

Palgrave Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 124740 |
| Local Authority | Suffolk |
| Inspection number | 328205 |
| Inspection date | 27 January 2009 |
| Reporting inspector | Paul Cosway |

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.

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary controlled |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School (total) | 43 |
| 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 Kit Wells |
| Headteacher | Mrs Angela Hall |
| Date of previous school inspection | 6 December 2005 |
| Date of previous funded early education inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Date of previous childcare inspection | Not previously inspected |
| School address | Palgrave Diss Norfolk IP22 1AG |
| Telephone number | 01379642507 |
| Fax number | 01379642507 |

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|--------------------------|-----------------|
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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: the progress made by pupils throughout the school; the quality of teaching across the school; the provision for the Early Years and Foundation Stage children, and the effectiveness of leadership. They gathered evidence from observations of lessons, discussions with staff and pupils, analysis of parents' views and scrutiny of school documentation and policies, as well as scrutiny of pupils' work. 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

Palgrave Primary School is much smaller than average. The school population represents a mix of social backgrounds, but pupils are mainly White British. Attainment on entry is close to national expectations. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below similar schools. There are no pupils at an early stage of learning English. The proportion who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with statements of special educational need, is close to the national average. Most pupils with additional needs have specific learning difficulties. There is no separate Early Years and Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision: the very few children involved are integrated into the same class as the Year 1 and Year 2 pupils.

Pupils come mainly from the village it serves and the outskirts of Diss. It is federated with another small school nearby and both schools share the headteacher.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This small school is very much at the heart of the village and surrounding areas that it serves. Small classes and a warm, family atmosphere help to explain why children settle in so quickly and make good progress. It is a happy and welcoming school, in which pupils are taught Christian values as well as the skills they need to progress in their academic studies. Pupils' personal development is promoted outstandingly well. They behave particularly well in class and around the school, because of the consistent ways in which adults reward good behaviour and model respect and concern for others. The school's leadership is accurate in judging the school to be good. All the parents who responded agree that their children are happy and making good progress. They praise the small class sizes and the fact that their children are treated as individuals. One parent summed it up when they said, 'All teachers know every child, leading to a happy learning experience and contented children.'

Pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development is outstanding. During their digging for 'fossils' in the school garden, there was a very real sense of awe and wonder as they found a fascinating range of bones and pottery. Pupils were engrossed by the assembly they enjoyed, which was based on the Chinese New Year, and many took an active part. Their genuine enjoyment of school helps to keep attendance figures above average.

Pupils contribute well to the local community and the wider world. They are very aware that some people are not as privileged as they are and they show this by raising money for charities. The progress pupils make in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills, along with the many opportunities they have to collaborate and work in teams, ensures that they are prepared well for their lives after school. Older pupils are involved in marketing exercises with local businesses. This makes a good contribution to their understanding of financial matters. The good preparation for their future roles in society is further evidenced by the achievements of the school council. Representatives are democratically elected and they have made a significant contribution to the working of the school. For example, they have had changes made to windows so that the environment in the classrooms is more comfortable. These alterations have involved special shielding so that heat and glare from the sun is reduced in sunny weather. The council has also instigated a suggestions box so that every pupil can put suggestions forward and have ideas considered.

The school council is currently campaigning for better outdoor facilities. The lack of these is a problem for the school. The building dates back to Victorian times and is full of charming features, but in some respects is inadequate for education today. The governors have worked hard to make the best of what they have. For example, the school is equipped with the latest information and communication technology equipment, which is used well to aid learning. However, there is hardly any hard play space and the facilities for the Reception children to learn outside are inadequate. Pupils' understanding of the need to eat healthily is good, as is their commitment to healthy exercise, but the lack of resources limits their opportunities to take part in sport. They rightly believe that the school is a safe and secure place to be and are well aware of potential dangers in the wider world. The school works well to promote community cohesion and this ensures that any incidents of racism are extremely rare. Multicultural festivals and themes are built into the religious education and collective worship programmes, alongside excellent links with the local church that give a strong spiritual dimension to the pupils' education. They are actively engaged in the village community, supporting senior citizens and

organising litter collections in the locality. They are in communication with a school in Africa, developing extremely well their understanding of other cultures.

