

Brancaster Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121131
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	327411
Inspection date	19 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Glynn Storer

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)	61
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	Mrs Sophie de Winton
Headteacher	Mrs Linda Hothersall
Date of previous school inspection	12 January 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Market Lane Brancaster King's Lynn Norfolk PE31 8AB

Age group	4–11
Inspection date	19 March 2009
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- factors contributing to high standards of attainment and the extent to which these are set to continue;
- whether changes to teaching and the curriculum are benefiting children in the Early Years Foundation Stage;
- whether new approaches to leadership, management and governance are sufficiently rigorous to sustain improvements in standards and quality.

Inspectors gathered evidence from lesson observations, the scrutiny of pupils' current work, the analysis of performance data, the scrutiny of school policies and planning, and from discussions with the headteacher, staff, pupils and governors. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This very small primary school serves the community of Brancaster in north Norfolk, although more than half of the pupils travel from homes outside of the immediate area. All of the pupils are from White British backgrounds and the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for a free school meal is lower than in most primary schools. Most children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage attaining standards that are typical of four-year-olds nationally. However, the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average and the number with statements of special educational need is high for a school of this size. The school experiences a considerable turnover of pupils and, under 'managed move' arrangements, regularly takes in pupils who encounter difficulties in other schools.

The school has gained the following: Artsmark (Gold), Activemark and FA Chartered School status. It has participated in Healthy School and Well-Being programmes and is currently working towards Eco Schools and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Brancaster Church of England Primary is a good school. Under the determined and energetic leadership of the headteacher, the school has established a strong track record of improvement in recent years. The school knows itself well and has a clear view of how it will improve further. It is consistently good, and in some areas gives excellent provision that is having a beneficial impact on pupils' learning and achievement. Consequently, the school has the support and approval of most parents. Comments such as, 'I have seen my child become more confident, more outgoing and make real progress in her work,' and 'Brancaster school is what every school should be. It has a real family feeling and always puts the children first,' sum up the views of many parents.

Children get a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They gain knowledge, understanding and skills that lay firm foundations for learning throughout school. Standards in Key Stages 1 and 2 vary quite markedly from year to year because year groups are so small and differ enormously in terms of ability and need. Nevertheless, standards are generally above average because most pupils attain the standards expected for their age in reading, writing, mathematics and science and an increasing number exceeds national expectations. This trend reflects clearly in the results of the most recent national tests for seven- and eleven-year-olds and in the school's tracking of current pupils.

An exceptionally strong feature of the school is the way staff use highly effective partnerships with the local community, outside providers and support agencies to broaden and enrich the curriculum and to provide excellent equality of opportunity for all pupils, from the most needy to the most able. As a result, despite variations in standards, over time, virtually all pupils achieve well in relation to their abilities and starting points.

Pupils achieve well because teaching is good and measures to improve the curriculum, now outstanding in its own right, are feeding through to the classroom in a way that improves pupils' learning. Teachers have high expectations and manage their pupils effectively. Lessons are well-planned and so learning proceeds at a brisk pace. Teachers make excellent use of the community and the local environment to give relevance and a real 'hands on' feel to pupils' learning and, as a result, pupils are highly motivated and willing to learn. This is particularly the case in upper Key Stage 2, where effective teaching and an excellent response from pupils combine to accelerate progress and achievement. In some classes, however, lessons occasionally miss the mark because activities intended to reinforce pupils' learning are not closely matched to the teacher's objectives or to the range of age and ability in the class. At such times, pupils' progress is reduced. Support for pupils who find learning difficult is effective and allows these pupils to progress at a similar rate to all others.

The creative linking of subjects adds to pupils' enjoyment. Topics that focus on aspects of local history, geography, ecology and culture give a purpose to pupils' learning and foster an in-depth understanding of issues that affect the local community. That said, the school is also determined to promote community cohesion in the wider sense. Visits to a local hotel to experience foods from around the world, opportunities to talk to migrant workers or to local older people, visits to Buddhist and Hindu temples all add to the richness of pupils' experience and provide them with telling insights into the needs and interests of people whose lives are very different from their own. The curriculum does much to promote community cohesion by fostering citizenship, understanding and values based on mutual respect. Staff also integrate the use of ICT into

pupils' learning in all subjects, and a similarly strong focus on the visual and expressive arts results in good standards in subjects such as art and design.

This quality in depth throughout the curriculum turns out confident and well-rounded youngsters and prepares them well for their lives as young adults. The vast majority of pupils attend regularly and punctually. Pupils are extremely enthusiastic about school because they have a real voice in matters that affect them. For example, pupils are currently engaged in planning an extension to their adventure play area and are coming up with some good ideas! Because staff respect pupils' views and give them responsibilities, such as caring for younger pupils, many develop levels of maturity beyond their years. Pupils' understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles is extremely good. It reflects clearly in their lively and energetic play, their commitment to sporting activities and in the success of the school's teams. That said, they play responsibly and safely, using apparatus sensibly and showing consideration for others. This quality of response enables pupils to make a strong contribution to the school as a caring community. They also contribute to the wider community, for example by working with staff from the local bird reserve and participating in community events. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is excellent. Most pupils are sensitive to things of beauty. They behave outstandingly well that indicates they have a clear understanding of what is right. Relationships are excellent. As one pupil said, 'Everyone has a friend.'

