

Coates Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110631
Local Authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	325186
Inspection dates	11–12 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Lynne Blakelock

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	157
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	30
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Garry Crackle
Headteacher	Mrs Wendy Martin
Date of previous school inspection	27 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	The Fold Coates Near Whittlesey Peterborough Cambridgeshire PE7 2BP
Telephone number	01733 840 527

Age group	4–11
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Fax number

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than average and serves the fenland village of Coates and two quite isolated rural communities. The large majority are from White British backgrounds and all speak English as their first language. Most live in favourable circumstances. A very small minority has a statement of special educational needs. Overall, a below average proportion has learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, in some year groups, a higher percentage than nationally have specific learning needs. A higher proportion of pupils than found nationally, start or leave the school at other than the expected times. Children enter the Reception class in the Early Years Foundation Stage as soon as they are four years old. The governing body runs a daily breakfast club and after school club.

The school has achieved both Investors in People status and the International Schools award for the second time. It has been awarded the Basic Skills Quality Mark 3. In 2007, it achieved the National Healthy Schools award. It was awarded Activemark in 2006, 2007 and 2008. It holds the Pre-School Learning Alliance Quality accreditation for its work with pre-school children. A pre-school class for children who are between the ages of three and four years is held in the Early Years Foundation Stage area five mornings a week and one afternoon.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This good school provides its pupils with an effective education. The school's accurate understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement and the good impact of measures taken since the last inspection, show its good capacity for further improvement. Effective subject leaders and governors carry out their monitoring roles thoroughly in the school's drive to quicken the rate of pupils' progress in some key areas of their work. Parents are generally very supportive of the quality of education although the headteacher recognises that a number of parents do not feel that the communication between home and school is effective.

The good leadership and management of the school, led well by the headteacher, are demonstrated in the careful planning of its work. A wide range of partnerships strengthen the quality of education. Excellent opportunities for pupils to be involved in school life and in the wider community, and a variety of initiatives to promote their economic well-being lead to a busy school in which pupils feel valued and included. It has led to good behaviour, above-average attendance and pupils' supportive attitude towards others. This leads to good personal development. Pupils' outstanding grasp of the need to adopt a healthy lifestyle and their good knowledge of how to stay safe, are gained through lessons and reinforced in daily school life. Basic to pupils' sense of security and readiness for learning are the effective care, support and guidance provided by the staff, which extends to the breakfast and after-school club. Procedures to keep pupils safe and to provide emotional and learning support for those who find learning harder than most, are effective in promoting their learning and progress. Whilst pupils have targets to work towards, they are not always focused upon enough in lessons and the marking of work does not always tell pupils regularly how to make further progress.

Pupils achieve well from the start of the Early Years Foundation Stage because of the good quality of teaching and learning. Standards vary from year to year because of factors such as the above average mobility of pupils. Attainment at the end of Year 2 is in line with that expected nationally. Year 6 pupils are on track to reach above average standards in 2009 with a larger proportion than last year predicted to reach higher levels in English, mathematics and science. Common strengths in the teaching include positive relationships between staff and pupils and good use of computer-based resources by staff. Teachers' secure knowledge of their subjects and their efforts to make learning interesting encourage pupils to work hard. Their progress is not always as fast as it could be in writing and mathematics because tasks are generally not as challenging as they are in reading and science.

Positive attitudes to lessons and good progress owe much to the good curriculum and in particular, the engaging and relevant nature of many activities, which make learning quite stimulating. Cultural weeks, regular visits and visitors and a focus on music and learning instruments from Year 2, result in an increasingly creative curriculum. Community cohesion is promoted well, supported especially by excellent international partnerships. A good range of after-school clubs allow pupils to discover new talents and to use the skills they learn in the informative personal, social and health education lessons.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Overall, children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with knowledge and skills that are broadly in line with those expected for their age. Many children have spent time in the pre-school

and have made a good start in the six areas of learning. Any shortcomings in children's language, social and communication skills are tackled quickly because of the high priority given to their personal development. They settle happily into school, benefiting from the very caring and supportive environment provided for them along with the growing partnership with parents. Children's welfare is exceptionally well promoted. As a result, children make good progress, many exceeding the learning goals expected for their age. Activities are planned in detail, giving appropriate prominence to the development of language and numeracy skills, with good use made of the outdoor area to enhance all areas of learning. Teaching is consistently challenging, achieving a good balance between staff-led activities and those chosen by the children themselves. Careful assessments are made of children's attainments when they arrive in the Reception class. Thereafter, very detailed assessment records are kept, enabling staff to know exactly where each child is in their learning journey, and where they need to go next. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed, inspired by a leader with limitless energy, dedication and vision for future developments.

