

Redcastle Furze School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120905
Local Authority	NORFOLK
Inspection number	291904
Inspection dates	14–15 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Joy Stopher

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	215
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr P Pearson
Headteacher	Dr A Sheppard
Date of previous school inspection	14 October 2002
School address	St Martin's Way Thetford Norfolk IP24 3PU
Telephone number	01842 752239
Fax number	01842 755995

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Redcastle Furze School has seven classes in addition to a nursery with part time provision for 26 children. The school is in an area of high social deprivation with higher than average mobility. There is a considerable variation in the school roll from year to year. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is above the national average. There are a small proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and approximately 5% have English as an additional language. Attainment on entry to the nursery is well below national expectations.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school provides a good standard of education and demonstrates a high level of commitment to the pastoral care of its pupils, which is outstanding. The headteacher provides strong leadership and is well supported by his deputy. Since the last inspection the school has added part time nursery provision and specialist facilities for physical education, music, drama, art, science and information and communication technology (ICT) which has enhanced teaching and learning. The nursery provision is of a high quality and is having a positive impact by giving children a good start to their education. This good progress continues throughout the Foundation Stage. Pupils really enjoy school and are very proud to belong to this caring community. They appreciate their new buildings and the quality of resources and opportunities made available to them. The school offers them a safe and nurturing environment.

Pupils' achievement overall is good. By the time pupils enter Year 1 they have made good progress but have still not achieved the outcomes expected of them nationally. They continue to make good progress and current standards show that they are on target to be closer to national expectations by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 than has previously been the case. The good progress this year is not yet reflected in pupils' achievements in national tests, but the improvement in standards is evident in lessons and their work and a key priority is to sustain the momentum of improvement. The school has made very good use of a range of partnerships and initiatives to support learning and help pupils improve, particularly in literacy and numeracy. Staff and governors are united in their determination to raise standards further.

Pupils' personal development is good. Moral and social development is given a very high priority and consequently behaviour is good. Pupils treat each other, and adults, with respect. Adults provide good role models. The overwhelming majority of parents are supportive of the school's work. The school has made every effort to encourage parents to be involved in their children's education. This is beginning to have an impact but there is still room for improvement, for example, with regard to attendance. Pupils talk enthusiastically about how to achieve healthy lifestyles and have many opportunities to contribute to the running of the school and take responsibilities to prepare them for adult life.

Teaching is good. The consistency with which planning and assessment is carried out is evident throughout the school. The high number and quality of teaching assistants are very effective in supporting teaching and learning. They help ensure that pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are well supported enabling them to make good progress. All teachers contribute to the management of the school and monitoring and data analysis are well developed. The school is actively seeking ways to develop the curriculum further to ensure that there is coherence across subjects and that it is relevant and exciting for the pupils.

Good leadership is evidenced by the high level of consistency, commitment to pastoral care and the continuing determination to raise standards shared by all staff. The headteacher, staff and governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and where development is needed. They demonstrate good capacity to take the school forward. The school offers good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards, particularly in literacy and numeracy.

- Identify and implement a high quality curriculum which is more coherent, relevant, fun for pupils and which makes full use of the very good facilities.
- Extend parental involvement in the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' progress and achievement are now good. Children enter the nursery with levels well below average, as do those who enter the Reception class without having attended the nursery. They make good progress and by the time they reach the end of Year 2 standards are improved, although still below average in recent past years. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress, as do those who have English as an additional language. Standards in Year 6 have been mainly below national expectations over a number of years and pupils' progress from Year 2 was broadly average. The exception to this was the 2006 results for Year 6 pupils where standards and pupils' progress dipped. Rigorous monitoring and data analysis have enabled the school to identify the underlying causes and take prompt action. Good teaching and the effective use of a range of partnerships such as the Intensive Support Programme have helped to raise standards in literacy and numeracy throughout the school. Inspection evidence shows that Year 2 and Year 6 pupils currently are progressing well and on target to achieve standards close to the national average.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral and social development, is good. Pupils behave well in lessons because the teaching is good and at breaktimes because staff expectations are clear and consistent. Pupils enjoy school and feel safe. They are very supportive of each other and openly discuss problems together and ways in which they might be managed. Pupils have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles. The effective school council is being active in promoting the eating of more fish with the help of a dietician and the school cook. In order to promote healthy lifestyles the school puts a strong emphasis on physical education (PE). All pupils benefit from two hours PE a week, very good facilities and specialist coaching. Attendance had been steadily improving over time until last year when parents offered a strong challenge to the school's justified resistance to holiday absence which resulted in below average attendance. Current data suggest that the school's robust procedures to promote better attendance are now being supported by parents. Older pupils demonstrate a good deal of confidence and pride when they carry out roles of responsibility such as 'prefect' and 'bully buddy'. Such responsibility, in addition to their partnership, team working and basic skills, makes a good contribution to pupils' future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage where teachers place a strong emphasis on personal development. Throughout the school teachers help children to work cooperatively, behave well and enjoy learning. They make good use of a wide range of resources and encourage children to be independent. The consistent way in which teachers plan lessons, mark pupils' work and help them understand what they need to do next is improving learning. Teaching

