

St Edmund's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124779
Local Authority	SUFFOLK LA
Inspection number	315056
Inspection dates	20–21 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Jill Bavin

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	103
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Clare Valori
Headteacher	Mr James Leese
Date of previous school inspection	8 March 2004
School address	St Mary's Street Bungay Suffolk NR35 1AY
Telephone number	01986 892502
Fax number	01986 892502

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

St Edmund's is smaller than most primary schools. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and very few speak English as an additional language. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is lower than average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is lower than average, although there is a higher than usual percentage of pupils with statements of special educational need. Attainment on entry varies widely but is most commonly broadly average. Mobility rates are lower than nationally. Nevertheless, the movement of one or two pupils to or from the school towards the end of Key Stage 2 often has a significant impact on results because year groups are so small.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Edmund's Primary is a good school which provides good value for money. Leadership, management and governance are good which encourages a culture of reflection and accountability. The school's performance is scrutinized, accurately evaluated and analysed, providing the basis for continued development. Consequently the school sets realistic but challenging targets for pupils' achievements. This has resulted in good improvement over the last three years. The capacity for further improvement is therefore also good. Teaching, learning and academic guidance are good. Well planned lessons ensure that all pupils learn key literacy, numeracy and technology skills. Plenty of opportunities for pupils to work together develop their sociability. These strengths ensure that all pupils make good progress regardless of their ability or the point at which they join the school. Consequently pupils are well prepared for the future.

There has been an upward trend in Key Stage 1 assessments over the last three years, and consistently above average results in national tests at the end of Key Stage 2. In 2007 Key Stage 1 results were just above average. Performance in writing at the end of Year 2, while satisfactory, is not as strong as in reading, mathematics and science. The school has rightly identified less consistent challenge in writing as the explanation. There is often a vast range of ability within very small year groups. The school works very effectively both to challenge higher attaining pupils and pupils with particular difficulties. Partnerships with other professionals are strong. The use of external expertise and a flexible response to pupils' difficulties are strengths.

Strong pastoral care ensures that personal development is good. Pupils are justifiably proud of how well they work and play together. They understand the principles of staying safe and keeping healthy. They enjoy school and attendance is very good. Pupils' contribution to the school and local community are good. They take responsibilities seriously. Older pupils are especially supportive of younger children, and so they feel safe at school. Pupils develop a mature approach to considering how fortunate they are compared with others. Discussions about how to live a simple and responsible life are made relevant with activities such as, '50p Soup Recipes'. Events such as these contribute to the good curriculum by successfully linking subjects to add interest and enjoyment. The all-weather outside surface greatly enriches pupils' experience, and sport is a significant feature of school life. The contribution of Britain's culturally diverse society is not emphasised in all subjects, so pupils do not fully appreciate its extent or importance. Parents appreciate the quality of music in the school and much good art work is achieved.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Good teaching, focusing on key skills in the Foundation Stage means children enjoy suitable activities and learn effectively. Strong teamwork between the teacher and teaching assistant provides children with consistently positive messages about how to behave so they rapidly feel secure and grow in confidence. Good planning focuses on all the required areas of learning and on using assessment well to meet individual needs. Consequently children of different backgrounds and abilities, including those with learning difficulties, make good progress across the whole curriculum. While children join school with a wide range of skills, by the end of the year above average numbers reach expected goals. Together the headteacher and class teacher

