

Northborough Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110700
Local Authority	Peterborough
Inspection number	337551
Inspection dates	1–2 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Mary Summers

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	190
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gilmour McLaren
Headteacher	Christine Moss
Date of previous school inspection	7 February 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 12 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of school policies and plans, pupils' work and 61 questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

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

- more able pupils' achievement in mathematics and science in Key Stage 2
- the achievement of boys in Key Stage 2
- the impact of subject coordinators on pupils' achievement and standards
- provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- how well the school checks its own performance and plans for improvement.

Information about the school

Most pupils in this small village school are from White British families although a few other ethnicities are present in small numbers. Over the school as a whole, the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than average. Numbers vary considerably in each year group, however, and, in some year groups, the proportion is above average. Their difficulties are concerned mainly with moderate or specific learning problems.

The headteacher started at the school in September 2007. The school holds the Healthy Schools and Activemark awards.

The Sunflowers Club, run by a private concern, operates from the school site and provides pre-school provision, before- and after-school care and a holiday club. It was separately inspected.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

This school is improving rapidly following a dip in standards in the last two years. A range of staffing issues, including absences and changes of teachers, affected overall performance. These have now been overcome and school leaders are focused more firmly on pupils' progress and achievements. Assessment procedures have been strengthened and now enable the school to gain a very clear picture of pupils' achievement and highlight areas where improvement is needed.

Children's attainment on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage varies widely from year to year. In some years, children join the Reception class at levels that are in line with those expected for their age and, in other years, their attainment on entry is low. They make good progress and most transfer to Year 1 having met the goals expected for children of their age.

Pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1. Standards at the end of Year 2 have been well above average in recent years, but look likely to be broadly average this year because of the number of pupils in this year group who started school with low skills and capabilities and also because of some inconsistencies in the teaching. Progress is satisfactory in Key Stage 2. In the last two years, pupils have reached average standards by the end of Year 6, although standards in English have been above average. However, more able pupils do not make enough progress in mathematics and science. Too few reach Level 5 in the national tests. Achievement in Key Stage 2 has been affected by the many changes of teachers that pupils have experienced in previous years. The current staffing situation is more stable and pupils are now achieving satisfactorily. Standards look likely to be above average by the end of the year.

Pupils' rates of progress vary throughout the school because of inconsistencies in teaching. Pupils make the most gains in their learning in Years 1, 5 and 6 because of good and sometimes outstanding teaching. In other classes, progress is satisfactory. The work set by teachers is sometimes too easy for more able pupils and this limits their progress in lessons. This is often the case in mathematics and science. Pupils' work is marked regularly but does not always provide pupils with clear advice about how to improve. Teachers do not have sufficient opportunities to observe their colleagues and learn from good examples.

Pupils say they feel safe and are confident that there are many adults they can turn to in the school if they have any concerns. They know what to do if bullying occurs although they say that this happens rarely. They understand the dangers of drugs and how to use the internet safely. Pupils are well behaved in class and around the school. Pupils have a good awareness of different faiths and cultures. They listened with great

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interest, for example to an assembly that explained how Christmas was celebrated in different parts of the world.

Pupils confirm that they enjoy school and their good attendance reflects this. They especially enjoy the new outdoor learning environment, developed over the last year, which is supporting more investigative work in science as well as other aspects of the curriculum. Good partnerships with parents and outside agencies really benefit pupils' learning and personal development. Pupils gain tremendous insight, for example, into life in a multicultural community through well-established links with several schools in Peterborough.

School leaders have a reasonably accurate view of performance, although they are sometimes too generous in their judgements because systems to check teaching and the school's performance are not as systematic and rigorous as they might be. Improvement plans lack clear monitoring procedures to enable their progress to be reviewed and actions adapted if necessary. Weaknesses in pupils' achievement at Key Stage 2 in mathematics and science have been recognised and the curriculum strengthened to provide more challenging, investigative activities for pupils. Leaders have identified inconsistencies in teaching and have implemented plans to try to improve practice. These actions demonstrate the school's satisfactory capacity to improve in the future.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportions of pupils reaching Level 5 in the Year 6 national tests in mathematics and science by ensuring that more able pupils are given challenging work in lessons.
- Improve the proportion of good teaching in the school by
 - establishing systems to allow teachers to observe examples of good and outstanding practice within and beyond the school
 - monitoring lessons more regularly and rigorously to ensure that initiatives are being implemented and advice acted upon
 - ensuring a consistent approach to marking to provide pupils with advice about how they can improve their work.
- Establish a continuous cycle of monitoring and evaluation, involving all stakeholders, to gain a better picture of the school's performance and ensure that the school improvement plan contains clear monitoring procedures to assess the progress of the plans over the year.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and the overwhelming majority enjoy their education. Children make good progress through Reception and benefit greatly from the wide

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range of activities provided to develop their confidence and independence. Year 2 pupils have reached well above average standards in past years, reflecting good progress across Key Stage 1. However, progress currently is variable across the key stage and is satisfactory overall. Pupils currently in Year 2 look likely to reach broadly average levels by the end of the year. More able pupils are not always challenged by the activities provided and are capable of much faster progress.