assistants are very effective in supporting learning particularly for pupils with learning difficulties. Good quality assessments feed into good quality data systems. Teachers use these very well to track and predict progress and to assist lesson planning. Most teachers have a good grasp of pupils' abilities. There are increasingly good links between subjects and this was seen in the work on 'chocolate' which caught pupils' interest. The school has made strong efforts to include parents more fully in their children's learning, but so far with limited success.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum provision is good and is developing. It meets the needs of learners well and is beginning to improve due to the recognition that the curriculum should be more thematic and relevant to the locality so that pupils have a greater sense of fun. The curriculum for guiding pupils in their moral and social development is outstanding and it provides good guidance on learning how to stay safe and manage difficult situations. Pupils enjoy school due to the content of lessons and the range of additional activities offered to them. These include regular visits, visitors in school and residential opportunities. Consequently, pupils have a good knowledge of what happens outside the school and in the wider community. Pupils develop self-confidence through a range of responsibilities and make a strong contribution to their school community through the school council. The provision for gifted and talented pupils is satisfactory and is developing. The very high quality of resources and facilities, for example, the gym, design and technology room, art room and music room, add considerably to the provision the school is able to offer. These are not fully used at present.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Pastoral care is outstanding. The school places a very strong emphasis on pupils' personal development, helping them to work together and behave well so they are able to enjoy their learning and make good progress. Academic support is good through tracking, target setting and marking which offers advice on how to improve. Parents' evenings were poorly attended so now the school has produced good reporting systems to ensure that parents have a clear understanding of what their child needs to do to improve. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities receive good quality support through effective individual education plans, support staff and the work of the special needs coordinator.

The school has in place strong measures to help ensure pupils' safety and security and school staff ensure compliance with procedures for safeguarding pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher and the chair of governors share a clear vision for the school based on providing a safe, supportive and high quality environment in which pupils can enjoy learning and make progress. The headteacher and deputy share responsibility for the day to day management of the school. They have an accurate understanding of the quality of teaching and learning and have demonstrated the capacity to take action when it is less than satisfactory. The school judges itself to be a good school and this is supported by the inspection evidence. Since the last inspection there have

been several staff changes and a significant drop in pupil numbers. The school has maintained its effectiveness and brought about improvements, for example, in assessment, monitoring and the use of ICT. All staff have the opportunity to be involved in the management of the school through a flexible senior management team. They are invited to contribute to discussion and decision-making that are relevant to their areas of responsibility. All staff are involved in monitoring performance and revising targets and are strengthening the school's capacity to improve. The chair of governors provides strong support and visits the school regularly. The governing body performs its role satisfactorily and is kept well-informed about progress but there are limited opportunities for governors to experience the work of the school first hand.

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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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
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	3
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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	3
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

16 March 2007

Dear Pupils,

Redcastle Furze School, St Martins Way, Thetford. Norfolk IP24 3PU

Thank you very much for welcoming Mr Perkins and me to your school when we visited you. We enjoyed talking to you and looking at your work. We really enjoyed having lunch with you. We were impressed by the good range of healthy food to choose from, and by the birthday parties! We think that Redcastle Furze is a good school and know that you are very proud of it. You show this by behaving well and taking good care of each other. All the adults in school try their very best to help you do well.

We were very pleased to hear that you enjoy school and are trying to improve your work, particularly in literacy and numeracy. We want you to succeed and have asked the staff to help you do this. You told us how much you enjoyed exciting lessons that are fun because this helps you to learn. Dr Sheppard and your teachers are already looking for ways to make your work more interesting. Your recent work about the Chinese New Year and 'chocolate' shows what a difference this can make. We have also asked the school to find more ways to involve your parents in your learning. Can you help too?

We enjoyed your singing in assembly on Wednesday and were impressed by your knowledge about Easter. We hope that you enjoy the rest of the term and the Easter holiday when it comes.

Look after your school and each other!

Very best wishes

Joy Stopher

Lead inspector