

Grange Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124630
Local Authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	328181
Inspection dates	17–18 March 2009
Reporting inspector	John Messer

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	198
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 Les Smith
Headteacher	Mrs Sue Todd
Date of previous school inspection	14 March 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Grange Road Felixstowe Suffolk IP11 2LA
Telephone number	01394 283912
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average sized primary school. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in the Nursery and Reception classes. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and a small proportion are from minority ethnic groups. A few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well above average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is exceptionally high. The most common difficulties are associated with pupils' emotional, social and communication skills. The proportion of pupils who enter or leave the school partway through this phase of their education is very high, especially in Years 5 and 6. There is an exceptionally high proportion of teachers who are new to the school and are covering for temporary staff absences. The school has the Nursery Quality Assurance Award, the Primary Quality Mark, the Activemark, the Healthy Schools Award and the bronze Eco-school Award. There is a newly opened Children's Centre on site which serves the needs of the local community. A new headteacher has been appointed and is due to join the school after Easter.

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 where pupils achieve well. This is often from low starting points, especially in communication, language and literacy. The school faces a number of significant challenges. It has developed a reputation for dealing well with pupils who find learning difficult and, consequently, attracts a large number of pupils who have significant gaps in their prior learning, particularly in the older classes. Mobility is high as pupils move into and out of the area. This often interrupts the continuity of their learning. More than half the teaching force is on temporary leave or secondment. This has been managed well but has inevitably caused inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and has had an adverse impact on the strength of subject leadership. Nevertheless, pupils make good progress in both key stages because overall good teaching and learning have been maintained. In Key Stage 2 the amount of progress pupils make is often more than the national average. They do well to attain standards by Year 6 that are below average.

Pupils make good progress, including those who find learning difficult and those who speak English as an additional language. Pupils achieve well in Years 1 and 2 and continue to do so in Years 3 to 6. By the end of Year 6 standards in English, mathematics and science are below average. Examination of pupils' work and analysis of the school's assessment data shows that standards in mathematics are declining in Key Stage 2. This is largely because the faster learners are not always sufficiently challenged to accelerate their progress and also there is a significant lack of good quality resources for supporting teaching and learning in mathematics.

Pupils' good personal development supports their learning well. They are sensible, well behaved, polite and sensitive to the feelings of others. They enjoy school, are eager to please and keen to succeed. They also develop good attitudes to work and good social skills. This prepares them well for transferring to the next phase of their education and for their future lives. The school has begun to link subjects together to create a thematic approach to teaching the National Curriculum. The effective curriculum is enriched by a good range of extra activities such as clubs and educational visits. However, the curriculum does not fully match all pupils' interests to raise achievement further. The school council enables pupils' views to be aired. Councillors are good at making decisions and ably assisted the governing body with the appointment of the new headteacher.

Pupils' welfare is a top priority. They receive good guidance about how to stay safe and look after themselves. Guidance on how to improve their work is not so secure. Work is marked but does not always show pupils how to improve. They have targets to aim for in literacy and numeracy but few can remember what they are. In most classrooms a quiet, productive learning environment has been established. Teaching is good and staff promote a serious, business-like approach to learning. Relationships are excellent and so pupils work willingly and are keen to do their best. In some lessons the faster learners are not challenged enough to make sure that their progress is as rapid as it should be.

Good leadership and management help the school to run smoothly. The headteacher provides excellent leadership and has succeeded in maintaining good levels of provision despite the temporary loss of most of the teaching staff. The effective support provided by teaching assistants has helped to maintain a good degree of continuity in pupils' learning during the course of this difficult period. The headteacher's astute, strategic management of personnel has helped to minimise any adverse effects of staffing difficulties. The strength provided by

leaders who are now temporarily absent left a legacy of good practice which has also helped to sustain the school through challenging times. The school has improved since the last inspection and it has good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Excellent provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage gives children a wonderful start to their school lives. Most enter the Nursery with levels of development that are low compared with those normally expected for their age. They make excellent progress. Standards have been rising in recent years and by the time they leave Reception most are now working at levels that are close to national averages.

Outstanding leadership promotes and sustains highly effective teamwork. As a result all staff give children entirely consistent messages about what is expected of them. Consequently, they settle in quickly and rapidly become ready to embrace new experiences. Work in a small, special nursery group designed to develop children's understanding and language is excellent. These strengths contribute to children's outstanding achievement. Children's welfare is paramount and staff successfully forge close working relationships with parents in order to support children. This is a significant factor in children's remarkable personal and social development.

Close observations of children's achievements and interests are used to modify planning to meet children's individual needs. No time is lost urging children on to the next step in their learning. Staff are following national guidance about teaching children the relationship between letters and the sounds they represent and this is proving highly effective. Because children have plenty of opportunities to develop their own interests and ideas, they make exceptional progress in enthusiastically communicating their increased understanding of the world. For example, during the inspection, there was much planting of 'magic' beans. Children knew that the need for soil is 'real' and the anticipation of a beanstalk is fantasy. The Early Years Foundation Stage team is far from complacent and is rightly seeking ways to make further use of the outdoor area.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve learning resources and provide greater challenge for the faster learners in Key Stage 2 so that they achieve well in mathematics.
- Develop an even more stimulating curriculum that better matches the interests of all pupils.
- Provide clearer guidance, through marking and target setting, so that pupils understand what they need to do to reach the next stages in their learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children do exceptionally well in the Early Years Foundation Stage and are prepared well to start work on the National Curriculum in Year 1. They make good progress through Years 1 and 2. National assessments for pupils in Year 2 show that standards are improving in reading, writing and mathematics. Most pupils continue to make good progress in Years 3 to 6 but learning is interrupted by high levels of pupil mobility and changes in staff. By the end of Year 6, standards are below average in English, mathematics and science. However, this represents good achievement, as pupils' starting points are often well below those normally expected. Pupils who experience difficulties with their learning make good and often outstanding progress

