

Place Farm Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number124554Local AuthoritySuffolkInspection number340596

Inspection dates4–5 February 2010 **Reporting inspector**Cheryl Thompson

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 pupils4-9Gender of pupilsMixedNumber of pupils on the school roll271

Appropriate authorityThe governing bodyChairMr Nick FranksHeadteacherMr David GoldingDate of previous school inspection8 November 2006School addressCamps Road

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Age group 4–9

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors used half their time to observe pupils' teaching and learning by visiting 20 lessons and additional time was spent looking at pupils' books. Inspectors also held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body, two local authority advisers and local authority educational welfare officer, groups of pupils and senior staff. They observed the school's work and looked at pupils' work in each class, the school's progress tracking system, policies and safeguarding documentation, improvement plans and analysed 63 parental questionnaires, 89 pupil questionnaires and 24 staff questionnaires.

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

Why has attainment declined to a low level, especially for boys?

- Has the teaching and assessment improved enough to ensure that pupils are catching up and making at least satisfactory progress?
- What action has the school taken to tackle low attendance, and with what effect?
- Are the 'new' systems of assessment/monitoring and target setting sufficiently embedded to ensure the school has the capacity for sustained improvement?

Information about the school

The school is currently a first school and will remain so until September 2010. In the past, pupils have left the school at the end of Year 4 and moved to a middle school. Due to the local authority's school re-organisation, Place Farm will be undergoing extensive building and refurbishment to become a primary school, taking pupils to the end of Key Stage 2. From September 2010, Year 4 pupils will stay at the school and continue their primary education until they leave at the end of Year 6.

The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. There are fewer than average numbers of pupils from other minority ethnic groups, with a small number at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is similar to that found nationally. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. Children start in the Early Years Foundation Stage at age four plus and are taught in two Reception classes. In the remainder of the school there are two parallel classes in each year group.

The school has attained the national Healthy School award, Football Association Charter award, the Eco-Schools silver award and has met the Investors in People standard.

In June, 2009, the local authority classified the school as a School of Concern.

There is a breakfast and after-school club run on school premises. This provision has been inspected separately. The report can be found on the Ofsted website.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

4

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 special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Place Farm Community Primary School has declined in its effectiveness since the last inspection in November 2006. The issues raised by that inspection have not been tackled until very recently. The school is providing an inadequate education for its pupils.

The headteacher takes a keen interest in making sure pupils are happy at school and has developed good links with almost all parents. Until very recently, not enough focus has been given to ensuring pupils learn at a good rate and do well. There has been no rigorous and extensive monitoring and self-challenge to halt the decline in standards and ensure the school's improvement since its last inspection.

Since late June 2009, an appropriate plan has been in place to bring about improvement. However, the progress made since the implementation of this plan is fragile. New procedures and systems are not fully embedded and there remains too much inconsistency in provision. The track record of bringing about improvement in the past three years is weak. Consequently, the capacity for sustained improvement is currently inadequate.

The roles of the senior leaders are beginning to develop but their effectiveness is constrained by the time available for them to monitor rigorously what is going on in their subjects, plan for improvement and make sure it happens.

Pupils' attainment is low and the progress of almost all groups of pupils is inadequate. Pupils are not achieving as well as they should. Consequently, they are not well prepared for the next stage of their education. The exception is pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities; they make satisfactory progress. These pupils benefit from the good partnerships with outside agencies and the provision of very effective support.

The quality of teaching and the use of assessment are inadequate. While there is some satisfactory or better teaching in the school, there is not enough to ensure pupils' consistent progress as they move through the school.

Until very recently, teachers did not have a clear understanding of exactly how well their pupils, especially boys, were learning. Although some improvement is evident in lesson planning, teachers are not consistently pitching their lessons at the right level.

There is a considerable legacy of underachievement in reading, writing and mathematics. Currently, teachers' knowledge of how to teach and assess these key skills is not consistently good enough to help pupils catch up. The quality and quantity of resources for reading are poor, with very little to interest boys.