The care, guidance and support for pupils and their families are good overall. The school meets current safeguarding requirements and procedures for giving pupils guidance on how to improve their work are developing well. A system of whole-school and personal targets is improving pupils' understanding of how to progress to the next level, but these are not yet applied consistently throughout the school. Pastoral care is an outstanding strength of this area of provision. This is a school that will always 'go the extra mile'. For example, under the 'managed move' scheme, outreach to families whose children have encountered difficulties in other schools has been extremely successful and reflects in the good progress that many of these pupils now make. This quality of care extends to all pupils and school includes parents fully in their children's education. Strong links are forged when children start in Reception and the willingness of all staff share information sustains highly constructive relationships throughout the child's time in school. As one parent put it; 'Friendly staff - always available to talk about my concerns, big or small.'

The school is going from strength to strength because leadership and management are effective. It has a good capacity for further improvement because the headteacher has taken effective steps to strengthen leadership at all levels. She leads from the front and, in doing so, provides colleagues with clear direction and a strong role model, both of teaching and of leadership. She has built a team of senior staff and is actively fostering the leadership potential of those recently qualified staff and of those who, until recently, have not had leadership responsibilities. The headteacher gives all leaders a role in school improvement and ensures that they have the necessary training to be successful. Developing leadership has been an important contributory factor in the drive to improve quality and achievement. However, its full impact is yet to be felt as some staff are still undertaking training and settling into their leadership roles. Governors contribute effectively to school management by bringing a good balance of support and challenge to their oversight of the school.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

When the children start school, they achieve at levels typical for their age. By the end of the year, standards are above national expectations in all areas of learning. Their good progress owes much to the caring and supportive environment provided by staff, and the strong partnership forged with parents, which promote all aspects of children's personal development and welfare effectively. Children settle quickly, enjoy being at school and mix happily with each other when they work and play. However, the constraints of the Victorian building, coupled with the lack of immediate access to outdoor learning facilities, place considerable pressures on the overall quality of provision. Improving the effectiveness of its Early Years Foundation Stage provision is a priority in the school's development plan. It has a strong base for doing so because staff readily rise to the challenge. Teaching is generally good and enables children to achieve well, through a good balance of teacher directed and free choice activities that effectively promote language development, numeracy and creative skills. Assessment arrangements are robust, enabling staff to know exactly where each child is on their learning journey, and what they need to plan for next. This provision is well led and managed, and plans are already well underway for the radical transformation of the Reception unit to include adjacent, dedicated, space for outdoor learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve facilities and resources for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and, in particular, their access to outdoor learning.
- Strengthen further the contribution that recently appointed leaders make to school improvement.

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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?	1
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?	2
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?	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
The extent to which 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	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?	1
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	1
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**

20 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Brancaster Church of England Primary School, King's Lynn, PE31 8AB

You may remember that I visited your school a little while ago, along with my colleague Mr Williams. Thank you for making us so welcome and for taking time to talk to us and to answer our questions. I particularly enjoyed hearing the choir practise for the Mother's Day service and talking to some of you about your ideas for extending the adventure play area. I know that Mr Williams enjoyed seeing the Year 5 and 6 massage session and he had fun in Reception too.

I thought that you would like to hear what we found out about your school.

There are many good things happening in your school.

- Almost all of you make good progress in English, mathematics and science and overall standards are above average.
- You thoroughly enjoy school because teachers, educational visits, visitors and special events make learning exceptionally interesting and enjoyable.
- You get on wonderfully well with one another and your behaviour is excellent.
- All of the adults help you when you have problems and you all try particularly hard to welcome pupils who come to Brancaster from other schools.
- Mrs Hothersall, the staff, governors and pupils work hard to make your school a better place.

There is not much that needs to be improved at Brancaster Church of England Primary. That is why your school is so good. However, I know that there are plans to improve the teaching area for Reception children. I agree that this is a good idea and have urged staff to carry their plans through, especially when it comes to enabling children to do much more learning out of doors. I have also suggested that staff who are still learning to be leaders in certain areas of the school's work should be given every opportunity to develop leadership skills. Then they too can join in fully with the drive to improve your school. You can help continuing to give your ideas thoughtfully and sensibly when staff ask you....because I know that they will.

I hope that you will all continue to work hard and enjoy your time at Brancaster Church of England Primary School.

Yours sincerely

Glynn Storer

Lead inspector