well, particularly through work planned to match their capabilities and learning needs, and, as a result, there is no significant difference in their progress.

Literacy is taught with consummate expertise and considerable confidence throughout the school. As a result, English lessons are exceptionally well planned and objectives for learning are made especially clear. The rapport between teachers and pupils fully engages their attention and commands very good efforts. Pupils are excited by the challenges and find their tasks interesting. The approaches to learning add much to encouraging pupils' positive responses. They thoroughly enjoy sharing their work, animatedly discussing their ideas, which stimulates the achievement of high standards. The expert teaching of information and communication technology (ICT) shares much of the positive qualities found in literacy and as a result high standards are achieved. While sound, some mathematics lessons lack the verve found in literacy and pupils' engagement with the work and their efforts to achieve are at a lower level compared with what they are like in other subjects.

School leaders have been aware for some time of the need to strengthen mathematics provision and pupils' proficiency in oral and mental calculations if achievement is to improve but despite their efforts to do so, there has only been a little headway made. A comprehensive monitoring exercise carried out recently has prompted the school to give more time to mathematics, re-organise how pupils are grouped for teaching and buy new resources. However, not all of these initiatives are embedded and it is too early to assess their impact on raising achievement.

The curriculum is exceptionally broad in providing learning opportunities that interest pupils, which leads to them enjoying school thoroughly. Clearly, there are real strengths in literacy and ICT but also in the arts, music in particular. Pupils' awareness of a healthy lifestyle and staying safe are actively promoted. The knowledge and appreciation of different cultures and people's circumstances throughout the world, forms a vital part of the curriculum. Pupils' work and activities are extremely well enriched by visits, visitors, special events and lots of after-school clubs and sports. The curriculum meets a principal aim of the school of producing well-rounded individuals. As a result of this, their good achievement and excellent personal development, pupils are exceptionally well prepared for their move to secondary education.

A strong and well-defined Christian ethos provides pupils with excellent spiritual, moral and social development. Pupils attend well and their behaviour is extremely good. They make friends easily. They happily work together and help each other. Pupils really appreciate the personal benefits they gain from what they have learnt about a healthy lifestyle and staying safe. They willingly suggest fund-raising ideas and support charitable activities for good causes at home and abroad. The school council plays an active part in school improvement and local developments such as helping decide on play equipment for the village recreational area. Pupils self-confidence grows from the strong pastoral care the school provides and its arrangements for safeguarding them are robust. Regular homework, the encouragement of parents to support their children's learning and helpful marking are a positive contribution to pupils' progress. They appreciate having targets of literacy and numeracy and their teacher's advice on how to improve their work.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Good accommodation and resources for the Foundation Stage provides strong support to children's play activities. Teachers and teaching assistants are skilled in encouraging children's involvement in a wide range of enjoyable and challenging activities in the classroom and the playground. A particularly good feature is how nursery children progress effectively from their self-initiated activities to more structured learning opportunities in Reception. Across the Foundation Stage, communication, language and literacy are promoted effectively. Children make good progress towards all of the early learning goals. They improve their social skills and make good friendships. This assists them in becoming self-confident and developing positive attitudes to learning. Children achieve well by the end of the Foundation Stage with most working within the standards expected and some beyond this in all the areas of learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the teaching of mathematics to enable pupils to make greater progress.

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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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

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?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

18 April 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sir Robert Hitcham's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School,
Framlingham IP13 9EP

I greatly appreciated your welcome and friendliness when I visited your school recently. I thoroughly enjoyed spending time with you and the staff. I would like to say a special thank you to the members of the School Council for telling me about their work and what they thought about school.

From my visit I found out that you have a good school. This is because of the hard work and dedication of staff and governors in making the school successful. It is also due to your contribution by attending well and being really well behaved. I was very impressed by how friendly you are towards each other and how well you all work together. The staff support and take care of you exceptionally well, so you develop the important aspects of growing up such as a healthy lifestyle, staying safe and making a positive contribution to the community.

I thought nearly all of the work and activities your school provides were exceptionally good. The standards you achieve in your work are often impressive, especially in English and ICT. Your progress in these subjects is excellent, although in mathematics it could be even better.

Your school is outstanding and in many respects and the staff and governors are very committed to your school being one of the best. I have asked your headteacher and the staff to carry on the work started some time ago to improve your mathematics lessons. You can help by working as hard as you can and make as much progress as possible.