

Harleston CofE VA Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134049
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	328810
Inspection dates	15–16 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Cheryl Thompson

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	393
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 Lynne Aldred
Headteacher	Mr Roger Walsh
Date of previous school inspection	15 March 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	School Lane Harleston Norfolk IP20 9HE
Telephone number	01379 853211
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger-than-average primary school. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and live in Harleston, or in nearby villages. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) are taught in the Nursery, one Reception and one mixed Reception/Year 1 class. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is average. Attainment on entry is broadly average, but varies considerably from year to year. The proportion of pupils needing extra help with learning, or to cope with disabilities is similar to that found nationally, although the proportion of pupils with a statement of special needs is above average. There is a very small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language.

The school was originally two schools. Classes are housed in six separate buildings on a large site. Current building work is to replace some of the temporary classrooms.

The school is a training partner for several providers of initial teacher training. It has been awarded national 'Healthy School' status, Activemark, Artsmark Silver award, Eco Schools Silver award and Investors in People status.

Building of new houses in the locality has resulted in a significant influx of pupils in various year groups.

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. It has significant strengths in its provision of outstanding care, guidance and support. This successfully underpins pupils' learning and supports their exceptional personal development. The headteacher's outstanding and inspirational leadership provides the strong sense of spirituality that permeates the life and work of the school. Staff, pupils and regular volunteers take pride in working at Harleston Primary. Parents and the community hold the school in high esteem. Very strong teamwork is a consistent feature throughout the school. The capacity for further improvement is good.

Pupils love coming to school and demonstrate this with their good attendance and high participation in the exceptionally good range of extra-curricular activities on offer. As one parent commented, 'My children have enjoyed every day at school.' Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning. The principal reasons for this are that the curriculum is interesting and relevant, and it is delivered by enthusiastic and knowledgeable staff. Pupils achieve well because teaching is good and on occasions, outstanding. Standards are above average in reading, writing and mathematics in Year 2 and in English, mathematics and science at Year 6. In information and communication technology (ICT) standards are also above average.

Relationships are excellent. Pupils know they are valued as individuals. The school's system for tracking pupils' progress is used most effectively by senior staff to check that pupils are doing as well as possible in English, mathematics and science and to target those needing extra help with learning. Consequently, these pupils achieve well in relation to their starting points and have very good self-esteem.

Pupils' personal development and well being are outstanding. In lessons and discussions, they display a thoughtful maturity which is frequently at a level that would normally be thought to be beyond their years. They have no doubt that, should they have any worries, an adult will help them. Behaviour is almost always outstanding, except on those occasions when there is too little for pupils to do in the playgrounds. However, at all times, pupils demonstrate great respect for one another. Community cohesion is excellent. The school is at the heart of its community and has strong links with schools in other countries. Older pupils, particularly, make an excellent contribution to school life and the wider community, taking on responsibilities in classes and the school with great enthusiasm.

Leadership and management are good and, as a result, there has been a good improvement since the last inspection. The school works extremely well in partnership with others to promote learners' well being. For example, there are profitable links with speech therapists as well as local pre-schools and the nearby secondary school. The findings from analysing pupils' progress are used rigorously to set targets for improvement. The leadership sets and publishes realistic targets for raising standards in English and mathematics and aspires to better these. However, they do not include their aspirational and challenging targets in the school improvement and development plan to make it clear to staff and governors what an exacting standard they are trying to achieve.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The skills of the children in this year's Nursery intake are typical of those found nationally. However, the school's data show considerable differences in attainment from year to year. The

EYFS provides a secure environment so that children settle quickly and happily into school. Staff look after children with utmost care and attention. Children feel safe. Their personal development is good. The development of language skills and extending vocabulary is a high priority. Children benefit from having adults play with them in drama activity areas. Teaching is good and children enjoy learning because they are provided with good opportunities to explore and discover for themselves. For example, carefully examining very old toys that their grandparents may have played with and playing with leaves in the outside play area. Achievement is good. Adults make careful observations of what children can do. As yet, they are not planning precisely enough to address the learning needs of individuals to ensure that they make even better progress. By the end of Reception, most children reach standards appropriate for their age and in some years exceed these. The EYFS leader manages staff well so that all work very effectively as a team. She monitors children's progress well using assessments made by staff. However, she does not have time to monitor the provision in classes other than her own. Consequently, she does not have a clear picture of the strengths and areas to improve within the EYFS.

Good links are established with parents through home visits prior to children starting Nursery. Parents are welcomed warmly into school. They are helped and encouraged to contribute to their children's learning and say that they appreciate this help. Transitions from Nursery to Reception and from Reception to Year 1 classes are managed very well so that children are confident and keen to join their 'new' class.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide opportunities for the EYFS leader to monitor the provision for Reception children.
- Include aspirational targets in school development planning.
- Provide a greater range of resources and activities for pupils at playtimes.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' attainment and progress have improved since the last inspection. Achievement is good. Pupils of all abilities make good progress in their learning as they move through the school, although the school has noted that a few pupils who are more able could do even better. Standards in national tests for English, mathematics and science have risen from the average levels noted at the last inspection, to above average across the school. Indeed, as a result of the school's focus on improving writing, in Year 2, standards in writing were exceptionally high in 2008 national teacher assessments. The proportions of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 have increased year-on-year. In the end of Year 6 assessments for English, mathematics and science they are now similar to the national averages in English and mathematics, and above in science. Standards in ICT have also improved and are now above average in Year 6. Pupils use their ICT skills competently in other subjects such as mathematics and for finding information on the Internet.

