

Frobisher Primary and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114757
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	338439
Inspection dates	24–25 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Selwyn Ward

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	287
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Maurice Alexander
Headteacher	Emily Simpson and Tracey Caffull (Co-headteachers)
Date of previous school inspection	18 January 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors visited 17 lessons and observed 10 teachers. They spoke with parents, staff, governors, groups of pupils and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work, the analysis of the tracking of pupils' progress, school policies and procedures, school leaders' monitoring records, school development planning and risk assessments. They also analysed the questionnaires received from pupils and 51 parents and carers.

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

- leaders' impact in tackling underachievement, and the extent to which the school ensures that boys and girls of all abilities make the progress they should throughout the school
- the governing body's role in budget and target setting, and in holding leaders to account
- the effectiveness of arrangements to support and ensure the progress of potentially vulnerable pupils and those with additional learning needs, and to promote full attendance.

Information about the school

The school is larger than the average primary school. The great majority of pupils are White British, with only a very small number from minority ethnic backgrounds. Around a third of the pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, which is close to twice the national average. The highest proportion of additional needs is for dyslexia and moderate learning difficulties. A high proportion of pupils join and leave the school partway through their primary education. Frobisher has Healthy Schools status. The co-headteachers each work part-time. They were appointed in September 2009.

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?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the quality of teaching and pupils' attainment.

'This school has changed for the better since the new headteachers came in.' This comment from a parent was typical of many that recognise the improvements that have been introduced this year. A more stimulating curriculum has given added relevance to subjects such as mathematics, so that pupils are now beginning to make greater effort. In line with the good arrangements for pupils' care and welfare, thorough systems have been introduced to reduce avoidable absence. Pupils demonstrate a good appreciation of the need for a healthy diet and regular exercise. Although attendance remains below average, it is now very much better than it was, and the school has exceeded the target for attendance agreed with the local authority. Most notably, pupils' behaviour has been transformed. It is now good in most lessons and in the playground, and this is mirrored in the dramatic reduction in the number of exclusions: down to three from the 23 seen the previous year. Pupils get on well together and treat each other with respect, reflecting their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. These changes illustrate how far Frobisher has come over the past year and reflect the school's satisfactory capacity for further improvement. However, as school leaders readily acknowledge in their own accurate evaluation, it still has further to go.

Good provision for the many pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has rapidly accelerated their progress. They particularly benefit from the well targeted provision for them in specialised mixed-age classes. As a result, this group of pupils is now making good progress. There are examples, too, of good progress for other pupils in lessons, but progress and achievement overall are inadequate because there are too many lessons where the teaching is inadequate. Sometimes, this is because teachers do not expect enough of the pupils. Even in satisfactory lessons, teachers and support staff too often settle for pupils being quiet rather than ensuring that they are actively listening and taking part. Teachers rarely direct questions at those who sit quietly and who do not volunteer answers. During whole-class teaching, teachers do not routinely use teaching assistants to look out for those pupils who are uninvolved so that they can focus on better engaging them in the next lesson. Marking varies in quality, and there is not a routine expectation in every class that pupils check their work and take care in its presentation. Pupils make the best progress when they have a clear understanding of what is expected of them, precise success criteria against which to gauge how well they

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are doing, and varied activities that keep them on their toes. These are not, however, consistent features of teaching across the school. With the notable exception of the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, work is not matched carefully enough to pupils' different capabilities. The net result is that, despite the many improvements this year, attainment remains low and pupils' low literacy and numeracy skills mean that they are not well enough prepared for the next stage of their education.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching in order to raise attainment by increasing teachers' expectations of what the pupils can achieve and by ensuring that in all lessons:
 - pupils have a clear understanding of what they are due to learn and the tasks they are expected to carry out
 - teachers give pupils varied, well paced activities that fully engage their interest
 - teachers and support staff ensure that all pupils are actively involved
 - work is set that is appropriately challenging for pupils of all abilities
 - pupils are given clear guidance, through marking, that shows them what they need to do to improve their work.
- Involve pupils more actively in their learning in order to accelerate their progress by:
 - directing questions at those who are reluctant to volunteer answers
 - consistently giving pupils clear success criteria so that they can evaluate for themselves how well they are learning
 - ensuring that pupils routinely check their work
 - encouraging pupils to take a greater pride in the presentation of their work.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**4**

