

Dereham Church of England Infant School and Nursery

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121195
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	327429
Inspection dates	25–26 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Gulshanbir Kayembe

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	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	209
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	Mr John Gretton
Headteacher	Mrs Karen Gay
Date of previous school inspection	17 January 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	St Withburga Lane Dereham Norfolk NR19 1ED
Telephone number	01362692727

Age group	3–7
Inspection dates	25–26 March 2009
Inspection number	327429

Fax number

01362691083

Age group 3-7

Inspection dates 25-26 March 2009

Inspection number 327429

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is situated in a small market town not far from Norwich. A high proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and these are mostly additional needs in literacy and numeracy. The large majority of pupils, over 90%, are White British. The proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds varies from about seven to ten per cent. Many of these pupils begin at the school with little or no English. The most common first language is Portuguese. The Early Years Foundation Stage includes a Nursery as well as two Reception classes. About a quarter of children who join Reception have not attended the school's Nursery and some have not attended a Nursery, or other pre-school provision, at all. The school has achieved a number of awards including the Artsmark Silver, Eco Schools Silver and School Travel Plan Awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school providing a good education for its pupils. Consequently, they make good progress in their learning and are well prepared for their next school. Pupils' personal development and well-being are also good because the school provides a positive and warm learning environment. As a result, pupils become increasingly confident and self-assured as they move through the school.

Standards have been rising well since the last inspection and were above average by the end of Year 2 in 2008 indicating good progress from their starting points for this group of pupils. Current standards are broadly average by Year 2 and pupils are making good progress from low starting points. Progress in reading is particularly strong because the school has had a good focus on this area. Pupils also make good progress in writing and there are examples of particularly good quality writing in Year 2 when pupils have been working on cross-curricular themes. Whilst many pupils make good progress in mathematics, overall progress in this area has been satisfactory. This is because, pupils are not always confident with mathematical problems and calculations and do not always have enough opportunities in lessons to develop these skills. They make good progress in science to reach above average standards. More able pupils now make good progress and this is a significant improvement since the last inspection.

Good teaching promotes positive attitudes to learning and enables pupils to achieve well. Support staff make a good contribution to the learning of different groups of pupils. As a result, those who find learning difficult make good progress. Effectively tailored support for the few beginners in English in Years 1 and 2 ensures they achieve well. A good curriculum supports pupils' personal development so that they understand how to lead healthy lives and develop positive values and attitudes. Most behave well and this supports their learning. A wide range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities encourages enjoyment and contributes to pupils' good social skills. Strong links with the local church and clergy support pupils' spiritual and moral development most effectively. Pupils are very well looked after and cared for. Good use of local community links and a wide range of agencies ensures individuals and their parents are well supported. The use of a jointly-funded parent support adviser promotes effective links with parents and helps to meet their needs, for example, sign posting to English classes for Portuguese parents or help with child care arrangements. Teachers provide useful oral feedback to pupils and there are examples of good self and peer assessment. However, pupils are not always sure about their targets or what they need to do to improve their work. This is because marking is not consistent enough in giving individual feedback on what they have achieved and their next steps in learning.

Leadership and management are good. The school has an accurate view of its effectiveness and there is good monitoring of teaching especially by the headteacher. The involvement of other staff in checking the quality of the school's work has improved and they are now effectively involved in looking at teaching, planning, pupils' work and talking to pupils. Governors provide good oversight of the school's work. They are involved well in planning for the school's further improvement and help promote the school's links within the local community. Community cohesion is promoted well within the school and local community. However, whilst the curriculum provides some good opportunities, pupils do not have enough first hand experiences to learn more about cultural and faith diversity particularly within British society. This limits their understanding and appreciation of these.

Given the progress made since the last inspection and the improvements in standards, the school is well placed to make further improvements.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Attainment on entry to the Nursery is often well below that expected of children of this age group. Attainment on entry has also been declining in recent years with an increasing number of children needing extra support and care. They make good progress especially in their personal, social and emotional development and literacy. However, attainment remains low at the start of Reception. In some years, despite good progress in the Nursery, attainment remains significantly lower than age related expectations. In 2008, attainment at the end of Reception was below average. In the current Reception classes it is close to average. Most pupils learning English as an additional language make rapid progress and are reasonably fluent in English by the start of Year 1.

Children's personal development is good overall and they learn to develop independence and to share resources. They also gain confidence and show a willingness to try new things. Sometimes, children lose focus and concentration during whole-class sessions but they engage well when activities are practical. Teaching is good. Resources are well prepared and organised and there is good use of questioning to help children develop their thinking as well as their speaking skills. However, sometimes whole class sessions are a little long or lessons lose pace. The Nursery in particular provides a rich learning environment where the outdoor area is a vibrant and interesting extension of the indoor area. There is more limited access to the outdoor area in the Reception classes.

