

Blakeney Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121108
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	327409
Inspection dates	23–24 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Helen Ranger

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	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	49
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	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Neil Batcock
Headteacher	Mrs Sue du Bois
Date of previous school inspection	31 January 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Wiveton Road Blakeney Holt Norfolk NR25 7NJ

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	23–24 March 2009
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This small school serves the village of Blakeney and the surrounding area. Pupils come from a very wide range of social and economic circumstances and almost all current pupils are from White British backgrounds. Levels of free school meals are high. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than in most schools, having risen sharply recently. When children start school in the Early Years Foundation Stage, their attainment varies widely, but is broadly in line with the levels expected nationally for four-year-olds. A greater than average proportion of pupils join or leave the school part way through their primary education; reasons for this include movement to and from nearby independent schools.

The school works in a partnership federation with Hindringham Primary School. The schools share a headteacher, but have separate governing bodies. Staff and governors work together to provide increased opportunities for the staff and pupils of both small schools.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In the school's view its overall effectiveness is satisfactory and inspection findings confirm this. Since its last inspection the school has faced considerable challenges in staffing and pupil mobility, in the increased number of pupils who need extra help with learning, and in ensuring that the premises meet pupils' needs. It is to the credit of senior staff and governors that these challenges have been managed well and any negative impact on pupils minimised. The headteacher has played a pivotal role in this and is supported very well by the lead teacher. Their close working arrangements ensure that the school's leadership and management are effective, both when the headteacher is working on site and when she is at the partnership school in Hindringham. Parents' and pupils' views of the school are very positive and summed up in a father's comment that, 'The school is a great asset to the community'.

Pupils' academic achievement is satisfactory, although not yet consistent enough to ensure they reach higher than average standards by Year 6. However, recent tracking of individuals shows that current pupils make at least sound and, quite often good progress, compared with their starting points at the school. Pupils who receive additional adult help with learning are supported consistently well and make good progress. There has been sustained improvement across the school in pupils' key literacy skills, but standards in mathematics have not improved to the same extent. In response to this, staff have identified any significant gaps in pupils' learning in mathematics and are tailoring activities to fill these gaps. This includes additional opportunities for practical work and problem solving.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They enjoy school and behave well. The various age groups mix well together. They understand how to lead safe and healthy lives. Pastoral care is good. As part of this, staff have made great efforts to improve attendance, but rates are still below the national average.

Improvements to provision over several terms have ensured that teaching and learning are at least satisfactory and increasingly good. Recent monitoring by senior staff, endorsed by the inspection, shows that most lessons this school year have been taught well, although this good practice has not yet had a full enough impact on raising standards. The headteacher and lead teacher are strong role models of good practice and the entire staff works as a cohesive team. A key feature of recent improvements has been a strengthened curriculum. Activities are now based securely on the full range of pupils' needs. Pupils who can benefit from extra help or from being challenged in learning are identified and catered for well. Lessons are enhanced well by a range of extra activities that is impressive given the size of the school. The partnership arrangements with Hindringham provide pupils with opportunities that otherwise would not exist. The Blakeney site presents considerable challenges as its outdoor facilities are limited, but staff are tireless in finding ways to enhance the playground and improve provision for outdoor learning.

Staff and governors have a clear picture of the school's strengths and its areas for further development that is based on rigorous self-evaluation. There are detailed plans for the future that reflect the determination to raise standards. There is a good track record of improvement in key areas, such as rising literacy standards, provision for the youngest pupils, the eradication of some weak teaching and closer working with parents. This, combined with the joint skills of the current team of staff and governors, puts the school on a good footing to continue to improve.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (the Reception year) has developed well since the last inspection, when it was judged inadequate. It is now satisfactory and has continued to improve this year. There are important good features in provision in the quality of welfare offered by staff and the standards of children's personal development. Children are settled and confident with good attitudes to learning. The Reception children share a class with Key Stage 1 and adults plan well to meet children's separate needs, while enabling all ages to mix well. Records of progress in recent years show that, by the end of the Reception year, most children reach or exceed the levels expected for the start of Year 1 in all areas of learning. This represents sound progress. Activities are interesting and enjoyable. The school has good plans to improve outdoor learning in spite of the considerable challenges that the site and financial constraints present. Adults already take many opportunities to extend learning outdoors when the weather is favourable, but the lack of a dedicated, covered outside space limits what can be planned at present.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate progress in mathematics by fully implementing the plans to fill the gaps in pupils' learning and provide more opportunities for practical work and problem solving.
- Build on the good practice already evident in teaching to ensure all lessons are good or outstanding.
- Work with parents to improve the attendance of the small number of pupils who take time off school unnecessarily.