Achievement in Years 3 to 6, while satisfactory overall, varies according to the quality of teaching that pupils receive. Work in mathematics and science does not always stretch the more able and help them to reach high levels. In a science lesson on friction for example in Key Stage 2, while pupils' learning was satisfactory overall, opportunities were missed to challenge the more able pupils to design and carry out their own investigations.

Boys attained lower levels than girls in the national tests in Year 6 last year but school records and scrutiny of pupils' work shows that this is not a significant trend. Pupils' achievement and standards have been hindered by many changes of teachers in previous years. The situation is now more stable and the current pupils in Year 6 are on track to reach above average standards by the end of the year.

Pupils with moderate and specific learning difficulties have made satisfactory progress in the past but current initiatives have improved the level and quality of support which is contributing to better achievement. Pupils at risk of falling behind are now quickly identified through the school's assessment procedures and small group work implemented to help them catch up. Strong links between staff and parents ensure that these pupils settle quickly and take a full part in school life.

Pupils treat one another very sensitively, supporting their friends and showing great respect for different cultures and opinions. They have a strong awareness of right and wrong and a good sense of fairness and consideration for others. They make a strong contribution to the school, local and wider community, keenly accepting responsibilities as school councillors and hosting pupils from schools in Peterborough who come to use the school's outdoor learning environment. Average levels of basic skills mean they are satisfactorily prepared for their future education.

The school's efforts to gain Healthy Schools and the Activemark have meant that pupils develop a good knowledge of how to keep healthy. They participate eagerly in physical education lessons and sports clubs outside school hours. School lunches are healthy and nutritious, with growing numbers of pupils enjoying them during the week.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Inconsistencies in teaching contribute to pupils' uneven progress across the school. In some classes, teaching is outstanding and pupils make excellent progress. In an English lesson in Year 6 for example, the pupils worked extremely hard to write a mystery story, using the knowledge gained through their analysis of other texts. They thoroughly enjoyed the task because it was presented in a dynamic way by the teacher and the subject matter captured their interest and excitement. In some other classes, pupils, especially the more able, are not engaged and challenged by the work and this limits their progress. Marking is inconsistent across the school and does not always provide enough guidance for pupils so that they know how to improve their work.

Throughout the school, teachers enjoy good relationships with pupils which enable them to manage their behaviour well. This ensures that lessons proceed in a calm and orderly manner. Pupils feel very confident to offer their ideas and suggestions, firm in the knowledge that these will be valued. They are not frightened to ask for help, reflecting the strength of their relationships with teachers and adults.

Subjects are often linked to make learning relevant to pupils. Pupils in Year 5 for example, wrote reports of their historical research, following visits to the local church and Manor House. The school arranges a good range of visits to extend pupils' experience in, for example, the arts and sport. Themed days, such as Greek Day and the Great Fire of London Day, provide exciting and enjoyable occasions for pupils to develop their learning. Residential trips in Years 4, 5 and 6 are extremely popular and provide good opportunities for pupils to engage in physically demanding activities, as well as learn how to live together away from home.

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Pupils with moderate and specific learning difficulties receive good levels of support. Assistants are well briefed and make learning enjoyable through a good range of games and activities. A small group of pupils made excellent progress for example, when they competed with the teaching assistant and each other in 'Countdown'. They used their numerical skills to come up with a series of calculations to arrive at a three-digit answer. 'Sensory circuits' is a successful initiative involving physical activities at the start of the school day, designed to help specific pupils get ready for learning.

