

Aylsham St Michael's C of E VC Nursery and Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121027
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	339834
Inspection dates	24–25 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Geof Timms

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	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	144
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Lawrence Smith
Headteacher	Mrs Anne Jewers
Date of previous school inspection	10 October 2006
School address	School House Lane Blickling Road Norwich
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Eleven lessons were observed and six teachers seen. Meetings were held with a group of pupils, four members of the governing body, senior staff and other teachers. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at policies, planning, assessment data, governing body documentation and the school's virtual learning environment. In addition, questionnaires completed by staff and a sample of pupils were scrutinised alongside 85 questionnaires returned by parents.

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

- how well the school supports the most able pupils
- recent changes to the curriculum and how well pupils' independence is developing
- how well the governors support and challenge the work of the school
- the provision and leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than average. The proportion of pupils known to be entitled to free school meals is very low, as is the proportion from minority ethnic groups. Very few pupils speak a language other than English at home. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average, but high in some year groups. The school has been awarded a charter mark for physical education (PE), Activemark, a silver ECO award, Healthy Schools award and a Gold Travel Plan 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

The school has worked hard since the last inspection and made significant improvements to many aspects of its work. Parents are clearly very happy with the school's work and as one said, 'I just wish I could keep my child in the school until eleven years old!' The school has an accurate picture of how well it is doing. This is partly due to the excellent work of the governing body in challenging and questioning the school about all aspects of its work, and in monitoring the improvement planning and other self-evaluation activities. These activities and the strong leadership provided by the headteacher and senior staff, ensure the school has a good capacity to improve further.

Pupils' good progress is due to good teaching and the excellent links between the school, parents and carers, and other outside agencies and organisations. Many of these partnerships have a directly positive impact on learning. For example, the excellent work done as part of a creative partnership is supporting pupils' use of their imagination which is having a clear impact on writing skills. All groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make equally good progress. The pupils who join the school at an early stage of speaking English quickly settle in and make rapid progress. Most lessons are sufficiently challenging for the most able pupils and this leads directly to the high proportion of them attaining the higher levels in the annual assessments in reading, writing and mathematics. Recently there have been good developments to highlight and identify the gifted and talented pupils. By the time pupils leave the school attainment is consistently above average and in 2009 was especially high. The most recent assessments show that the current Year 2 are unlikely to do quite as well but they are still on track to reach above average attainment and are making good progress from their starting points. The excellent behaviour and good attendance are important factors in the good progress made.

The school has recently made significant changes to the curriculum. These have resulted in better links being made between subjects, more creative and active learning and more outdoor learning in all year groups. These changes, although at an early stage, are already having a positive impact on pupils' personal and social development, and on the value they place on learning. They talk about this work with real enjoyment and enthusiasm. The school is aware of the need to assess the impact of these changes closely and to review any further improvements that may be appropriate. Teaching, including the use of assessment, is good. A number of changes to assessment practice have been made recently and these need to embed and become a more consistent part of all teachers' practice. The school is aware that to raise standards still further more consistency in a number of areas is needed. Excellent teaching was observed in practical

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and active lessons such as music and physical education, and in outdoor lessons. The lessons involving basic skills of literacy and numeracy, although often good, lacked the pace, excitement and pupil involvement of the others. Given their ages, pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy, and this is recognised by the parents. Pupils also make an outstanding contribution to the school and local community in a variety of ways, including ensuring the staff control the heating properly and turn lights off so energy is not wasted! These outcomes are the result of outstanding care, guidance and support. This is a very caring school. Its role in the local community as shown in the recent acquisition of a defibrillator, and the training in its use given to pupils, staff and parents as a resource for the local community. This is a further example of the often outstanding partnerships that are built around the school. The leadership and management of the school are outstanding because of the attention to detail and the continuous striving for improvement evident. The requirements for meeting pupils' safety and security are addressed in an excellent manner and pupils talk about how safe they feel in school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of outstanding teaching by
 - reviewing and embedding the range of recent changes and additions to the curriculum
 - giving teachers time to work more closely together and learn from each other to spread the existing excellent practice
 - ensuring recent developments in the way pupil's learning is assessed and tracked provide teachers and senior staff with useful information that is used effectively in planning lessons.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

From lesson observations, and from the work in pupils' books and that displayed around the school, it is clear that attainment is above average and progress is good. In the best lessons excellent learning takes place. In physical education, for example, staff expertise ensures pupils reach very high standards. The learning is supported well by the wide range of imaginative outdoor activities. The drama play with visiting teachers, the 'Forest School' work, the outdoor and adventurous activities provided by the sports partnership, in which parents also take a full part, all provide positive outcomes in terms of pupils' learning and for their personal and social development. Standards in writing have improved since the last inspection due to a focus on this area. Although standards are now good more remains to be done on technical aspects of writing such as punctuation. Some older pupils are now writing a lot with some very good quality content in response to a range of creative stimuli. Standards in mathematics are also above average and pupils confidently calculate and manipulate numbers. Work on developing pupils' understanding of letters and sounds has a good impact on their

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reading skills.