A small proportion of the 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

Records of pupils' individual performance show progress that, while satisfactory overall, has been uneven. The variations are partly because so many pupils change school and this disrupts the continuity of their learning. There has also been some underachievement in the past due to inadequate teaching. Improvements to teaching have resulted in pupils currently making at least satisfactory progress in all three classes and day to day progress is now often good. The school has recognised correctly that, across the school as a whole, standards in mathematics are not as strong as in literacy and is closely monitoring its action to improve mathematical achievement. Early indications are positive. Pupils in this year's Year 2 and Year 6 are on track to reach broadly average overall standards by the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 this year. A dip in science standards in the Year 6 tests in 2008 has been urgently addressed and pupils' progress has improved well in this subject. Pupils' academic skills give them a sound foundation for the next stage of their education.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. This was evident in a whole-school assembly where pupils were well-behaved, offered thoughtful opinions on Bible

stories and showed respect for others. Pupils feel safe and well cared for in school. Their grasp of what constitutes healthy living is good. They demonstrate this in practice in a high take-up of activities such as sports and social clubs. Particularly popular is the cookery club, although pupils do not consistently make healthy food choices at lunchtimes. The school has tackled below average attendance with some success. However, a few families do not send their children to school regularly enough. This disrupts the learning of these pupils, and of their classmates too when staff have to find time to make up any lost ground. There is a thriving house system and school council which enable pupils to offer their ideas and organise events. The older pupils act as house captains and playground buddies. They contribute well to the school community in such ways. Pupils also show awareness of the wider world, for example, of the changing diversity of the British population. They regularly contribute to charitable fund raising, recently deciding to donate money for clean water projects in developing countries.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and are continuing to improve because senior staff regularly monitor lessons and pupils' work, and advise on how they can be developed. The teachers and teaching assistants work well together. A key improvement has been in ensuring that planning more precisely meets the need of the wide range of ages and abilities in each class. Lessons have become more focused on individual needs as the systems to assess and track progress have been established and used to support lesson plans. The tracking systems identify any likely underachievement quickly so that it can be addressed. There are some areas of excellent practice which are gradually being adopted across the school, although this is inconsistent at present. Of particular note are 'learning ladders' which teachers are using to help pupils to recognise what each of them has learned and what to aim for next. Teachers give detailed and useful oral and written feedback on individual achievement, which is valued by the pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A significant factor in the improving provision is the good curriculum. While keeping a strong focus on basic skills, staff have reviewed the curriculum in all classes to encourage relevant links between subjects where appropriate. Pupils comment that this, combined with an increase in practical and investigative work, is making lessons more enjoyable and interesting. Pupils have welcomed the introduction of language teaching in both Spanish and French. While playground space is at a premium, there are very good arrangements to use nearby facilities for physical education, including swimming and gymnastics on a regular basis. The partnership arrangements with Hindringham mean that the two schools can join together to offer pupils a wide range of clubs, visits and special events.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of pastoral care for pupils is good and pupils and parents appreciate the good efforts to maintain links with families. This includes those parents who live in outlying areas. The school fulfils its duties to safeguard pupils. There are good links with other agencies where

relevant, especially in the care of vulnerable pupils or any who need specialist help. The school continues to work closely with the local authority to promote better attendance. Pupils receive good academic support and guidance. This is being developed as the systems for marking and target setting are established more consistently. There are good arrangements to provide additional help or challenge in the curriculum for individuals as needed. Measures such as individual written plans detail the next steps in learning and are shared with pupils and their parents.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Although the school's leaders acknowledge that there is still work to do in achieving their ambition for this to be a thoroughly good school, they have been successful in important areas. For example, standards are rising because of the good systems established for class teachers to assess and measure pupils' individual progress. Teachers now have the information they need to ensure that progress builds more systematically. School targets have been revised upwards this year as a result of such improvement. Senior staff have also succeeded in achieving more favourable views of the school among parents. Their vision for the school, shared by the governors, is firmly rooted in a clear determination to do the best for pupils. This determination is shown in the continuing plans to improve outdoor facilities, which have involved complex planning and environmental considerations for the playground and plantation areas.

The headteacher's strong leadership has established a positive climate for further improvement in the school. The teaching staff feel valued and able to contribute to any developments. Strategic planning is mostly thorough. The governors are active, knowledgeable and supportive. Together, staff and governors work closely with the parish and the local area. They have aspirations to promote even wider links, although these are not yet expressed in an explicit overall strategy for developing community cohesion.

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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 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?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
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?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

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/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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
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	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

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

25 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Blakeney Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Blakeney, Holt
NR25 7NJ

This letter is to thank you all for your welcome when I visited your school recently. My particular thanks go to the pupils in Class 3 who gave up their time to talk to me and helped me to find out about your school. Many of your parents wrote to give me their views of the school too, so please pass on my thanks to them. They all told me that you enjoy school a great deal as I saw that for myself when I met you and visited all your classrooms. You have lots of interesting lessons and many extra activities such as all your clubs and trips.

The staff and governors told me that your school gives you a satisfactory education and that they are improving the lessons so that you reach even higher standards. This was what I saw during my visit too and I have asked the adults to make sure that your lessons keep on improving so that you learn as much as possible. I was impressed to see that you are making good progress in reading and writing. Your teachers think you could do even better at mathematics and I agree. The staff have good plans to help you with this, so stand by to be even more challenged in numeracy lessons!

I was pleased to see that you behave well and get on well together. You told me about how you learn to lead safe and healthy lives. You join in with plenty of physical activities such as on the playground and when you go swimming. This keeps you healthy. However, I did notice that not all of you choose the healthy options at lunchtimes. I was pleased to hear how the school council and house captains help to let the adults know about your views. You do well in all your charity fund raising, so keep up that good work. An important part of learning is regular attendance and most of you are happy to come to school unless you are ill. A few children take time off when they do not need to. I have asked Mrs Dubois to carry on encouraging everyone to attend whenever possible.

The staff and governors of your school are like a big team with Mrs Dubois as the captain. The adults care for you well and have good plans to keep things improving, such as the planned work on the playground and plantation. I hope you keep on enjoying all your school has to offer.

Yours sincerely

Helen Ranger

Lead inspector