Pupils' attainment and rates of progress are much lower than those described in the last inspection report. Although boys did much less well than girls in their Key Stage 1 assessments in 2009, there was little gender difference in Key Stage 2 and inspectors noted no significant differences between the overall performance of boys and girls. In some of the older classes, it is often girls who are quietly inattentive, while boys are more likely to engage in off-task chatter when they are given unchallenging tasks to complete, such as cutting and pasting. There is evidence of some improvement in progress and attainment this year, with an increasing proportion of pupils making the expected gain in National Curriculum levels over the course of their time in Key Stage 2, particularly in English. However, attainment remains low and is still below the minimum targets, set for the school. The good progress made by pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is not matched by other pupils. This is because there are too many lessons where progress is slow. Weaknesses seen in lessons during the inspection

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were similarly evident from the work in pupils' books. This also showed that pupils often make careless errors due to poor presentation or because they had not taken the time to check their calculations or their spellings and punctuation. Although mobility is high, this does not materially affect the school's test results: there is no evidence that pupils who join the school partway through their primary education do less well than their peers.

The improvement in pupils' behaviour, and the good support given to pupils who need extra help in managing their behaviour, have helped to make Frobisher a harmonious community where squabbles are rare. Pupils are often compliant rather than eager in lessons because they are not always given enough varied, practical activities. Where tasks are made interesting and fun, the pupils respond with enthusiasm and ready for new experiences. For example, they have been keenly motivated by the 'World Cup' mathematics challenge, where, with teachers acting as referees, teams notionally matched to national soccer teams compete against each other in assembly on their knowledge of number facts and multiplication tables.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

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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Teaching seen during the inspection ranged from good to inadequate. Although there are signs, including from pupils' work, that teaching is improving, there is currently not enough good teaching to ensure that pupils all make the progress that they should and that they catch up on previously lost ground. Teachers have this year been made more accountable for pupils' progress, and they have assessment information that gives them, and school leaders, an accurate picture of how well each child is doing. This has been used to target support, including one-to-one tuition to help some pupils to accelerate their progress. However, teachers do not all plan and set work that is appropriately matched to each pupil's capabilities. In some classes, and particularly for work in literacy, marking gives pupils helpful advice on the next steps they need to take to move their learning on. This is not the norm. Much marking merely acknowledges that work has been done. There are few examples of teachers using marking to develop a dialogue with pupils about their work, and pupils are only sporadically involved in evaluating their own and each other's work.

The co-headteachers have ambitious plans for further developing the curriculum in the coming year, but there have already been improvements this year which have had a positive impact. Cross-curricular links have given pupils more opportunities to apply what they have learnt in one subject to their learning in another. Pupils' work in science, for example, draws on and contributes to literacy and numeracy skills, especially on those occasions when pupils record the findings of their investigations in their own way rather than using worksheets or templates. Despite some resources for information and communication technology (ICT) that are passed their best, pupils show reasonable progress in their ICT skills, with imaginative use made by the school of games consoles to supplement the aging computers. Initiatives such as 'Maths in the Movies', linking work in mathematics to popular films have helped to motivate pupils in a subject where performance at Frobisher has traditionally lagged, but their introduction is too recent to show through in terms of their measurable impact on standards.

Arrangements for pupils' welfare are an important strength of Frobisher, especially as the school caters for a high proportion of potentially vulnerable pupils and those with troubled backgrounds. The school works closely with families, equipping parents to support their children's learning and successfully reducing the previously high rate of avoidable absence. The support given to pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities helps them to make good progress.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

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How effective are leadership and management?

In taking over a school which has been carrying a large deficit budget, the co-headteachers have had to review staffing and management structures, and there have been redundancies because previous staffing levels were unsustainable. Some of the arrangements to make up the deficit have not been conducive to the accelerated progress needed: some class sizes are unusually large, making it more difficult for the class teacher to ensure that every pupil is fully engaged. This has been recognised in the arrangements for class sizes from September 2010, which are in line with those seen in most other schools. Despite the many difficulties which school leaders have faced, the improvements over the past year have been substantial, and are amply verified by both parents and the local authority, with whom school leaders have worked closely. The co-headteachers work very effectively together and have an accurate picture of the school. Their monitoring has helped to drive improvement, although the monitoring of lessons has tended to focus on the features of teaching rather than on its impact on pupils' learning. Other school leaders share the co-headteachers' ambition for moving the school forward but are still in the process of developing their roles.