The school has maintained its excellent provision for pupils who need extra help with learning. These pupils continue to make good progress in relation to their starting points. As a result, they have very good self-esteem.

Pupils who join the school during the school year are helped to settle in quickly and given extra help or support if necessary, enabling them to make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils are very happy in school and thoroughly enjoy their lessons. They respond well to the strong, caring Christian ethos of the school which is consistently modelled by all staff. They are knowledgeable and respectful about a range of cultures and beliefs. Their spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding. Pupils have a strong sense of empathy and a depth of understanding, for example, of the qualities which make a person inspirational to others. Behaviour in lessons is exemplary. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to lead healthy life styles and keep themselves safe. They make a very significant contribution to their own, the local, and the wider community in numerous ways. These include an impressive commitment to environmental issues, links with local businesses and substantial funds raised for charities at home and abroad. Pupils are very well prepared for the future world of work through their good progress in basic skills, excellent social skills, an outstanding ability to work together in teams and, for their age, astute financial awareness.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The competent and skilful teachers clearly enjoy their work. This enjoyment is infectious and reflected in pupils' excellent attitudes to learning. A few outstanding lessons were observed, and what was most notable about these were the excellent links between subjects, which made learning exciting and relevant. Excellent relationships between staff and pupils support pupils' confidence to discuss and attempt challenging work without the fear of making mistakes. Across the school, the consistent approach to marking and the use of self-assessment is impressive. Teachers' feedback to pupils about their work is excellent. All pupils have clear targets so they know the next steps in their learning. A small number of lessons lacked pace. The time between, or before lessons at the beginning of the day, is not always used to good advantage.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Practical, first hand experiences capture pupils' interest, deepen their understanding and lead to a good rate of learning. Every opportunity is taken to give pupils real-life experiences. As examples, after a fete, pupils count, bag and deliver the coins to the bank; pupils monitor the school's energy consumption and help take practical steps to reduce it. There are good links developing between many subjects. French is taught as a discrete subject. Activities, such as three residential trips, enrich the curriculum and contribute significantly to children's learning and personal development. The school draws on the skills of a good number of members of the local community to enrich pupils' learning. The excellent library provision continues to be a strength in its promotion of pupils' very positive attitudes to reading.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

All staff demonstrate a very high level of commitment to encouraging pupils' enjoyment and achievement as well as helping to ensure their health and well-being. The school works exceptionally well with other agencies such as the parent support advisor to help pupils and

their families. Pupils new to the school are helped to settle in and establish friends. Several parents commented on how well their children settle and thrive, 'The improvement has been incredible', wrote one parent. Exceptionally strong links with the local community ensure that should difficulties occur outside school these can be dealt with in school. Safeguarding arrangements are thorough and carefully managed. The school has maintained its excellent provision for pupils needing extra help with learning or help to manage physical disabilities. Pupils for whom English is an additional language have their needs assessed carefully and are well supported. The school has recently taken creative steps in providing for gifted and talented pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Good management systems are in place. For example, the school's pupil progress tracking system is thorough. It is used highly effectively by the senior team and headteacher to identify groups and individuals who are not doing as well as expected so that interventions can be put in place. The school has correctly identified that the next step is for teachers to make more precise use of this system to keep a close eye on the progress their class is making. Teaching and learning are monitored regularly and rigorously and teachers helped to improve their practice. This has secured a good improvement in the quality of teaching reflected in the rising standards since the last inspection. Self evaluation is good but school improvement planning does not include the aspirational and challenging targets set for Year 6. Governance is good. Governors know the school well and take a proactive role within it. They are not afraid to question to see if the school can do even better. Community cohesion is excellent and very effectively promoted throughout the school. The headteacher and senior team are aware of the success of this work. For example, they carefully check to ensure that the high number of volunteers who help in school are representative of the various groups within the local community. They also consult with the community as to how the school can be used most effectively as a resource. In lessons and assemblies, teachers make very successful use of their strong links with schools in other countries to raise pupils' understanding of others' lives.

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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	1

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

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?	1
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 January 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Harleston C of E VA Primary School IP20 9HG

Thank you so much for welcoming us to your school. Like you, we think it is a very friendly place to be and you get on very well together. Our particular thanks to those of you who kindly gave up part of your lunchtime to talk to us. We found what you had to say very helpful. In return, I now want to share with you my findings.

This is a good school. You told us that you really enjoy school and we could see why, particularly when we saw the interesting lessons you have and the good range of sporting activities, visitors and other opportunities such as the Eco schools work the school provides. You told us the teachers are nice and everyone is friendly. We agree that teaching is good and all the adults care about you a great deal and work hard on your behalf. We could see that you think hard about how well you have completed your work and try to reach the targets your teachers set for you. We noted that standards are above average and you make good progress because teachers keep a close eye on how well you are getting on. We were impressed by your good manners and your ability to discuss things in a very sensible way. We thought that you could be even more sensible at playtimes if you had more equipment to play with. Your headteacher and senior teachers provide good leadership. I have asked them to do three things to make your school even better.

- Give you more equipment to use at playtimes.
- To include the really hard targets they set for you in Year 6 as part of school development planning.
- To give the leader of the Nursery and Reception more time to see what is going on in the classrooms.

Your school is successful, not only because of what the adults bring to it, but also because of your contributions. You are very positive about learning and we were very impressed with your excellent behaviour and how welcoming you are to visitors.

Thank you again for your help.

Yours sincerely

Cheryl Thompson

Lead inspector