

Ixworth Church of England VC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124704
Local Authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	328195
Inspection dates	24–25 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Sandra Tweddell

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	164
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Jim Wolf
Headteacher	Mrs Rebecca Dodman
Date of previous school inspection	24–25 May 2006
School address	Crown Lane Ixworth Bury St Edmunds IP31 2EL
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited thirteen lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils and parents who were around the school. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school improvement plan, records of the progress that pupils make and a range of school policies. They also analysed 46 questionnaires which were received from parents.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the progress of pupils in Years 3 and 4
- how the school identifies pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- how well children are prepared to live in a culturally diverse world
- the effectiveness of the new leadership team
- communication, language and literacy in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Information about the school

This small first school serves the local village which has a population from a wide range of social backgrounds. Most pupils come from a White British background. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is lower than most schools. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than other schools. Difficulties are predominantly moderate learning, behavioural, emotional and social. Awards include Activemark for sports and Healthy Schools. Breakfast and after school clubs, managed by the governing body, operate before and after school. Attainment on entry is broadly average.

The school is in the third phase of Suffolk's reorganisation proposals. There have been changes in the leadership team over the past two years and during the inspection an acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher were in post.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Pupils are happy in this caring school, an important part of the local community. A good range of partnerships support pupils' learning. Parents are very supportive and even those who have some criticisms recognise that their children love coming to school. As a result, attendance is good, pupils enjoy learning and are eager to participate in all activities. Their achievement is satisfactory overall, although their progress varies from class to class, mainly because of staff's different expectations of how well pupils can achieve.

Children get a satisfactory start in the Early Years Foundation Stage although the assessment of their skills when they enter the nursery has not been clear enough to enable the school to accurately map the progress that they make and expectations of their work are not consistently high enough.

The acting leadership team has continued to improve the school during a period of change. Assessment has become more rigorous since the last inspection but there is still some inconsistency in setting challenging targets for the most able. The school quickly identifies pupils who start to fall behind with their learning. All of these pupils are counted as having special educational needs and requiring additional support, which means that the school has higher numbers than other schools. This has resulted in some inconsistencies in the expectations of what some pupils can achieve. Governors are most supportive of the school but do not fully challenge it to have the highest possible expectations for its pupils. This is because they do not have a secure understanding of how well the school is doing in relation to others. Standards have remained average since the last inspection and pupils' progress is satisfactory overall. The acting headteacher knows the school's strengths and where it needs to improve although the school's self-evaluation was over generous as it did not take fully into account the impact of inconsistencies in practice. Improvements in teaching and learning are starting to raise the standards that pupils reach. The capacity for further improvement is therefore satisfactory.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise expectations and improve standards across the school by:
 - ensuring greater consistency in the use of assessment
 - reviewing procedures for assessing pupils with special educational needs.

- Improve the progress of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage in communication, language and literacy by:
 - having higher expectations of the most able children
 - consolidating the new system of assessment on entry so a clear record of children's progress can be mapped.
- Ensure that governors effectively challenge the work of the school by:
 - increasing their knowledge of pupils' achievement
 - becoming more involved in the strategic direction of the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Most pupils are eager learners, keen to do well and enthusiastic about their work. They make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2 and standards have been consistently average for a number of years. Progress in Year 3 is satisfactory and in Year 4 it accelerates and is good. Overall standards are in line with expectations by Year 4 though they are better in English than in mathematics and science. Progress across the school is inconsistent and standards are not high enough for more able pupils. Boys achieve less well in literacy than girls sometimes because they quickly lose concentration.

The majority of pupils are well behaved and behaviour has improved following successful initiatives by the school. They feel safe, supported by the school's caring ethos. Their knowledge of how to keep healthy is outstanding. All pupils are involved in growing vegetables, harvesting and eating them. They understand the importance of exercise, helped by activities such as circus skills in the clubs before and after school. Year 4 pupils were astounded at how much waste is generated when they took responsibility for recycling. Pupils effectively learn workplace skills, and support their local community well. For example, pupils take part in "work experience", where they have to apply and be interviewed for a job in the school. Pupils also learn about the world of work from parents and other members of the community visiting school to talk about their work. Skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology are good in some classes, but satisfactory in others. Pupils have a good understanding about the diversity of religions and cultures through discussion in lessons, especially in religious education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	3
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	3
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	2
How well do pupils behave?	2
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	2
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is satisfactory overall but inconsistent between classes. While some teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve this is not consistent across the school and a small proportion sets the sights too low. Pupils are clear about what they are expected to learn and the targets that are set for them. This is because all teachers discuss the learning with the pupils, some reflecting this in their marking of pupils' work. Although there has been a successful focus on assessment there is still some inconsistency in the quality of advice given by teachers, and the challenge of the targets they set. The best planning focuses on high achievement with different expectations for the wide range of ability groups. In a good lesson, the teacher based her expectations of learning on the most able pupils in the class. Her questions challenged not only this group but also other groups as she modified the questions to extend the learning of each child. Her support for the most able group was of very high quality. As a result, all pupils made good progress in their understanding of measurement and recording data. Pupils are motivated by good relationships that give them confidence to try different approaches and by the good use of resources for practical activities. Teaching assistants are well informed about their classes and pupils so they provide effective support. The curriculum is well planned and sometimes imaginatively taught, such as when a classroom became a Sikh Gurdwara and pupils cooked a healthy Indian meal. It very effectively supports pupils' personal development, especially through the wide range of enrichment activities. The breakfast and after school clubs make a good contribution to pupils' learning. Pupils are cared for very well, including those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The acting headteacher has worked hard to build on the school's systems and use information from assessment to drive improvement. This has resulted in raised standards at the end of Year 4 and improved teaching. Planning to develop the staff's skills and to make the school a better place for pupils to learn is strong. A number of teachers are developing leadership skills by monitoring their areas of