What the school should do to improve further

- Quicken the pace of pupils' progress in writing and mathematics by providing a greater level of challenge in their work.
- Give a sharp focus to pupils' targets in all lessons and improve marking so that pupils know what to do raise the standard of their work.
- Strengthen the links with parents by re-establishing and sustaining the formal lines of communication between them and the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 vary from year to year, due to above average mobility and the nature of the small cohorts. However, pupils, including those who find learning more difficult than most, make good progress through the school from their broadly average starting points. Assessment of pupils' work points to them reaching standards in line with the national average at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2009, helped by good teaching and termly assessments in reading, writing and mathematics. The Year 6 pupils' current work shows they are on track to reach challenging targets and above average standards in English, mathematics and science, by the time they leave the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy being at school, as the above average attendance rates over several years testify. Most try their best and experience success within an environment in which they feel happy, safe and secure. Typically, their behaviour is good. Occasionally, however, a few of the older boys can get a bit over-excited at playtimes. Pupils value leading a healthy lifestyle exceptionally well, in terms of diet, regular exercise and keeping fit. They take full advantage of the many opportunities offered at school, and locally, to participate in sporting activities. Equally, they value the chance to contribute fully to the life and work of the school, for example through the school council. 'We are proud to be school councillors,' was a typical response of those elected to this role. Pupils have a well-developed social and moral awareness, and take their responsibilities very seriously. Their spiritual and cultural development are both good.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is effective and leads to pupils' good progress. A common feature through the school is the positive relationships between pupils and teachers, which really encourages pupils' enjoyment of learning, their good behaviour and positive attitudes. Teachers' subject knowledge is good. Pupils are clear about the purpose of learning which is revisited during lessons. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) by teachers has improved since the last inspection and keeps pupils' focused. The best lessons feature several activities, have a brisk pace and challenge pupils very well. However, although a number of tasks at different levels are usually set in reading and writing, in mathematics and writing teachers do not always provide the right level of challenge to help pupils make as much progress as they are capable.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils' enjoyment of school has much to do with the curriculum, which meets pupils needs and promotes their all-round development. Although it is firmly based on literacy and numeracy, learning regularly centres on themes that engage and motivate pupils. Creative and cultural weeks stimulate interest and excitement and promote pupils' personal development. From Year 2, all pupils start to read music and in Year 5, their lessons in playing a brass instrument ensure they have a good grounding in music. They enjoy learning spoken French through the curriculum. From the start of their education, pupils are encouraged to broaden their horizons and the school's strong partnerships, both local and global, result in them developing a good appreciation of the wider world and our responsibility to care for it. A world-of-work initiative, involving professional people working with pupils through the school, aids very effectively their good preparation for their future lives. Pupils who find learning more difficult than others are provided for well and provision for gifted and talented pupils, currently being developed, is satisfactory. The school offers a good range of enrichment activities, both in and out of lessons.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school is a genuinely caring community with a dedicated commitment to pupils. This extends from the breakfast to the after school club which offer a purposeful and safe environment. Staff know the pupils well. The care and support this affords is strengthened further by the full body of policies and procedures to promote and ensure pupils' welfare. Child protection and safeguarding arrangements are all in place. Staff are trained to know how to keep pupils safe. Pupils with learning difficulties receive good support including, when necessary, the help of external agencies. The school's systems for tracking progress are now more effective than at the time of the last inspection and they support appropriate interventions with pupils identified as underachieving. Procedures for monitoring standards in writing are being put into place, although they have not yet had sufficient impact to raise the standard of pupils' written work. The variable quality in teachers' marking and use of pupils' targets, reduces their capacity to raise further the rate of pupils' progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is able to move forward because of the clear direction and good planning of the headteacher. She is well supported by the senior leadership team and by subject leaders, who have made good progress since the last inspection in improving the quality of monitoring of the school's work and the recording of pupils' progress. Curriculum portfolios of pupils' work, for example, are providing staff with accurate knowledge of the standards of pupils' work. The improvements to the library and up-dated ICT resources have improved the provision for learning, although ICT is not used widely across subject areas to promote independent learning. The commitment of the staff has resulted in diverse learning opportunities, which also broaden pupils' understanding of the world in which we live. This is particularly so in the school's effective planning and promotion of community cohesion through interesting and often imaginative local and international links, which take into account the full context of the school. Most parents are very supportive of the quality of learning and the opportunities for their children, although a significant minority have concerns about the quality of communication between school and home, which the headteacher has plans to address. Governors monitor the school's work well and know the next stages in its development, adding to its ability to move forward. Policies and their impact are regularly reviewed.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which 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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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**

13 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Coates Primary, Whittlesey, PE7 2BP

I am writing to tell you the judgements that we made about your school when we visited recently. First, thank you for making us welcome and for showing us round. We send special thanks to those of you who gave up part of your lunchtime to share your thoughts about what it is like to be a pupil at your school. It was good to hear that you enjoy school.

Your school gives you a good education. You make good progress and standards are above average by the end of Year 6. Teaching is good. Your headteacher wants your learning to be even better by making sure that lessons always offer you enough challenge in writing and mathematics to help you to make faster progress. Also, the targets you have will be a much more regular feature in lessons so that you focus on improving your work. You enjoy your lessons, which are usually interesting. We were impressed with the partnerships you have, such as with the school in Switzerland.

You have an excellent understanding of how to keep healthy and you know how to keep safe. We were delighted to see the outstanding contribution you make to your school and the local community. By getting involved, you are not only helping your school and the local community but are developing many skills to help you when you are older. The teachers care for you well. Many parents are very happy with the school but your headteacher is planning to improve the communication between your parents and the school which some parents say is not effective.

I hope that you continue to make the most of all the opportunities that the school gives you.

Very best wishes

Lynne Blakelock

Lead inspector