

Acle St Edmund Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121024
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	339832
Inspection dates	16–17 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Alan Jarvis

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	236
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Harris
Headteacher	Mr Paul Henery
Date of previous school inspection	5 December 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 10 teachers in 15 classroom visits. Meetings were held with governors, the headteacher and a number of staff responsible for key areas of the school's work. Inspectors looked at planning, minutes of meetings and other documentation, including that relating to safeguarding and pupils' learning and progress. Several informal discussions were held with parents. Questionnaires returned by 63 parents and carers, 83 pupils and 11 members of staff were analysed.

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

- the extent to which attainment and progress have improved especially in writing
- strengths in pupils' personal development
- how effectively teaching meets the needs of pupils of different abilities in the mixed aged classes
- how well the curriculum helps broaden pupils' perspectives and develop their lifelong learning skills.

Information about the school

Nearly all pupils are from White British backgrounds in this school of average size with a few of mixed heritage. A below average proportion have a special educational need and/or disability. Most commonly these pupils have support for their moderate learning, speech, language and communication or autistic spectrum disorder needs. Most pupils are taught in mixed aged classes. The governing body operates a breakfast club. The school has achieved Healthy Schools status and the Intermediate International Schools Award.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school that has improved considerably since the last inspection. It enjoys the full support of parents and carers, who rightly feel it is going 'from strength to strength'. Good teaching in the mixed aged classes and a stimulating curriculum have helped attainment rise and ensure all groups of pupils make good progress in their learning over time. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage enter school with skills and abilities which are in line with national expectations and make good progress across all of the areas of learning. By the time pupils leave in Year 6, attainment is above average in English, mathematics and science. Pupils' ability to apply their good basic skills together with their above average attendance and good punctuality prepares them well for secondary school.

Attainment is stronger in reading than it is in writing. This is partly because the starting point in writing is lower in the Reception class, but also because children do not choose sufficient writing activities from the wide range of interesting experiences that are provided for them. Across the school not enough is done to promote neat handwriting and good presentation of written work. There are inconsistencies in the way in which writing targets form the centrepiece of learning in lessons.

Pupils' personal qualities are equally good. This stems from the good personal care provided and the school's strong focus on developing in them a sense of responsibility and what it means to be a good citizen. In class they behave well, know what is expected of them and demonstrate a keen work ethic. Older pupils regularly support and include the younger ones, and pupils work well together in lessons in pairs and small groups. Pupils have a highly-tuned perspective of how to keep others safe as well as themselves; they understand for example the reasons for filtered access to the internet and 'staying away from dangerous marshland'. Pupils also have a good understanding of how to maintain a healthy lifestyle which is reflected in the school's Healthy Schools status. This is helped by them learning to cook, tending the raised gardening beds and running the 'Golden Mile' around the school field. Regular trips out and good quality residential visits in each year together with curriculum opportunities in art, drama, music and sport ensure pupils develop a good understanding of the environment, biodiversity, the arts and local businesses.

Effective steps have been taken to link subjects together so that the curriculum provides them with skills that will stand them in good stead in later life and is more relevant to pupils' lives. Some topics work better than others. Those that work particularly well have a strong focus on current events and cultural diversity and are enhanced by good links with partner organisations and schools in Italy, Spain and France. Although the curriculum simulates and engages pupils well the richness of the experiences provided,

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while good, is not of the highest quality. This is mainly because the approaches to learning and how skills such as confidence in using computers, independence, enquiry, reasoning and citizenship are not fully mapped out so they develop year by year. Additionally, pupils' collective and individual interests are not fully capitalised upon which limits the already good curriculum being highly tailored to their different needs.

