

Saxmundham Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124605
Local Authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	340610
Inspection dates	25–26 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Martin Beale

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	186
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Robin Potter
Headteacher	Mrs Elaine Hawes
Date of previous school inspection	8 May 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 12 lessons, attended assemblies, and held meetings with staff, groups of pupils and the chair of governors. They observed the school's work, and looked at assessment information, pupils' books, progress records and improvement plans. The team received and analysed 60 parental questionnaires, 52 responses to the Key Stage 2 pupils' survey and 14 responses from the staff.

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

- the features of teaching and any additional activities used to challenge the more-able pupils
- the success of the school's work to improve teachers' and pupils' use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support and extend learning
- how effectively both the academic and personal development of vulnerable pupils is supported.

Information about the school

Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds in this average-sized school, and almost all use English as their first language. Free school meal eligibility is below average. Few pupils join or leave the school other than at the usual ages. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a Nursery class and a mixed Reception/Year 1 class. The school has received Healthy Schools status and the Eco School Silver 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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Staff and governors are proud of the progress the pupils make, in a calm, happy and cohesive environment. Most parents are pleased with the school and feel well informed about how well their children are progressing. Parents and pupils greatly value the high quality of the care taken to support and guide all pupils. For this reason, almost all pupils say they feel very safe when in the school. The school has established excellent links with others to support its work, such as the wide range of multi-agencies to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Attainment is above average by the end of Year 4. From skills slightly below those expected for their age on entry to the school, the large majority of pupils across the school make good progress because teaching moves their learning forward at a good pace. When this is not the case, it is largely because teachers in a small minority of lessons do not use assessment information well enough to plan lessons that address the learning needs of all pupils effectively. Furthermore, children in the Nursery and Reception classes have insufficient opportunities to plan their learning or develop their speaking skills through activities carefully linked between the inside and outdoor classrooms.

The pupils' positive attitudes, generally good behaviour and support of an effective team of classroom assistants contribute considerably to their learning and motivation. The learning of the more-able pupils is now being extended further, leading to more working at above nationally expected levels in each year group. Reading is a major focus and a particular strength of the school.

The pupils' learning benefits very considerably from a wide range of interesting and exciting activities within and beyond the school day. These are a highlight of their life in school and include a varied programme to complement normal lessons. These activities support their excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development so they develop a very strong appreciation of the customs and cultural backgrounds of others. Music plays a major part in the lives of many pupils and includes the opportunity for performances in public. Pupils develop an excellent awareness of how to adopt a healthy lifestyle. Links with local schools are used to extend learning and enrich the curriculum in areas where the school might otherwise not be able to, such as in broadening the range of sporting activities.

Governors are well led and share in shaping the school's long-term future, including the challenges to be faced by impending reorganisation in the area. Staff and governors understand the school's context and participate in activities to support pupils and their families. These are not always formally planned, and the school has not fully evaluated

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the impact of any actions it undertakes to promote community cohesion. The school has built on the qualities identified at the last inspection so that there is evidence of some improvement since then, but this has been patchy. Too much rests on the shoulders of the headteacher, and the roles of others with leadership responsibility are not broad enough nor their expertise suitably developed. Monitoring of the school's performance at all levels, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage, is not sufficiently systematic. The information gathered, including the results of pupil assessments, is not evaluated effectively enough so that improvement planning can be focused on a few key priorities aimed at better outcomes for the pupils. For these reasons the school currently has satisfactory rather than good capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop a cycle of self-evaluation which focuses on the impact of actions on the pupils' learning, involves all those with a stake in the school and is used to focus improvement planning on clearly identified priorities.
- Focus all members of staff in the Nursery and Reception classes on:
 - extending the opportunity for children to take greater responsibility for their learning and develop their speaking skills more rapidly
 - planning carefully how learning can be linked more effectively between inside and outdoors
 - making greater use of information about pupils' academic targets and progress to evaluate the effectiveness of the school's actions.
- Use the school's understanding of the context in which it works to plan for community cohesion and evaluate the effectiveness of its implementation.
- About 40% of the school's whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

The pupils' positive attitudes coupled with teaching that makes lessons enjoyable result in good learning and achievement. They are inquisitive learners and enjoy opportunities to discuss their thoughts and ideas with others. All groups of pupils make equally good progress - including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those capable of the highest standards. Individual targets are now more challenging than in the past, and inspection evidence shows current year groups are on track to meet their goals. Attainment is above average. The pupils extend and apply their literacy and numeracy effectively for a broad range of purposes on a daily basis; they do not practise their ICT skills to the same extent. Helpful marking of their work means that pupils are usually clear about the steps to take to improve their learning.

The pupils enjoy school and, particularly, the additional activities provided for them. The pupils engage well with a wide range of groups beyond the school including community

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organisations. They are keen and frequent participants in local sporting and cultural events. Through the Eco-School initiative, the pupils are beginning to appreciate issues affecting them and the environment. Their hard work, regular attendance and developing skills of teamwork and collaboration provide them with a secure base from which to be successful in the next stage of their education and beyond.

