

Walcott Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120391
Local Authority	LINCOLNSHIRE
Inspection number	291712
Inspection dates	20–21 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Rajinder Harrison

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	86
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Paul Wells
Headteacher	Mr Andrew Sewell
Date of previous school inspection	4 December 2001
School address	Pinfold Lane Walcott Lincoln Lincolnshire LN4 3SX
Telephone number	01526860400
Fax number	01526 860400

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This small school takes pupils from the village and its surrounding rural area. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. An average proportion of pupils are entitled to free school meals. The number of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is high.

For a trial period since the last inspection the school was led and managed through a partnership arrangement by the headteacher of another school. The current headteacher was subsequently appointed in 2005. Since that time, there have been a number of staff changes including some temporary arrangements that have now been resolved for September 2007.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school with good features. Pupils' personal development is good. The calm, friendly environment helps pupils feel happy, secure and valued at school. They trust the adults who work with them and form good relationships. Their good attendance shows they like being at school. Most pupils try hard and this, together with their sound academic progress, prepares them satisfactorily for the future.

Children start in the school with knowledge and skills that are below those typical for their age. Their literacy, numeracy and social skills are particularly weak. Through good provision, they progress well and at the end of the Reception year most reach the expected levels in all but their writing and numeracy skills. Recent improvements in provision have resulted in pupils' progress being satisfactory in Years 1 to 6 and overall standards are broadly average. In Year 2, standards are broadly average in reading and above average in mathematics. Because of the pupils' low starting point, standards in writing continue to be below average in Years 1 and 2. Year 6 pupils are working at broadly average standards in English and science. Weaknesses in their ability to solve problems result in below average standards in mathematics. Good support for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities helps them to achieve well.

While the overall curriculum is satisfactory, pupils have insufficient opportunities to work independently especially when solving problems or conducting investigations. Teaching and learning are satisfactory resulting in pupils' satisfactory achievement. While teaching has improved considerably recently and is often good, it remains inconsistent, particularly in Years 3 to 6, because the level of challenge is not always high enough and this limits what pupils can achieve. Additional activities and experiences enhance learning well. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Pastoral care arrangements are good and pupils say that if problems arise they are dealt with promptly. Setting pupils individual targets is helping to raise achievement, but not all pupils understand what they have to do or whether the work they produce is of a good enough quality to achieve these targets.

Good leadership and management have secured good improvement since the last inspection. By improving teaching and learning and checking pupils' progress more closely, the decline in standards over the last few years has been arrested. Governors are very supportive and challenge senior managers well regarding the school's performance. The school accurately judges itself as satisfactory. In light of recent improvements and a good understanding of what still needs to be done, managers have good capacity to improve the school further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing in Years 1 and 2.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to work independently particularly through solving problems and carrying out investigations.
- Make sure pupils of all abilities are challenged fully, particularly in Years 3 to 6.
- Make sure pupils understand what they need to do to achieve their targets.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

In the Reception class, detailed assessments and interesting activities help children progress well, especially in the literacy and numeracy skills that are particularly low when they start school. While these aspects continue to be below expected levels, pupils leave the Reception class having reached satisfactory levels for five year olds in all the other areas of learning.

In 2006, Year 2 pupils attained well below average standards in reading, writing and mathematics, with writing being the weakest. Through better teaching and additional support for specific groups, standards have improved this year. Although writing remains below average, current Year 2 pupils are reaching standards that are broadly average in reading and above average in mathematics. In 2006, pupils in Year 6 attained below average standards in English, mathematics and science. With closer checking of pupils' progress, better teaching and more support for targeted groups, Year 6 pupils are now working at broadly average levels in English and science. While standards in mathematics have improved, they remain below average. Strategies to improve writing are helping more pupils achieve at the higher levels but inconsistent practice in investigations in mathematics and science hampers achievement here. Good individual guidance helps pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Most enjoy school, behave well and are kind towards others. They play together well and pupil mediators make sure playground problems are quickly resolved. Through residential visits and other social events, pupils learn how to work with others successfully. A good programme for personal and social education and well planned assemblies help pupils develop respect for others and to value differences reflected in the cultures and traditions of different communities. Their interest in tending their various gardens promotes their awareness of the wonder of the natural world. They work with the local community to raise funds for various causes and take part in many local social and cultural events. School council members are keen to improve the school environment by redesigning play areas and pursuing recycling projects. Their thriving allotment is helping pupils understand the importance of healthy eating and many take regular exercise through the various sports clubs on offer. Pupils know the dangers of drugs and who to go to should they feel threatened or bullied. Visits and many visitors introduce pupils to the wider world of work. While most pupils have very good attitudes to school and learning, a few are less enthusiastic and this hampers their progress. In light of the overall average standards achieved in their basic skills, pupils' preparation for their future economic well-being is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers generally prepare for and manage lessons well. They work closely with teaching assistants to make sure all pupils participate fully. Support for individuals and specific groups is particularly well planned. Children in the Reception year have many good opportunities to explore new situations independently and learn through their practical experiences. Similar