Attendance is low, but there are recent signs of improvement in lowering the number of pupils who are persistently absent.

With the exception of the newly appointed Chair of Governors, currently, there are many new governors who have yet to develop their roles to a level where they can appropriately monitor and evaluate the school's performance.

There are satisfactory aspects of the school's work.

Provision for children in the Reception classes is satisfactory. They make sound progress and have an enjoyable start to school.

Staff know pupils well so that any unhappiness or uncharacteristic behaviour is noted quickly and something done. Pupils are confident that they are safe at school and have a satisfactory idea of how to keep themselves safe.

Pupils' enjoy school. Their behaviour is satisfactory in lessons and around the school and at playtimes. They are kind and considerate to one another and really enjoy the opportunities to take on responsibility within the school. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory.

For their age, pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves fit and healthy.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and have good things to say about it. They appreciate the good links the school has developed with the local pre-schools and themselves which support their children when they start school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - tackling rigorously the key priorities identified in the school's recent improvement plan
 - providing leaders and managers at all levels with training and additional time to enable them to fulfil their monitoring roles rigorously and regularly
 - using the information gained from monitoring or analysing data to pinpoint success or where more emphasis is needed
 - increasing all governors' awareness of the strengths and weaknesses in the school's provision so that they can hold the headteacher to account for the pace of improvement.
- Improve teaching, learning and assessment to a consistently good level by:
 - rigorous and regular monitoring by the senior team
 - using the outcomes of this monitoring to provide support, training and challenge for individuals.

- Improve attendance to a satisfactory level by:
 - raising parents' and pupils' understanding of the need to come to school regularly
 - working closely with the local authority to ensure parents whose children have high levels of absence are made aware of their legal responsibilities.
- Raise attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - increasing teachers' and learning assistants' level of knowledge and skill in teaching and assessing early literacy, handwriting and numeracy skills
 - replacing outdated and shabby books with up-to-date reading material, particularly books that appeal to boys
 - using precise assessment to set realistic and challenging targets for pupils to attain
 - monitoring progress carefully and regularly and plan support for groups or individuals who have not made the expected progress.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

4

When children start in the Reception classes, their levels of skills and understanding are below those expected for their age. They make satisfactory progress during their Reception year. In all other year groups, pupils' progress and achievement is inadequate. Results of Year 2 national assessments shows standards are low, particularly in reading. Inspectors found that boys have more ground to catch up on than the girls, particularly in reading and writing. In some lessons observed, pupils made reasonable progress. However, evidence from looking at pupils' books shows that over time, there is unsatisfactory progress in most classes. Pupils' poor literacy and numeracy skills slow the progress they can make in other subjects. The main reasons for their inadequate progress are teachers' lack of expertise in the use of assessment data and a lack of expertise in teaching basic literacy and numeracy skills. The school's recent action plan has identified areas for improvement but, currently, the new ideas and strategies are not sufficiently embedded to have made significant impact. There is now a comprehensive system of recording how well pupils are doing and checking to see if they are making enough progress. However, this system is not as useful as it should be because of inconsistency in the accuracy of teachers' assessments. This inaccuracy gives a flawed picture of progress and pupils' attainment. Consequently, planning for the next steps in pupils' learning is not always meeting their needs. The exception is for pupils with special educational needs, who make satisfactory progress.

Pupils are positive about learning and behave satisfactorily in lessons, even when the pace is slow and work is too hard or too easy. They usually listen to their teachers and try their best. Pupils' very limited spelling and poor handwriting skills make writing a slow process for them. Their basic understanding of mathematical concepts is tenuous because the quality of teaching they have received has not been consistently good enough. As a result, there are gaps in their knowledge and understanding which mean

pupils struggle when they are expected to apply their knowledge of multiplication or number bonds to solving simple problems. Because of low levels of literacy and numeracy, pupils are not prepared sufficiently well for their next stage of education or future life.