The curriculum is good, not only in its breadth and depth, but also in the ways that work in English supports learning in other subjects. All pupils study French. There are many visits and visitors to enhance their studies and a good range of after school activities. Teaching is good; teachers plan exciting lessons and ensure that pupils are actively involved. Their control and management of their classes are excellent across the school. Teachers have high expectations of pupils. They plan lessons well to ensure that the work they set is appropriate for the different needs, ages and abilities of the pupils in their classes. Lessons are well resourced and information and communication technology is used very well to help pupils to learn. Pupils know their targets suitably and sometimes join the teacher in deciding how they can demonstrate that they have reached them.

All this good provision has a positive impact on pupils' achievements. Over their whole time in the school, pupils achieve well. They make good progress, so that standards are above average by the time they leave. The very few children in the Reception year achieve satisfactorily. Attainment in the national tests and assessments for seven year-olds varies from year to year because of the small size of the intake but is currently average. In recent years, performance in the national tests at the end of Year 6 has risen and was above average in 2008. Compared with pupils in similar schools, pupils here make better than expected progress through Key Stage 2. The school is working to raise writing standards, realising that these are below those for reading, mathematics and science. Some teachers do not give enough written advice to pupils on how to make their writing better. There are good opportunities for pupils to redraft their work, but they are not given enough guidance on how to improve it from first to final draft. All other aspects of support, care and guidance are outstanding. All the children are known and cared for exceptionally well. Links with families are very close and supportive. Child protection procedures are very secure and all safeguarding procedures are firmly in place. Links with external agencies are very effective in providing support for pupils who need it. Pupils with learning difficulties and/ or disabilities benefit from considerable additional help that helps them to progress at the same rate as the other pupils.

The school benefits from good leadership, not only from the headteacher and senior team, but all staff with management responsibilities. Good self evaluation and analysis of data ensures that the school is aware of its strengths and weaknesses. Effective strategic planning has led to clear improvements in teaching, planning, parental involvement and the curriculum. Governance is good. Governors have developed their role in challenging the school to continue improving and are involved in all aspects of the work of the school. The many strengths in management ensure that the school has good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Overall, children make satisfactory progress towards achieving the goals expected of them. They make better progress in some areas of learning than others. The very few Early Years Foundation Stage children are integrated within a mixed age class, where they receive good additional support in a range of well organised and structured activities. There are so few children that achievement varies widely from year to year. They usually meet their goals for personal and social development and numeracy skills. However, the inadequate quality of the available indoor and outdoor space limits children's experiences and opportunities for the

development of their independent learning skills. In an attempt to overcome this, teachers work hard to provide children with as many learning opportunities through play as possible.

Personal development is good. Children settle into school well and experience a happy and secure start. As a result, they learn in a safe learning environment where they are well cared for. Young children learn to cooperate and to care for each other alongside the older children, who set good examples. They develop positive attitudes that equip them well for their life in school. Satisfactory leadership and management are seen in the good teamwork and the regular checks on children's progress, but the limited resources to support children's learning were also a weakness at the time of the last report. Largely because of limitations imposed by the cramped accommodation and the site that are beyond the school's control, they remain an area of concern.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make certain that teaching gives all pupils clear and effective guidance on what they need to do to improve and develop their writing skills further.
- Improve the facilities for the Reception children so that they can benefit from the full range of learning opportunities recommended for children of their age.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

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| 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

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|---|---|
| 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

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| 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

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|---|---|
| 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 | 2 |
| 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 | 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? | 1 |

Leadership and management

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| 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

28 January 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Palgrave Church of England VC Primary School, Diss, IP22 1AG

Thank you very much for making us so welcome at your school. It was a pleasure to talk to you. Your singing in assembly and your acting out of the story of how the Chinese years came to get their names were particularly enjoyable! A special thank you to the children we met at lunchtime, who talked about what it is like to be a pupil at your school.

You said how much you like your school and of the happiness and friendliness that dwell there. Your school gives you a good education. You feel safe and cared for because the school looks after you extremely well. By the end of Year 6, you have made good progress. You are better at reading, writing and numeracy than most children in other schools. You behave extremely well and enjoy your learning.

The teachers in charge of the school are leading it well. Your headteacher and all the staff are working hard to help you succeed. You make good progress because your teachers teach you well. We have asked them to make sure that you get lots of advice to help you to raise the standards of your writing even higher. The school is very small. This is good in some ways. Everyone knows each other and you get individual attention. It does mean that the youngest children do not have the same facilities that they would have in many other schools. So the school is going to try to improve the outside learning areas and give them more play equipment.

Once again thank you for a delightful day.

Yours sincerely

Paul Cosway

Lead inspector