The school has improved its overall effectiveness from satisfactory to good since the last inspection and there is a strong ambition to be even better. This is due to the incisive lead given by the headteacher and governing body and good impact of the work of leaders and managers at all levels. Their self-evaluation is good and reflected in a development plan which is sharply focused on honing outcomes. The good track record of improvement and the concerted and effective steps being taken to drive improvement show the school is well placed to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in writing by:
 - ensuring all children in the Reception class engage in daily guided writing activities
 - implementing a more structured approach to developing handwriting and presentation skills and check these are applied consistently
 - ensuring pupils use their writing targets consistently well in all classes to improve their work.
- Further strengthen the creative curriculum and its delivery by:
 - reviewing the approaches to teaching and learning which are working well in existing topics and build upon these in mapping an enhanced curriculum
 - ensuring pupils' learning skills are progressively developed
 - taking full account of pupils' interests and skills when planning new topics.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The school's results in the national tests in Year 6 have risen since the last inspection and are now consistently above average. During the inspection boys and girls of different abilities made good progress in most lessons seen and attained levels above those expected for their age. Pupils read confidently for their age and enjoy the books they read. They use good expression when reading and can identify the crucial features about the characters they are reading about. Although their writing is not always well presented the content is often good. For example, pupils in Year 6 applied themselves diligently and rose to the challenge of using medieval vocabulary and commas, apostrophes and other higher level punctuation when writing in the style of William Shakespeare. In mathematics, pupils in Years 2 and 3 really enjoyed their learning and worked at a good pace either in pairs or independently when tackling quite difficult problems for their age. Some even attempted calculations expected of Year 5 pupils.

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Work in their science books shows that they are good investigators and can hypothesise, plan, carry out and make sense of a range of real life investigations. The splendid artwork on display reveals their above average attainment and many also demonstrate good musical talents which are helped by the good level of music tuition provided.

Pupils of all abilities make good progress because of the good levels of challenge provided in lessons. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good gains in their learning helped by the good individual education plans and effective support is provided by teaching assistants. The school's data show that there are no long term differences in the progress and attainment of boys and girls. The few pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds do equally well as other pupils.

Pupils value their school community and willingly take on responsibility through helping in assemblies, running school clubs or the library. They care a great deal about local and global issues for example through raising money for charities such as 'Hats for Haiti'. Closer to home, the St Edmund's orchestra plays regularly in the local church and at community events. The pupils' voice is strongly developed through the school council and the eco-council although the views of younger pupils are not as strongly represented as those of the older ones. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and pupils engage especially well with pupils from other backgrounds including those not represented in the immediate community.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
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	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2

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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The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers' strong subject knowledge and expertise is used to good effect in ensuring pupils of different ages and abilities in the mixed aged classes are given work which is well tuned to their learning capabilities. Imaginative use is made of resources including computer display screens, digital cameras and recording devices to stimulate learning and engage pupils' interest. For example, in a Year 6 literacy lesson pupils were given a sack of props to stimulate their imagination and help them write about an imaginary character they hadn't met. Pupils made very strong progress in several literacy lessons because teachers used pupils' writing targets as the key focus for learning and a means of checking success. However, these opportunities are sometimes missed. Verbal feedback during lessons is good. This helps pupils refocus their learning and sort out any ideas they have not grasped. Marking is thorough and gives pupils good guidance on how they can improve their work. This is helped by a good marking policy which is providing a stronger focus on improving pupils' writing and presentation of work.

A strong guided reading programme, underpinned by carefully chosen books, lies behind the well above average attainment in reading. A strong focus on using drama as a stimulus and stressing the importance of vocabulary, connectives, openings of sentences and punctuation has helped attainment in writing to improve. The strengthening of calculating and problem solving in mathematics and investigative work in real life contexts in science has also strengthened the curriculum and raised attainment. Popular clubs such as 'Mad Science' and 'Grease Paint', which has drama and singing at its heart, are designed to appeal to pupils. The curriculum for some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, particularly those with autistic difficulties, has been carefully adapted so that it meets their particular needs. Topics such as 'Around the World' in which pupils investigate the cultures, environment and lives of different people are working particularly well and are acting as the template for further fine tuning of the creative curriculum.

Staff care for pupils well and know them as individuals. Clearly targeted support for vulnerable pupils has helped many overcome their difficulties, improve their attendance and achieve as well as other pupils in the school. Good quality advice and comprehensive transition arrangements effectively support pupils when they transfer to secondary school. Typical of the school's good care is its provision of a calm and welcoming breakfast club which is greatly appreciated by the pupils. 'We play with our friends, eat toast with toppings and make felt puppets' are typical of their views.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching

Taking into account:

The use of assessment to support learning

2

2

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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?