Good leadership is ensuring that assessments of children's work are improving and procedures are now sound. There is good oversight of the work within the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children are exceptionally well looked after and cared for. Their individual needs are identified and addressed promptly. Strong links with parents help children to settle in quickly.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more opportunities for pupils to develop their calculation and problem-solving skills and help improve their confidence in mathematics.
- Improve marking so that written comments tell pupils how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
- Provide pupils with more opportunities to learn about different faiths and cultures from first hand experiences.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Current standards at the end of Year 2 are in line with national averages and this represents good progress for pupils from the start of Year 1. Writing standards have improved since the last inspection. Many pupils make very good progress in writing now, especially in Year 2. There has been an increase in the support given to pupils in Year 2 to help improve their progress in mathematics. More opportunities have been provided for problem solving work in recent months. However, overall, these are not consistent enough across the school both in mathematics and in other subjects. Pupils who find learning difficult are doing well and some make significant progress to attain standards that are in line with national expectations by the end of Year 2.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, and pupils generally show respectful attitudes to others. They develop a good understanding of their own culture through their work in the arts. Regular visits to the adjoining Church and visitors to the school contribute to pupils' understanding of Christianity. Pupils have a keen awareness of how to stay safe and about the importance of healthy eating and exercise. Attendance is similar to the national average though most attend regularly because they thoroughly enjoy school. Pupils make a good contribution to the school community. Those in the school council talk proudly of what they have helped to change about the school, including the music played at lunchtimes. Pupils' behaviour is good. They listen very carefully when teachers are speaking, though occasionally some lose focus. Pupils make good progress in developing the skills that they need for the future, especially effective social skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers establish good relationships with pupils and this secures their co-operation. Support staff are used well to promote learning and are especially good in supporting pupils who find learning difficult. Teachers have good subject knowledge which they use to good effect to question pupils and extend their understanding. In most lessons work is accurately matched to pupils' individual needs and able pupils are challenged effectively. Some teaching is outstanding, however, on occasion the pace of the lesson is not brisk enough. Sometimes learning objectives are not clear or sufficiently well linked to desired learning outcomes. Teachers make good use of drama and pair work to help develop pupils' speaking skills and involve them actively in lessons. Most books are regularly marked but do not consistently tell pupils how well they have achieved and what they need to do next to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

There is much in the curriculum that is innovative and vibrant. The good focus on developing pupils' creative skills through themes has a positive impact on learning. This work is particularly well used in Year 2 to provide extensive and interesting opportunities for writing. A wide range of stimulating activities during and after school thoroughly enrich the curriculum. Many theme weeks and days, including the 'science extravaganza' and 'Africa week', support the school's efforts to make learning exciting, while after school clubs, including football and gardening, develop skills as well as promote good health. Visits out and visitors to the school effectively develop pupils' awareness of their own cultures and Christianity although opportunities to meet people from other cultural and religious backgrounds are limited. While there is an effective focus on literacy and numeracy other subjects, including drama and music, receive strong emphasis. Effective links between subjects make learning meaningful, though links between mathematics and other subjects are not fully exploited. Relatively recent resources for and planning of information and communication technology (ICT) are beginning to strengthen the ICT curriculum. The curriculum strongly supports the development of pupils' social skills, so that they are able to work cooperatively with others and enabled to become good citizens.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff are strongly committed to encouraging pupils' enjoyment and achievement. The effective strategies for developing pupils' social well being are reflected in their positive relationships with others throughout the school. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils and for their health and safety are in place. In this nurturing environment, all groups of pupils reach increasingly challenging targets. Pupils who need additional support are identified early so that their needs can be fully addressed. The school works hard to encourage regular and prompt attendance, and to tackle the persistent absence of a few, by extending strategies to tackle term time holidays including extended holidays taken by some families.

Teachers provide pupils with good opportunities to evaluate their own learning so that they get a sense of how well they have achieved. Some pupils talk knowledgeably about their learning targets. One said 'I have to improve my work by joining two sentences together to make a longer one'. Others, however, do not have a clear understanding of their targets or what to do to achieve them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides good leadership. She has established a good sense of teamwork among staff and all are clear as to the school's key goals. Monitoring work has improved since the last inspection and this has helped the school to gain a good understanding of how well it is doing. Middle leaders are involved well in assessing the quality of the school's work. Tracking of pupils' progress is sound and good use is made of tracking information to identify and support pupils who need additional help or are beginning to fall behind. Targets are challenging and pupils are meeting these well. The school makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion though at school level it is good and there are effective links in the local community, such as with the local church and other schools. However, the school has yet to address key gaps especially in relation to the wider UK and global communities. While the school makes some use of the cultural diversity that exists within it to develop pupils' understanding of others, it does not fully exploit this resource. Governors are enthusiastic and committed to the school. They bring a wide range of expertise to the benefit of the school.

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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	3
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	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	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?	3
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**

27 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Dereham Church of England Infant School and Nursery, Dereham, NR19 1ED

We enjoyed visiting your school and would like to thank you for making us feel welcome. It was very nice to meet you and watch your lessons. The school gives you a good education so that you are ready for junior school.

These are some of the best things about your school:

- you thoroughly enjoy school and getting involved in the activities it provides
- your learning gets off to a good start in the Nursery and Reception classes
- you are taught well and, as a result, make good progress in your learning especially in reading, writing and science
- those of you who don't find learning so easy get a lot of help especially from teaching assistants
- visits out, visitors to the school and themes make learning interesting
- you are happy at school because you are very well looked after and cared for
- your headteacher works hard with other staff to keep making the school better.

I have asked Mrs Gay and your teachers to help you make even better progress by:

- making sure you get more confident in solving problems that you find difficult in mathematics
- telling you how well you are doing and what you need to do to make your work better
- giving you more opportunities to meet people, including children, who are different from you and believe in different things.

You can contribute to improvements by making sure you keep trying hard to improve your work and asking your teachers what you need to do to meet your targets.

We wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Gulshan Kayembe

Lead inspector