because they receive support that is very well tailored to their individual needs. Faster learners make satisfactory progress but could do better if given more challenging work, especially in mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school and this is reflected in their good attendance. They are accustomed to new children joining their classes and are friendly and welcoming to these newcomers. Pupils are interested in lessons and proud of their achievements, although this is not always apparent in the care they take in presenting their work. Pupils feel safe in school. Some have difficulty in managing their own behaviour but this is dealt with well. About a quarter of parents express understandable concern about the behaviour of this minority of pupils. Nevertheless, the school is an orderly community because the behaviour of the vast majority is good.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Many pupils develop a respect for, and interest in, the traditions of other cultures. They are increasingly prepared to reflect on serious issues, such as poverty and looking after the environment. Pupils appreciate that their health and welfare depends on the choices they make, including what they eat and what they do.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

One key strength of the teaching is the excellent relationships that staff have with pupils. Teachers treat pupils with great respect, thanking them for their contributions to discussions, for example. They offer appropriate praise and encouragement which help to build high levels of motivation. Pupils enjoy earning 'golden nuggets', that rewards them with free choice of activities in 'Golden Time'. Most teachers have a quiet manner which helps to generate a calm atmosphere that is conducive to effective learning. The team of teaching assistants makes a strong contribution to the quality of pupils' learning, especially for those who find some aspects of their work difficult to grasp. Whilst teachers offer effective guidance in lessons, pupils' work is not always marked well enough. Consequently, pupils are not clear on how to improve. When pupils are writing and recording their work teachers do not always insist on high standards of presentation and so pupils' work is not always as tidy as it should be.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils are well served by the activities on offer. There is an appropriately strong emphasis on teaching key literacy and numeracy skills and very well planned provision for personal and social education. Computer technology is used increasingly well to make links between subjects. For example, pupils in Year 6 produced lively multi-media presentations about Anne Frank as part of their work in history. However, the school recognises that there are missed opportunities to enhance learning and raise achievement with more systematically planned links between subjects and more practical activities. There is an excellent range of specialised programmes of work for those pupils who have difficulty learning, particularly for those who struggle to control their emotions. The curriculum is enhanced well by a good variety of clubs and special events that contribute much to pupils' enjoyment.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff share a clear commitment to doing their best for pupils and pastoral care is exceptionally strong. Staff know pupils, and often their families, very well and support them wholeheartedly. Guidance to help pupils regulate their own behaviours is thorough and highly effective. It makes a major contribution to the positive ethos of the school. The school manages potential risks well and checks to safeguard pupils' welfare meet the latest requirements. Child protection procedures are robust. The involvement of pupils in assessing their own learning has begun but is at an early stage of development. The school maintains very precise systems to measure pupils' progress over time. This is helping to maintain pupils' good achievement in the face of so many staff changes.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has been highly successful in steadily improving provision. She has developed a strong team of senior managers and subject leaders. Currently, most of the substantive leadership team are away from school. Without this strong support there are signs that developments and improvements are not now progressing as fast as they used to. Nevertheless, standards are being maintained and the school continues to run smoothly. The school's self-evaluation is largely accurate but it is too heavily weighted to judgements on standards attained rather than evaluations of the amount of progress that pupils make year on year. The majority of parents are pleased with the education provided. One wrote, 'It's a lovely school with a real community ethos and my children love their teachers and would do anything for them.' The school promotes community cohesion well through strong links with the local residents' association, the horticultural society and by visiting a residential home for elderly folk. Pupils also understand that there are many communities in other countries where children are less fortunate than they are and they wholeheartedly support fund raising events to help them. The school has an explicit policy on equality which successfully promotes a good understanding of human rights and responsibilities. The governing body monitors the work of the school effectively.

Governors visit regularly, carry out safety checks and make sure that the school fulfils all legal requirements. The governing body have appointed a new headteacher and most of the senior team are due to return by the beginning of the next school year. The school now awaits a new chapter in its development.

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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?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

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	2
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?	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**

19 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Grange Primary School, Felixstowe, IP11 2LA

We enjoyed our short visit to your school. Thank you for being so friendly and helpful.

Grange is a good school. Children in the Nursery and Reception classes get an excellent start to their time in school. You make good progress in reading, writing, mathematics and science and also make good progress in your social development. You get on well with each other and you give new pupils a warm welcome when they join the school so that they quickly feel at home. Most of you are very well behaved and you are good at helping those who find it difficult to behave so well. We were pleased to hear that you really like your teachers and the support staff and appreciate all that they do to help you. You work hard and also enjoy having fun. You understand how to lead healthy lifestyles by eating a balanced diet and exercising regularly. You know how to stay safe and look after yourselves. You are developing a good understanding of how important it is to look after our planet by conserving energy and recycling paper.

We have asked your headteacher to do three things to help you to learn even more:

- Ensure that the faster learners in Key Stage 2 are challenged with more complex work so that they reach even higher standards. This is especially in mathematics where better equipment is needed to help you learn.
- Make projects even more exciting and interesting.
- Help teachers give you more guidance about what you need to do to improve your work.

You could also help to raise standards by making sure that your work is always as neat and tidy as possible.

We wish you and the staff every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

John Messer

Lead inspector