

St Botolph's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124758
Local Authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	319531
Inspection dates	29–30 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Patricia Cox

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	233
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Susan Goodwin
Headteacher	Mrs Linda Foxton
Date of previous school inspection	5 February 2007
School address	Back Hills Botesdale Diss Norfolk IP22 1DW
Telephone number	01379 890181
Fax number	01379 890213

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Almost all pupils at St Botolph's are of White British background and all have English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than average, as is the proportion with statements of special educational need. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is lower than the national average. The children's attainment on entry to the school varies from year to year but is similar to national expectations.

When the school was inspected in February 2007, it was given a Notice to Improve because leadership and management were inadequate. A new headteacher was appointed on a fixed term contract shortly after the inspection. She is due to leave at the end of this term and a permanent headteacher is to take up the post in September. The deputy headteacher was appointed in October 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13(5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools (HMCI) is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. The headteacher has been resolute and tireless in driving forward developments. The deputy headteacher provides good support and has made great strides in developing her expertise. As a result of good guidance, the staff are developing their leadership and management skills, although some are at a very early stage. Many parents wrote to express their appreciation of the progress the school has made, for example, 'Since the new head has taken over, so much has changed for the better.' Many of the staff echoed this view. Another parent noted that the staff, 'have worked extremely hard to take on board new initiatives...' They now mostly operate as a strong, focused team, keen to improve, so that progress since the previous inspection has been rapid and the school is poised well to improve further.

Pupils respond well to the school's strong ethos of care and respect for others, feel welcomed and want to learn. They enjoy school and show good attitudes to learning and to each other. Attendance is good, although, in spite of the school's good work, some parents still take their children on holiday during term time. The good relationships between pupils and with adults are a marked feature of most lessons. Pupils are polite and behave well; they respond particularly well when the teaching is good, as it is with increasing frequency because there are higher expectations of what can be achieved. The proportion of good, and sometimes outstanding, teaching is rising, particularly in Years 5 and 6 and the unsatisfactory teaching has been eliminated. Teachers capture pupils' attention with their own enthusiasm and subject knowledge. They set out clearly what pupils are to learn and help them to recognise when they are successful. However, there is inconsistency between classes and there are times when the pace drops, so that learning is not as rapid as it could be. There is developing use of assessment information to plan further work for the range of age and ability in the class, although this is not always accurate. Consequently, the tasks set are sometimes at an inappropriate level, especially for the more able.

Teaching is guided by a curriculum that is undergoing a series of reviews and initiatives to ensure that it fully meets pupils' needs. Teachers are beginning to highlight links between subjects to make learning more meaningful, although there is still work to do, particularly in the use of information and communication technology (ICT). It does not feature enough in planning other subjects, nor is it threaded consistently through some lessons. Because the school was focusing particularly on improving achievement in English and mathematics, standards in those subjects are rising. Science has had less attention, especially on planning to ensure that pupils build consistently on their skills and knowledge. Nevertheless, progress is satisfactory overall through the school, and accelerates in Years 5 and 6. Those who find learning more difficult or need support do as well as other pupils, and the school is developing strategies to support the most able in broadening and extending their knowledge and understanding.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children settle well into the Nursery and enjoy the activities provided. Close links with the local playgroup aid this process well. Through careful support and appropriate activities, children develop confidence and concentration throughout the Foundation Stage. The staff plan activities that are soundly matched to their needs and abilities, although there is sometimes insufficient

challenge for the more able. Teaching is satisfactory and staff place a strong emphasis on developing their basic literacy and numeracy skills. There is a balance of activities that are led by adults and those designed for the children to explore and learn independently. However, the independent activities are not always linked closely enough with the focus of the lesson. By the time children leave Reception, most have reached the levels expected for their age.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to improve pupils' achievement, especially in science and for the more able, by ensuring that teachers use the information they have about attainment to meet the needs of the full range of ability.
- Build on the work already started to develop the leadership and management skills of all staff, so that they take full responsibility for standards in their subjects.
- Extend the richness of the curriculum throughout the school by developing links between subjects, especially the use of ICT.