The governing body is also still developing its role. The fact that it had presided over a period of falling standards and an accumulating deficit, raised serious concerns with inspectors over the governance of the school. Many of the governors are new this year and the governing body is now acutely aware of past failings. Governors have a much clearer understanding of their responsibilities, and they are now discharging these satisfactorily. Arrangements for pupils' safeguarding, which were previously wanting, now fully meet government requirements, and the school has put in place robust systems for checking on pupils' safety and for dealing with child protection concerns. In many respects, equal opportunities are promoted well, especially in relation to vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, but there remains underachievement in lessons where teaching is insufficiently focused on ensuring pupils of all abilities make the progress they should. The school's promotion of community cohesion is most evident in the immediate locality, including through its work liaising with families and its contribution to local regeneration. Links with a school in Ghana have helped to broaden pupils' horizons and understanding of other cultures. The school is now well placed to extend its links with more diverse schools and communities in Britain.

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

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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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children join the school with often very low levels of attainment. Because the adults in Nursery and Reception have a good understanding of the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, the children make satisfactory progress. They enjoy the time they spend in the Nursery and Reception classes and, by the time they leave the Reception Year, the children show good skills of perseverance and concentration. Children's speaking and listening skills are especially low when they start school, and so the staff take every opportunity to encourage them to talk about what they are doing and how they feel. Relationships are good and children's behaviour is managed very well. As a result, most children are happy to make independent choices and have the confidence to select the resources they need for themselves. Children especially enjoy the wide range of exciting learning opportunities afforded them in the outside area: digging holes, blowing bubbles, watering plants, and the wide variety of physical activities, as well as dressing up and role play. Children do not always have similarly stimulating opportunities to develop their writing and drawing outside as a natural part of their play.

The adults make continual assessments of the children's progress, but much of this is informal and there is no written record, that can be shared with parents, of what each child needs to do next to move their individual learning on. Activities are regularly evaluated and this, and their knowledge of the children's needs and interests, influences future planning. For example, in Reception, a topic about the seaside has evolved as the children have brought things in from the local beach and the teacher makes the most of the facilities in the local area. She has also taken the opportunity to stress sea and beach safety, which are especially important considerations in this coastal school.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
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 of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Parents are positive about most aspects of school, particularly about how well the school keeps their children safe and helps them to develop healthy lifestyles. Several wrote to commend the improvements they have seen this year, although some would like to see more account taken of their suggestions.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Frobisher Primary and Nursery 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 51 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 287 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	33	65	16	31	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	31	61	18	35	0	0	1	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	22	43	22	43	6	12	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	26	51	20	39	2	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	23	45	23	45	3	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	23	45	23	45	4	8	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	21	41	29	57	0	0	0	0
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)	24	47	22	43	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	25	49	24	47	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	28	55	17	33	5	10	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	24	47	19	37	7	14	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	32	63	13	25	5	10	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	34	67	14	27	0	0	1	2

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



28 June 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Frobisher Primary and Nursery School, Clacton-on-Sea, CO15 2QH

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school. We could see that, under your co-headteachers' leadership, Frobisher has improved a lot over the past year. However, it still has further to go, to ensure that you are all making as much progress as you should be. Your school has therefore been given a 'notice to improve', and an inspector will visit the school again to see how well things are improving.

Those of you who get extra help with your learning are doing well, but that is not the case for everybody. At the moment, standards by the end of Year 6 are too low and there are too many lessons where you are not doing well enough. For that reason, we have agreed with the co-headteachers some changes to the way you are taught. We have suggested some ways of involving you more actively in your learning. This is a way in which you can all play your part in improvement. We would especially like to see you taking extra care to check your work, and seeing if you can spot and correct any spelling mistakes or punctuation errors. We would also like to see you take more care in the tidy presentation of your work; some of you let yourselves down by producing work that is untidy. One of the changes we have asked teachers to make is, when they mark your work, to give you all more clear guidance on how you can make it better. Again, you can all help by always taking care to read your teacher's comments and doing your very best to follow their advice.

I enjoyed watching the 'World Cup' mathematics challenge in assembly. Activities like that are helping to make learning more fun. We were particularly pleased to see how well behaved you are most of the time and how well you get on together. It was also good to see how much attendance has improved, although there are still some of you who are missing too much school. Staff take good care of you, and that is helping you to feel safe and secure at school.

Thank you again for being so helpful on our visit and our best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Selwyn Ward

Lead inspector

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