The headteacher has created a climate in which good practice is thriving and his staff are successfully developing an innovative approach to learning. The good impact is most evident in the lively teaching, rich curriculum, pupils' good personal development and rising attainment. Good monitoring of teaching has helped bring consistency and identify best practice to be shared, but on occasions the inconsistencies identified are not rigorously followed up. A thorough analysis of performance data is used to set ambitious targets which are helping to drive improvement. These and the close tracking of pupils' progress have ensured pupils have equal opportunity to make good progress and identified that the gap between attainment in reading and writing needs to be closed further. The school ensures all pupils are treated fairly. It has positive relationships with parents and carers who are well informed through newsletters, meetings, reports and the school's virtual learning environment.

The governing body has a strong collective vision and individual members effectively work alongside staff to monitor and evaluate how well the school improvement plan is being implemented. Good training is being provided to new members in order to refine their already good focus on developing a strategic view of longer term developments. Safeguarding arrangements are good because recommended good practice has been adopted across all areas. Some of the newer policies need time for them to be fully embedded and some new governors are not fully aware of current legislation. The impact of the school's good work on community cohesion is evident in the harmony in the school and pupils' well developed understanding of different faiths and cultures. The school already has good links with three schools abroad and there are effective plans to build links with schools in contrasting communities in the United Kingdom to give pupils first hand experiences of the cultures and ways of life of their peers.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2

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The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children start in the Reception class with skills and abilities that are broadly in line with those expected for their age although their mark-making and other early writing skills are weaker. They make good progress in all areas of learning. They start Year 1 as confident, independent learners and most are working in line or above the levels expected for their age. The stimulating, well resourced indoor and outdoor environment are both used well. Children are engaged, motivated and interested in the activities provided and move freely between. However, they do not always choose to undertake the optional writing tasks provided. This limits their progress in this key skill. Otherwise they become confident readers for their age and enjoy story telling, playing safely on the outdoor equipment, using their imagination in the role play areas and learning about the world around them especially in the gardening area. Children's personal development is good and helped by the friendly and informative links with parents, and by staff keeping a watchful eye on them at all times. There are clear plans for improvement which are focusing on writing and developing resources which reflect cultural diversity.

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

The vast majority of parents and carers are very happy with the school. They are particularly pleased about how well the school is led and managed, the good quality of teaching, how well their children enjoy school and feel safe and well cared for. The inspectors agree. A small minority felt that behaviour was not always dealt with effectively and the school did not sufficiently take their views into account. The inspectors judged behaviour and communication with parents to be good. Typical

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comments included, 'We have always felt part of our daughter's education and appreciate the regular feedback we receive' and 'The school encourages pupils to develop healthy lifestyles just as much as developing an enthusiasm for learning'.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Acle St Edmund Voluntary Controlled 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 63 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 236 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	32	51	27	43	3	5	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	32	51	28	44	2	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	22	35	34	54	5	8	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	21	33	34	54	7	11	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	22	35	36	57	5	8	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	23	37	35	56	2	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	26	41	35	56	2	3	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)	25	40	30	48	4	6	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	24	38	32	51	6	10	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	15	24	34	54	10	16	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	17	27	34	54	10	16	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	19	30	37	59	4	6	3	5
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	27	43	32	51	3	5	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.



18 June 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Acle St Edmund Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Acle, NR13 3RQ

Thank you for making us so welcome when we made our recent visit. We enjoyed talking with you, looking at your work and seeing you learning in class. We found out that you go to a good school and here is a list of some of the things we liked best.

We can see why you say you are proud of your school and feel extremely safe.

You also told us you liked the many clubs on offer and we like them too.

The young children in the Reception class make a good start to their education.

Good teaching helps you make good progress in reading, writing, mathematics and science and ensure your attainment is above average at the end of Year 6.

The imaginative curriculum helps you learn in many different ways in learning a lot about current events and the lives of people around the world.

Those of you who need extra help in your learning receive good support and you take advantage of this to make good progress.

We were impressed by your politeness and good behaviour and your good understanding of how to eat healthily and keep fit.

You know a lot about different cultures and how different people live their lives.

Your headteacher, governing body and teachers have done a great deal to improve the school and are working hard to make it even better.

Every school has some things that could be improved. There are two areas we want your school to concentrate on now.

Ensure your attainment in writing and presentation of work improves further. You can help by making your work as neat as it can be and working hard on your writing targets.

Further develop the already good curriculum so that it develops your learning skills to the highest quality and is fully tailored to your individual interests.

I wish you great success in the future. It was a pleasure to meet you all.

Yours sincerely

Alan Jarvis

Lead inspector

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