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 their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

In recent years, standards have mostly been similar to the national average in Years 2 and 6. This was the case in 2007, although the overall figure masked the variations in Year 6; standards in English were above average and the school's targets were met, but not in mathematics, where standards were below average. This year, gaps in pupils' mathematical learning have been identified and eliminated and therefore they have made satisfactory progress from their starting points. The pupils currently in Years 2 and 6 are on course to exceed previous results in the national tests, and may even meet the extremely challenging targets set. Those who have disabilities or find learning more difficult make similar progress to others in their classes. From their start in school, pupils have good speaking skills, and many are very articulate. Most of the younger pupils are not as good at listening, but by Year 6 they respond well to the views of others. The school is about to introduce a new handwriting scheme to tackle the untidiness of many pupils' work.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The opportunities for quiet reflection in assemblies, during visits to church, and within the curriculum contribute well to pupils' growing spiritual awareness. They have a strong sense of right and wrong and are responsive to wider moral and social issues. For example, pupils raise money for charities and take part in environmental projects. They take responsibilities seriously and carry them out well; for example, senior pupils look out for younger or more vulnerable pupils, and some make a good contribution through their membership of the school council. Pupils say they are listened to, and as one said, 'I like the fact that teachers listen to us and things get done.' Pupils are prepared soundly for the next stage of education and their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Most classrooms demonstrate a quiet buzz of purposeful activity. Many teachers use questioning well to promote pupils' thinking and check their understanding. In the best lessons, teachers have a very clear understanding of the level pupils are working at and set challenging and exciting activities to capture their imagination and promote rapid progress. However, on occasion, teachers keep pupils sitting on the carpet too long or allow the boys to dominate lessons. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to lessons, particularly through their support for groups and individuals. Their time is not always used effectively at the beginning and end of lessons. Much of teachers' marking is helpful in showing pupils whether they have achieved the purpose of the lesson but it is inconsistent. It does not always help pupils to know what they need to do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is being adapted well to meet the needs of pupils who require additional support, and strategies to challenge the more able are developing, although at an early stage. Planning is beginning to reflect this but practice is still inconsistent. The school has begun to take more opportunities for problem solving and practical investigations. Work in history, geography, French and religious education contributes well to pupils' appreciation of other cultures, as well as fostering an understanding of the diversity of cultures within their own society. Visits, out-of-school clubs and the contribution of sports providers play a very positive part in pupils' learning and their social and cultural development. Teachers sometimes make good use of interactive white boards in lessons.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

A combination of efficient and consistent school procedures and practice keeps pupils safe and secure, while promoting their independent learning. As a result, pupils' confidence and self-esteem have increased and their attitudes to learning have improved. The coordinated planning and teamwork between all adults are meeting pupils' personal needs effectively. Vulnerable pupils are identified and are carefully monitored to ensure their well-being. There are good partnerships with support agencies that ensure the specific needs of pupils who need additional support are met well. Assessment of pupils' progress is adequate and developing well; it is increasingly accurate and teachers use it to set targets. Many pupils are aware of these targets and the levels they are working at. Teachers are trying out different methods to encourage pupils to judge how well they have learnt in lessons. Most parents rightly report that the communication between home and school is good.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher knows the school extremely well through frequent and rigorous monitoring of all aspects of its work. The local authority has provided very good support, through advice,

guidance and challenge and is promoting the spread of leadership and management expertise. For example, senior staff are being trained to check the quality of teaching and pupils' work. Action taken to bring about improvements has been swift and effective, leading to rapid development. Planning for school improvement identifies all the most important priorities, although it is insufficiently specific about the timings and leadership of projects. Governance is good, under the strong and knowledgeable lead of the chair. Governors work closely with staff and are increasingly involved in supporting and challenging the school. Through good financial management, governors and the headteacher have rapidly eliminated the budget deficit.

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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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	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 disabilities make progress	3

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	1
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 the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
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?	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	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	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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

1 May 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of St Botolph's CofE Primary School, Botesdale, IP22 1DW

Mr Smith and I would like to thank you very much for the way you looked after us when we visited your school this week. We enjoyed our time with you very much, especially our discussions with some of you. I thought you would like to know what we found out. You are good representatives of your school because you behave well and are polite. You get on well together and we were pleased to hear that you enjoy coming to school. You are right to say that the school is getting better and that there are many exciting things to do.

Your teachers take good care of you and work hard to make your lessons interesting. You make the same kind of progress in your work as children in most other schools do, and your targets are helping you to see what you need to be able to do next. It was good to see some of you having a go at using the smiley faces or using your thumbs to say how well you thought you had done in lessons.

There are some things we have asked Mrs Foxton and the teachers to do to carry on improving:

- You can do better than ever, especially those of you who find learning easier. So teachers should make sure that you all have the kind of work you need for your ability. You can help by all trying as hard as you can and by trying to make your work neater.
- The teachers who lead subjects should all be checking how well you are doing and making sure that you do the best you can, especially in science.
- Teachers could link subjects together, so that you use, for example, your literacy and ICT skills more in other subjects.

Our best wishes for the future.

Pat Cox

Lead inspector