Pupils say they like coming to school, like their teachers and like being with their friends. They say they feel safe and know that if they have any concerns, any member of staff will help them.

Around the school and in the playground, pupils behave thoughtfully and demonstrate care and respect for one another. They thoroughly enjoy the responsibility of being a 'PAL' or 'buddy' at playtimes. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the gardening they do.

Attendance is low. The school has introduced positive procedures for improving attendance such as a class cup for weekly attendance, and attendance certificates for individuals. These incentives are not making as much of a difference as the school hoped. The school works with the local authority educational welfare officer (EWO) but more effective steps to deal with persistent absenteeism have yet to be taken by the local authority. The good deployment of the behaviour support manager has ensured vulnerable pupils are supported effectively. As a result there have been no exclusions this school year.

Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves fit and healthy. They make sensible choices from the school's good range of lunchtime food. They have a sound understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe. They have a satisfactory understanding of how cultural heritage can affect how people choose to live their lives.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning 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	3	
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3	
Pupils' behaviour		
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles		
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community		

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

The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

There are some strengths in the quality of teaching but also significant shortcomings. Teachers have good relationships with their pupils and manage them adequately. In the good lessons observed, teachers had high expectations of pupils' behaviour, application to task and progress. In the main, teachers prepare their lessons well, often making good use of interesting resources. The reason that these lessons do not have consistently good outcomes for pupils is because assessment is not used precisely enough to plan for individual needs so that pupils catch up quickly. Teaching of early literacy and handwriting skills by most teachers and teaching assistants is unsatisfactory. Although they do their best, most lack essential training to be effective. Similarly, discussions with pupils in mathematics lessons indicate that they are very insecure on basic concepts such as subtraction and multiplication and, therefore, find simple problem solving very difficult. The school's newly-introduced marking system is beginning to help pupils know what they have to do to improve their work. Most pupils are aware of their targets and keen to meet them.

The planned curriculum is satisfactory and provides a good range of visits and visitors and a strong focus on environmental issues. There has been a recognition that the curriculum needs to weave subjects together to make pupils' learning more interesting. To achieve this, there have been theme weeks and topic themes but there is more work to be done. Pupils are well known by all staff. Vulnerable pupils who have difficulties managing their behaviour receive good support. Pupils with a high level of special educational needs also receive good support when learning assistants and speech and language therapists work together to prepare and review programmes of work.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher is keen to promote a welcoming and inclusive school where pupils feel

safe. In these areas the school is successful. Staff morale is good and staff are willing to make changes. Until very recently, there has been no significant drive to raise attainment and little tangible application to dealing with the issues raised by the last inspection in November 2006. Pupils' attainment has declined to a low level, especially in reading and writing. The local authority undertook a 'pre-Ofsted health check' in June 2009 and, as a result, the school was designated as 'a school of concern'. The school's resulting action plan mirrors the issues raised by the last inspection. This plan has targets for pupils' attainment at the end of the school year. Inspection evidence suggests that these are ambitious but not always well-founded on pupils' capabilities. The school is now collecting a good deal of data from a newly-introduced programme of assessments. Lessons are now being observed. The information gained from data and monitoring is not as helpful as it could be for two reasons. First, not all teachers are skilled and precise with their assessment, making data flawed. Second, outcomes of lesson observations are not always used to help teachers develop their practice as much as possible because observers find it difficult to be incisive and prioritise points for improvement. However, the deputy headteacher, when observing alongside inspectors, demonstrated an astute awareness where improvements were needed and could discuss ways of achieving them. A literacy review has been undertaken, which has identified clear priorities for improvement, some of which have been implemented, but they have not yet been monitored in depth. A review of mathematics and ICT is underway.

The school has good links with the large majority of parents and carers. They appreciate that they are always welcome in school and that the school listens to them if they are concerned about their child.