approaches extend to Years 1 and 2 where standards have improved significantly. Pupils are challenged well and, because relationships are good, they work sensibly with each other and talk about their work enthusiastically. Pupils particularly enjoy practical tasks and 'learning through doing'. The effective use of interactive whiteboards helps pupils understand new information more visually. While some teaching in Key Stage 2 is good, it is not consistently so across Years 3 to 6. Work is not always matched well enough to each pupil's needs. Consequently, expectations of more able pupils are not high enough and this hinders their achievement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

With increased high quality resources and a much improved outdoor area, the curriculum in the Foundation Stage is now good and leads to children's good achievement. In Years 1 to 6, the school is developing a curriculum that links work across subjects so that it is more interesting and easier for pupils to follow. Regular practice in pupils' word-building skills has helped to raise standards in reading, but the impact is not as evident yet in pupils' writing. The school recognises that pupils enjoy learning through practical tasks but at present they do not have enough opportunities to be more independent in their problem solving and investigation skills. This limits the achievement of higher standards. Many effective early intervention programmes help lower attaining pupils make good progress but provision for more able pupils is not challenging enough. A good personal, social and health education programme supports pupils' personal development well. Many additional activities, including trips and sports clubs, enrich learning well. Good links with the community and other schools provide pupils with experiences of life in the wider world.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pastoral care arrangements are good. Pupils learn how to live healthy lives and stay safe. Procedures for child protection, health and safety, reporting racial incidents and safeguarding pupils are all secure. Pupils know they can ask for help if problems arise. Those with learning difficulties or disabilities make good progress towards their targets because effective action is taken to support them. The school is particularly vigilant in looking after its most vulnerable pupils and external agencies are contacted where appropriate. The school regularly asks parents to support their children's learning, and while most do, a few could do more to impress upon children why school is important. Pupils' progress is checked carefully and the information gathered is used well to set individual and group targets that many pupils benefit from because standards are rising. However, these targets, whilst very effective for raising the achievement of lower attaining pupils, do not challenge others enough because they are very broad and generalised. Consequently, pupils are not always clear about what steps they have to take to improve their work, or if their work is of a good enough quality to have met the targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Following a period of considerable change, the school has improved measurably in the last year. The headteacher has established an effective leadership team that is focused on raising standards and the decline in standards over the last few years has been arrested. Improved teaching, with

the headteacher taking on a full-time teaching role for part of this year, has resulted in pupils now leaving the school prepared satisfactorily for the next stage of their education. Parents are very positive about the school and the fact that their children are happy here.

Systems to check the quality of teaching and measure pupils' progress are good. Assessment data is analysed carefully in order to set pupils targets. The close partnership with the neighbouring school has benefited the school, particularly in staff training, improving the curriculum and maximising resources. Governors carry out their duties and manage finances well. They check the school's performance closely and have been particularly effective in improving resources, accommodation and staffing so that standards can improve. In relation to its available resources, the school gives good value for money. All the issues noted in the previous inspection report have been addressed well. The proven effectiveness of recent leadership and management shows that the school's capacity to make further improvements is good.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

24 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Walcott Primary School, Walcott, LN4 3SX

I am writing to tell you what I found out about your school when I visited recently to look at your work and talk to you and your teachers. I really appreciated your friendly welcome and your polite manners. Please thank your parents for completing the questionnaires about their opinions of the school. It was good to learn they are happy with the school. I particularly enjoyed having lunch with you and talking to you about all the interesting things you do, and I loved your beautiful gardens - I hope your potatoes taste delicious when you dig them up to cook .

The school is satisfactory, but some things are good and some need improving.

- You try your best and get the results expected from children of your age. Your results are improving but I think some of you could do even better.
- The work you do in all subjects is now more interesting, but you need to work more by yourselves especially when you do practical activities.
- The school takes good care of you and your teachers listen to you and help you if you have problems.
- You behave well, look after each other and know how to stay fit and healthy.
- I was particularly impressed by how you help around the school and look after each other and that you know so much about recycling waste materials.

These are the four things I have asked your teachers and governors to do to improve your school.

- Help you get even better results in writing in Years 1 and 2.
- Ask you to work by yourselves more especially when you have to solve problems or do investigations for example in science.
- Make sure teachers set you challenging work and that your lessons are always good especially in Years 3 to 6.
- Make sure you understand what your targets are and what you need to do to achieve them.

There are things you could do to help too. For example you could try to do your work by yourselves more often.

I am pleased that you are happy at school and have good friends; I hope that you continue to enjoy school and make progress.

Yours sincerely

Rajinder Harrison

Lead inspector