provide effective leadership for the Foundation Stage. They acknowledge that the very small outside learning area is not used routinely to support learning across all areas of the curriculum. Parents value the provision and their attendance at open lessons is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the consistency of challenge for pupils at Key Stage 1 so they make equally good progress in writing as in other subjects.
- Plan regular outside activities to enhance learning across all areas of the Foundation Stage curriculum.
- Ensure that planning for all subjects reflects cultural diversity in contemporary Britain, so pupils increase their awareness of its extent and importance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress. National tests indicate that by the end of Year 6 year on year standards are above average in English, mathematics and science. Higher attaining pupils do particularly well. Several reasons for this are apparent. They include consistently high quality teaching in Years 5 and 6 and the school's success in planning to meet the needs of all groups of pupils within a class. At Key Stage 1 standards are just above average. Standards in writing by the end of Year 2 are a current focus in the school for improved achievement. Pupils with learning difficulties achieve well. Several reach the expected level for their age or make good progress to get close to this. This is because their needs are identified early and specific programmes are selected to address areas of difficulty. The school meets the needs of the very few pupils with English as an additional language effectively, so their achievement is good. Displays of pupils' art work indicate that they reach a good standard of drawing for their age.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are commendably mature when reflecting on important issues, such as living simply and responsibly. Consequently, fund-raising for various charities is undertaken with a well developed appreciation of how their own lives compare with those who are less fortunate. Their work in and enjoyment of art and music are good and they have a good understanding of their shared and familiar culture which incorporates their Catholic faith. Their understanding of cultures other than their own in modern Britain is limited because it is not routinely planned in all subjects. Pupils enjoy school very much and attendance is very good. They establish very good relationships with their teachers and with one another. Pupils readily identify that they, 'all get on really well' and can easily, 'sort out a little fret'. This positive sense of community within school contributes to their willingness to assume responsibility. This is evident in the harmonious pairing of 'buddies' whereby older pupils help younger pupils at lunchtime or in Church. The school council initiates activities, such as 'talent shows', which extend the school's experience of community.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. Pupils are well motivated because they like their teachers and teaching assistants, and because work is planned well to keep them actively involved. Team work between teachers and teaching assistants is good. Teaching assistants make a positive contribution to pupils' learning, especially those pupils who find learning difficult. Teachers make good use of their knowledge of pupils to modify activities and ensure that all pupils are challenged well. When teaching is outstanding the level of challenge is excellent. This was exemplified in a Year 5 / 6 mathematics class. Two gifted pupils worked diligently to solve a problem independently, higher attaining pupils rapidly discovered the relationship between fractions and percentages, while pupils with difficulties used laptops to identify equivalent fractions. When teaching does not quite meet the customary good standards, it is usually because the class spends a little too long together before working in groups.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum has improved significantly since the previous inspection. More time is allocated to subjects such as music and art. Improved resources mean that pupils have far more opportunities to work with computers. There is a good breadth of activities available to all pupils who often cite art or physical education as favourite subjects. A good range of sports activities contribute to pupils willingly embracing healthy lifestyles. Particularly popular is a new sport of 'tchuk-ball'. Special projects linking subjects, such as recent work on 'the terracotta army' are very popular and enrich pupils' learning. While such work increases pupils' understanding of cultures elsewhere in the world, subjects are not routinely planned to emphasise the contribution of diverse cultures represented in modern Britain. A well structured programme of personal, social and health education helps pupils to feel safe and secure. There is a good range of effective programmes for pupils with particular needs which enable the school to provide precise help for individuals or small groups.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Adults in the school are fully committed to ensuring that health and safety matters and risk assessments are rigorously carried out. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are robust. Pupils' behaviour is managed positively and sensitively. The school goes the extra mile in supporting those pupils who are most emotionally vulnerable, with the result that they make considerable gains in modifying their behaviour, as well as good academic progress. The school works very effectively with other professionals in order to support all pupils, but this is particularly evident for pupils who find learning difficult.

Academic guidance is good. Teachers routinely share learning intentions with pupils who have ready access to individual targets. Occasionally, opportunities for pupils to review their learning at the end of lessons are too rushed. Nevertheless, pupils say that they receive the help they need, but not too readily, 'if they think you can do it really'.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher, ably supported by the senior teacher and governors, provides a strong steer for continued school improvement. Monitoring and evaluation are frequent and effective. Consequently the senior management team, governors and subject leaders know their school well. They are a reflective team with an astute understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for development.

A key feature in the leadership of the school is the strategic deployment of staff, playing to their strengths. The school accurately provides staff with support where necessary. A positive outcome is that subject leaders are embracing increased responsibilities for taking the school forward and have a good understanding of how to do this. The senior management team acknowledges that the next step is for all staff to be equally independent and proactive in their leadership roles. The higher level teaching assistant provides valued support for the senior management team by being the first 'port of call' for other teaching assistants. A small minority of parents lack confidence in the leadership of the school. Nevertheless, the vast majority are fulsome in their appreciation of its work, describing the school as 'fantastic', 'excellent' and 'exceptional'.

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

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

22 November 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of St Edmund's, Bungay, NR35 1AY

I really enjoyed meeting you when I visited your school recently. Thank you for sharing your work and your ideas with me so sensibly. I agree with you that you go to a good, friendly school where learning is fun. Here are some of the good things I found about your school.

- You work hard and make good progress in English, mathematics and science.
- You behave well in lessons and at break times, and you take good care of each other.
- You are interested in your work because teachers make sure the challenge is just right for you and you are actively involved.
- There are lots of interesting activities for you in all subjects and sometimes through special projects, like your recent work on China.
- You sing beautifully and do some really good art work.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are good at letting you know what you do well and how to improve.
- You trust the adults in your school so you feel happy and secure.
- The headteacher and senior teacher lead the school well so they are always working with the other adults to find ways of making things even better.

I have asked the headteacher and staff to make sure that children in Class 2 have chances to write even more. You can help by coming up with lots of ideas. Sometimes children in Class 1 spend too much time indoors. I have asked adults to plan more outside activities for you.

Although you are very grown up in many ways, you are not so confident in your understanding of people in Britain who come from backgrounds and cultures that are different from your own. I have asked your teachers to help you with this.

I hope you always enjoy learning so much. Thank you again for helping me to understand your school.

Jill Bavin

Lead inspector