The school puts a heavy emphasis on helping pupils keep themselves safe, including when cycling and travelling to school. Pupils can talk knowledgeably about healthy eating and what food and drinks are good or bad for them. Behaviour is outstanding in most lessons and around the school. Pupils themselves talk about their dislike of any bad behaviour. The excellent spiritual development is evident in pupils' appreciation of the natural world through their outdoor learning. This is supported by outstanding moral and social development and a growing cultural understanding of how others live.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
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	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

The teaching is good overall because teachers have very strong relationships with their pupils and this helps encourage them to take a full part in most lessons. The teaching and learning support assistants offer strong support but teachers do not always make the best use of their time when they are talking to the whole class at the start of sessions. Outdoor learning is a major strength of this school. Whether this is taking work outside onto the playground, working at a wide range of activities in the 'Forest School'

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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area, or taking part in adventurous and outdoor problem solving activities, pupils clearly love taking part. They make good progress, whether learning about frogs, weaving willow sticks or learning to work as a team to make a shape with a rope. The school has developed ways to ensure a closer assessment of pupils' attainment and progress. These are recent improvements and need to be used more consistently by all teachers to support their planning and to identify any underachievement. To help ensure more consistently high quality teaching the school has plans to use the existing expertise more effectively through peer coaching and providing more opportunities for teachers to work alongside each other. Many other changes to the curriculum have enriched pupils' experiences but these need time to embed and be reviewed to fully assess their success. There is an outstanding range of extra-curricular activities giving pupils the chance to extend their skills in a variety of sports and games, in musical activities and in French.

The outstanding care, guidance and support are evident throughout the work of the school. Pupils say teachers help them understand how to improve and this is seen in much of their work. First aid arrangements are robust and all outdoor activities are carried out with due care and attention to pupils' safety.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Recent staffing changes and absences have meant some disruption to subject leadership and the roles of some leaders. However, the senior staff have a good grip on how well the school is performing. Systems for collecting and collating data about pupils' progress have improved and now provide a clearer picture of good progress or underachievement. A range of monitoring activities helps senior management to have an accurate picture of the success of the teaching. The governing body are especially active in monitoring the work of the school. They work closely alongside subject leaders to hold them to account for the attainment reached by pupils. Improvement planning is very closely monitored and while offering staff very positive and unstinting support, the governors also ensure they challenge effectively all aspects of the school's work. Because of this, and the rigorous self-evaluation processes, the school has an accurate picture of how well it is doing. The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures is outstanding.

The excellent partnerships with pupils' families and other outside agencies have a very

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positive impact on learning. The school is working hard to develop pupils' understanding of how others' live and has a well developed plan through a church connection to link with a school in Cambodia. Teachers ensure a good range of multicultural activities take place throughout the curriculum. The school promotes equal opportunities outstandingly well.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
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	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
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 Nursery class on a part-time basis. Their attainment on entry is broadly in line with that expected although a growing number each year have weaker communication skills when they start. They very quickly settle and happily join their friends each day in this excellent setting. The provision is outstanding due to some excellent teaching from all adults involved, and this results in some excellent progress being made, especially in helping children become very effective and inquisitive learners. A particular strength is the use of children's learning journey record books, and the Nursery teacher's log of her reflections on each days' activities. Very good use is made of the outdoors as a learning environment. This is especially true of the school's 'Forest School' area where children quickly pick up an appreciation of the natural world and a willingness to explore their environment in a creative and physically challenging way. Although the school works hard to overcome difficulties, the organisation of the current Reception children is more complex due to the numbers and the design of the building. They are divided into two classes, one of which also has Year 1 pupils. In addition, it is more difficult for them to access the outside learning areas. This makes it hard to promote consistency in the provision. Even so, because the leadership and management

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of the Early Years Foundation Stage are excellent, and the overall provision remains outstanding, the outcomes by the end of Reception in most areas of learning, are good and children attain levels that are above average. The strengths in the Nursery, and the continuing good provision in Reception, and the way the children are prepared for their future learning, make overall effectiveness outstanding.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

The views of parents, taken from the good return of questionnaires and also those spoken to during the inspection, are clearly very positive about the school. One or two individual concerns are raised but almost all are happy with their child's experience at the school. They particularly praise how well the school looks after their children and how much they enjoy school. These positive views are supported by the evidence gathered during the inspection.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Aylsham, St Michael's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Nursery and Infant 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 85 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 144 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	70	82	14	16	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	64	75	21	25	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	49	58	34	40	2	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	51	60	31	36	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	58	68	27	32	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	46	54	38	45	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	74	87	11	13	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)	44	52	33	39	2	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	56	66	26	31	3	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	55	65	27	32	1	1	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	54	64	30	35	1	1	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	60	71	23	27	2	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	67	79	17	20	1	1	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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.



Friday 26 March 2010

Dear Children

Inspection of Aylsham, St Michael's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Nursery and Infant School, Norwich, NR11 6EX

I am writing to tell you what we found out about your school on our recent visit. Thank you for the friendly way you welcomed us and thank you also to those of you who took the time to talk to us. We think your school is a good one, and much of its work is outstanding. Here are some of the things we liked:

You have an excellent start to school life in the Nursery.

You have lots of exciting activities to do in the outdoors.

You reach above average attainment in reading, writing and mathematics.

You are especially well behaved in lessons where you are very active and involved.

Your behaviour is excellent and this helps your teachers to teach you.

The adults in school care for you very well and they keep you very safe.

You stay safe and know how to keep healthy. You help to look after the environment by checking on how well the school uses energy. Well done!

It was especially good to see how your families joined in with so many of your activities, helping with the Forest School work, taking part in the outdoor and adventurous activities and having lunch with you (and staying to play in the playground afterwards!).

To help the school get even better we have asked the teachers to be even clearer about how well you are doing, to check the changes they have made to the curriculum to help you learn and to spend more time learning from each other.

Enjoy your time at St Michael's and keep working hard!

Yours sincerely

Geof Timms

Lead inspector

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