Governance is inadequate but improving rapidly under the astute guidance of the new chair. Individual governors are now allocated to oversee each key priority on the action plan. Several governors are new to the role and are keen to undertake training such as that provided by the local authority on interpreting data.

Safeguarding procedures meet requirements. The school is a cohesive community. It has good links with the local community and beyond, and suitable plans for developing further pupils' knowledge of global issues.

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	4	
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4	
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	4
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
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 enjoy learning and make sound progress. Their welfare needs are suitably met. On entry to the Reception classes, most children have skills that are below those expected in all areas of learning, particularly so in communication, language and literacy. In both classes, the activities planned for in the classrooms and outdoors provide a suitable range of choices. Children soon learn routines for snack time and break times.

Planned activities reflect children's interest but sometimes lack sufficient challenge especially for higher attaining children. The recent focus on improving the teaching of letter sounds is beneficial and having an impact on the good start children make on learning to read and write. It is recognised that there is more to do to improve the teaching of letter formation.

Teaching is satisfactory with strengths in planning ways to capture children's interests. However, opportunities are missed to develop children's vocabulary, such as names of shapes and reinforcing knowledge of colours. Planning is not always precise enough to guide key people working alongside children in their activities.

Children who speak English an additional language and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are fully included in all the activities and have appropriate support. The Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactorily led and managed. The temporary leader has been very open to advice and support from the local authority. As a result, there has been significant improvement in assessment processes which now provide staff with a more accurate picture of children's level of knowledge, skills and understanding on entry.

The quantity and quality of resources is adequate but uninspiring. Both Reception areas are acknowledged to be in need of redecoration and refurbishment.

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

The overwhelming majority of parents are happy with the school. A few parents feel that their children are not making enough progress and they do not get enough information about their progress. A few also think that the school does not take account of their suggestions or concerns and that they do not get enough help to support their child's learning. Some feel that the school is not led or managed effectively.

Inspectors agree that children are not making enough progress and found that leadership and management are inadequate because the school is only just getting to grips with making the necessary improvements since the last inspection three years ago. Teachers prepare well for parents' evenings so that they can tell parents how their children are getting on and how they can help at home.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Place Farm Community 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 271pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	44	70	19	30	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	35	56	28	44	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	36	57	24	38	3	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	37	56	23	37	4	6	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	37	59	23	37	3	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	37	59	27	43	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	35	56	27	43	1	2	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)	22	35	31	49	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	33	52	28	44	1	2	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	28	44	30	48	2	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	26	41	33	52	3	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	32	51	27	43	3	5	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	39	62	22	35	2	3	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 oustanding 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:	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.
	 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.



8 February 2010

Dear Children

Inspection of Place Farm Community School, Haverhill, CB9 8HF

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when inspectors visited your school recently. My particular thanks go to those of you who sat and talked to us at lunchtime. You shared your thoughts and ideas about the school with us, and this helped us decide what your school is like.

You are looked after and kept safe in school because the staff know you well. We are concerned that the school has not improved enough since its last inspection and that teaching is not good enough to help you make steady progress especially in reading, writing and numeracy. So, we have said your school requires 'special measures' to make sure that it improves. This means that it will get some extra help and, in a few months time, some more inspectors will visit to make sure that the school has improved and is giving you a better education. We are also concerned about how much time some of you have off school and we encourage you and your parents to make sure you come to school regularly.

Your headteacher and governors have plans for improving your school and are going to have some help from the local authority. I have asked them to do four things to help make your school better:

- help teachers know more about how to teach you to read, spell, write and do numeracy work so that they can plan better lessons for you (I have also asked them to buy you some new, interesting reading books so that you can have fun when you are practising your reading.)
- make sure teachers keep a close eye on how well you are doing and give you extra help if you are not able to do as well as you should
- make sure that your parents know the importance of sending you to school every day so that attendance improves
- make sure governors have some training so that they can make sure that improvements are happening at a good rate.

Thank you again for your help and all good wishes for your success.

Yours sincerely

Cheryl Thompson

Lead Inspector

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