responsibility. Teachers are responding to the drive to raise standards but the impact has yet to be seen in all classes. The progress of different groups of pupils is monitored and adults are deployed strategically to support their learning, including groups with very small numbers. Pupils' have a good understanding of the needs and cultures of others through, for example, the nurture group and the programme for personal development. Safeguarding procedures have the highest priority, almost all parents commenting that they have confidence in the school's concern for their child's safety. Governors work tirelessly to support the school but, as they have identified, their challenge to the school and the way they hold it to account are weak. The school is an important part of its local community and the interaction between school, the community and the church is very strong. Links are being established with a school in Africa. While the school's contribution to community cohesion is satisfactory overall, there are weaknesses in its evaluation of this work. Strong partnerships with parents support the learning of pupils. Shared lunches, where parents join teachers and children are popular and very well attended.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the Nursery with a very wide range of skills and experiences ranging from well above to well below those expected for their age. They make steady progress, although those with advanced skills could do better, as expectations of children vary from high to low. A strength in the provision is in developing children's understanding of the world. Children were fascinated when they observed how eggs hatch into chickens and then watched them grow. The local environment is used very well to inculcate wonder about the world. Some reasons for the lower achievement in communication, language and literacy are that more able children sometimes dominate discussion, and at other times expectations are not high enough. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader uses a collaborative approach that draws on the expertise of all staff. However, there is not yet an overview of trends in achievement across the Early Years Foundation Stage. Until recently, recording the assessment of children on entry to the Nursery has not been robust enough so it is difficult to track the progress that children make. This year, there is a more accurate record of

attainment on entry. 'Learning Journeys' now identify staff's observation of children and provide good information about their progress from which targets for work are set.

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Most parents are happy with the school, including some who have concerns. A number of parents referred to 'an excellent school' where children do well. One of the concerns was the number of staff changes which the inspection team found the school manages well. A small number thought the school did not take account of parents' views but inspectors could find no evidence to support this. Other concerns were the different approaches by staff and rates of progress in classes. Inspectors found these concerns to be justified. A few mentioned behaviour, but inspectors found this has improved because of concerted action by all staff.

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ixworth CE Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. If a parent has more than one child at the school we ask them to record an answer against all the questions for each of their children.

The inspection team received 46 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 98 parents and carers registered at the school.

	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Never
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	24	17	5	0

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, training or development. This may refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding or desired attributes. Attributes include qualities or personal competencies which are important to the development of the pupil; for example personal, social, cultural, emotional or health.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.



26 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ixworth Church of England Primary School, Bury St Edmunds, IP31 2EL

We enjoyed our recent visit and meeting and talking to many of you. Thank you for telling us about your work and especially to the members of school council for discussing their support for the school.

We were impressed by how much you know about healthy food and your enjoyment in growing your own vegetables. You know much about hatching chickens from eggs and you are very proud of your two chickens. You behave well, work hard and enjoy your lessons. Your teachers and other adults in the school look after you carefully so you told us you feel safe. We saw many of you enjoying the clubs before and after school and some of you have very good circus skills! You enjoy the activities in your local community, and visitors to school help you to understand their work.

We have asked the staff and governors to make sure that you are all making consistently good progress in every class by:

- making the teaching even better so that more lessons are good and your work is set at the right level, not too easy and not too hard
- making sure that children in the Nursery and Reception classes make the best possible progress in reading and writing
- working with your governors so that they support the school in making sure that you reach the highest standards of work.

We know that you all can do this as you work hard and enjoy school. We hope that you have a lovely summer.

With best wishes

Sandra Tweddell
Lead inspector

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