Pastoral support is good. Pupils and their families are well known to staff, who often go the extra mile to ensure that they take a full part in the life of the school. An overwhelming majority of parents agree that their children are well cared for and enjoy coming to school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders have strengthened systems to maintain a close check on pupils' progress and to help teachers identify the next steps for each pupil in their learning. These are working well in reading and writing but are not so firmly established in mathematics and science, which results in lessons sometimes not challenging the more able pupils enough. Nonetheless, these systems are proving valuable in identifying individuals and groups who are at risk of underachievement so that appropriate steps can be taken to help them catch up.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher promote equal opportunities through monitoring the achievement of different groups of pupils, for example, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the gifted and talented pupils, throughout the year. Targets for different cohorts present real challenge, especially for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Senior leaders monitor teaching, but not regularly or rigorously enough to smooth out inconsistencies. Subject coordinators are developing their roles appropriately but do not have effective systems in place to gain a clear picture of provision and outcomes to help them to plan for improvement. This mirrors the school's overall evaluation procedures which are not systematic enough to gain a really detailed and accurate picture of performance. School leaders' plans for improvement take account of parents' and governors' views but lack enough detail about how developments will be monitored over time to assess their progress and success.

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The school is careful to ensure that all the appropriate checks are made on the suitability of adults who are working with children. The safeguarding policy is satisfactory and is regularly reviewed but lacks some details about training and how the policy will be monitored.

Governors are supportive and bring a good range of skills with which to support the school's work in, for example, finance and health and safety. They survey parents' views through regular questionnaires and make a series of visits to find out about the school's work. However, these are not always sufficiently well focused to provide a clear picture of performance.

The school enjoys good partnerships with parents and positive links with agencies outside the school that contribute well to pupils' learning and personal development. Workshops in mathematics have helped parents to support their children more effectively at home. Staff go out of their way to communicate with parents who find it difficult to approach the school because of work or other commitments. All of the parents who responded to the questionnaire said that the school listens to their concerns and suggestions. Links with local health services, the church and communities further afield, for example Chernobyl and Kenya, contribute successfully to pupils' personal development and promote community cohesion well.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
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 equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Well-established induction procedures help them to settle in quickly and provide a positive start to

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building strong relationships with parents. The children quickly develop independence and confidence because they are encouraged to choose from a wide range of well-organised activities indoors and outdoors.

Children's attainment on entry to the Reception class varies, although, in most years, it is broadly in line with levels expected for children of their age. In some years, however, it is lower than expected, especially in communication, language and literacy. Staff work hard to plan activities that interest and motivate the children in all aspects of their learning. Their progress is tracked carefully and information used well to ensure that individual children receive the right sort of support and challenge. In most years, attainment at the end of the year is above nationally expected levels.

The attractive learning environment is safe and well maintained. Vibrant displays celebrate children's efforts and provoke interest and excitement. Consequently, children really enjoy their learning. This was clear when they made 'maps' to show the three kings' journey to Bethlehem. They shared their ideas sensibly, considering how the kings might have travelled and who they might have encountered on the way. Adults intervened sensitively, posing appropriate questions to stimulate language and discussion.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school, commenting that their children greatly enjoy all the school has to offer. They say that the school listens carefully to their opinions and concerns. A very small minority expressed concerns about how the school manages unacceptable behaviour but inspectors found that the school has clear and effective systems in place to deal with behaviour and pupils themselves were happy about these.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Northborough Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 61 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 190 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	44	72	17	28	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	42	69	14	23	2	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	32	52	26	43	2	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	33	54	26	43	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	39	64	21	34	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	36	59	24	39	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	38	62	21	34	0	0	1	2
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	33	54	18	30	1	2	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	35	57	22	36	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	24	39	26	43	4	7	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	27	44	31	51	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	31	51	23	38	3	5	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	47	69	18	30	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



4 December 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Northborough Primary School, Peterborough PE6 9BN

Thank you so much for welcoming us to your school recently. Thank you especially to those of you who talked with inspectors to give us your ideas and opinions about the school. Your views, along with everything else that we saw in lessons and around the school, helped us to form a clear view about how well your school works.

Your school is giving you a satisfactory education overall although the following things are good:

- children get a good start to their education in the Reception class
- your behaviour is good in lessons and around the school
- you know how to keep safe and healthy
- most of you attend regularly and punctually each day
- teachers organise a wide range of exciting activities and clubs for you to enjoy
- adults look after you really well.

There are a few things about the school that could be better. More of you should be reaching Level 5 in the national tests in mathematics and science in Year 6 and we have asked your teachers to make sure that they give you really challenging work to help more of you to achieve this. We have also asked them to make sure that when they mark your work, they give you some helpful hints about how to improve. We have asked the people in charge to check more carefully to make sure you are all receiving good teaching and making good progress. They should also check other aspects of the school's work more carefully to find out where improvements might be made and plan these carefully, making sure that they keep a close eye on how these are going.

You can play your part in the school's success by continuing to work hard and give your views and ideas about the school to your teachers, other staff and governors.

Yours sincerely

Mary Summers

Lead inspector

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