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	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teachers are skilled at managing the behaviour of the pupils so that classrooms are a calm working environment for learning. Some enjoyable experiences are provided through the creative use of resources, but there remain too few opportunities for the pupils to apply their ICT skills to extend their learning. Opportunities for speaking and listening are helping the pupils to develop greater confidence. Teachers generally use assessment well to provide activities that are varied, interesting and matched well to the lesson's aims as well as to the pupils' individual learning needs. In a small minority of lessons, learning is only satisfactory because assessment is not sufficiently well used in planning to focus sharply on the needs of all pupils. Teachers deploy support staff well,

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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and ensure that their skills are fully utilised.

Educational trips and visitors to school are linked thoughtfully to areas being studied, which helps to put the pupils' learning into context. The pupils speak highly of these and of the clubs and sporting activities offered and supported by the expertise of outside providers, and by links with the local sports partnership. Writing skills are developed in a variety of contexts across the curriculum, and the opportunity of linking learning in different subjects is beginning.

The school now uses its assessment information very well to provide sharply targeted support or adaptations to programmes for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The specific circumstances of individual pupils are very well known to staff so that there is no danger of personal or academic problems going undetected. Very well planned transition arrangements into the school, between key stages and, subsequently, in preparing pupils for the next phase of their education generate great confidence and rapid settling into new surroundings.

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?

The headteacher is highly committed to the pupils and knows their circumstances and needs well. A key strength is the attention to detail she brings to the work of the school. Effective arrangements are in place for safeguarding the well-being of the pupils and to ensure that those working with them are properly vetted. The school is a harmonious community in which pupils of all backgrounds feel safe and secure. The school is successful in removing any barriers learners might encounter to impede their development, particularly for those with special educational needs.

The last inspection required the school to make better use of assessment data to gain a clearer view of the pupils' achievements. This has only been partially achieved. Assessment information is used well to identify where additional individual support is needed. By contrast, data is not used to judge whether action taken and plans for improvement are having the required impact. As a result, self-evaluation is not based on a clear understanding of how well the pupils are progressing and does not lead to sharply focused plans to improve their academic achievement and personal development. Consequently, progress in improving the school is not as rapid as it could be. Governors understand the school's qualities and support its plans for improvement. There are clear channels of communication with parents, but their views on matters

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such as school improvement are not regularly sought.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the school with skills slightly below those expected for their age. As at the time of the last inspection, they make good progress so that the large majority reach expected goals by the time they enter Year 1. They settle quickly when first joining the classes, because of close links with home and carefully planned induction and transition arrangements. Relationships are constructive and the children's behaviour is managed well. Policies and procedures adopted by staff ensure that the children are safe and carefully supported. Adults work closely as a team across the two classes. This adds to the children's feeling of security because their individual needs are recognised and they know there is someone to turn to if they are worried about anything.

The Nursery is a stimulating environment in which to learn, with many interesting and carefully prepared resources both inside and out, but the Reception class does not provide the same engaging and stimulating range of activities. The direct input from teachers and other adults is a strong feature supporting the development of basic literacy and number skills in both classes. Nevertheless, this is too often at the expense of the children developing their own ideas and taking a lead in their own learning.

Assessment data are not used effectively enough to identify the progress children make from entry until they leave Reception. Consequently, there is no clear evaluation of the impact of actions on the children's achievement and personal development. The whole-school priority of developing speaking skills is not being promoted across both

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classes because adults do not sufficiently encourage discussion or role-play.

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	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Parents are largely in support of the work of the school as shown by the proportion of positive responses and comments received to the inspection questionnaire. They are particularly pleased that their children enjoy school, the quality of teaching and the way they are helped to become safe and healthy. These are matters endorsed by the inspection team. The one area of concern for a very small minority of parents is the extent to which the school takes account of their views. The inspection team agrees that there is scope for parents to be consulted more when planning improvements.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Saxmundham 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 60 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 186 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	28	47	32	53	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	31	52	28	47	1	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	16	27	42	70	2	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	29	48	28	47	2	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	30	50	29	48	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	29	48	29	48	2	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	30	50	29	48	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)	25	42	29	49	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	24	40	34	57	0	0	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	21	36	31	53	4	7	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	19	32	33	55	6	10	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	30	50	24	40	5	8	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	34	57	24	40	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 outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

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

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

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

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

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



27 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Saxmundham Primary School, Saxmundham, IP17 1XQ

Thank you all very much for your friendliness and help when we visited your school recently. We were pleased to see how much you enjoy school and we agree with you that your teachers take very good care of you. You also take good care of each other. Well done! You behave well and those of you who have special jobs, such as members of the school council, carry out your duties responsibly. Thank you for sharing your views with us. You make good progress during your time in school, learning the skills you need for the future and becoming mature and responsible people. Most of you reach and several of you exceed the standards expected by the time you leave in Year 4. You make particularly good progress in reading, but have fewer opportunities to use and develop information and communication technology skills.

Your headteacher, other staff and governors are trying hard to make the school even better. The three things we have asked them to do are to:

- make sure that all staff and governors share with your headteacher planning how to improve even more your academic and personal development
- give more opportunities for the youngest children to plan and take responsibility for aspects of their learning
- carry out a plan to show how the school is to help the community to work more together.

I am sure that you and your teachers will work hard to make these improvements. You can play your part in helping the school to get even better by continuing to show pride in your school and enthusiasm for learning.

I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Martin Beale

Lead inspector

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