

Creeting St Mary Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124770
Local Authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	328210
Inspection dates	12 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Judith Dawson

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	37
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Alastair Rogers
Headteacher	Mrs Marilyn Spall
Date of previous school inspection	4 July 2006
School address	All Saints Road Creeting St Mary Ipswich Suffolk IP6 8NF
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited four lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at various school documents including the pupils' work, records of their progress and 13 parental questionnaires.

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

- The quality of teaching and the curriculum and their impact on raising standards and accelerating pupils' progress.
- How the school evaluates and responds to the impact of the three term entry system on the youngest children.
- Whether the school's plans for improvement are clearly focused on raising standards.

Information about the school

This very small rural primary school serves pupils from the village, where most have favourable socio-economic backgrounds. Over half the pupils come from outside the catchment area. Fewer pupils than nationally come from minority ethnic groups. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or statements of special educational needs is higher than in most other schools and includes pupils with social and emotional challenges, speech and language difficulties, moderate learning and medical conditions. The school has strong links with the church and holds the Activemark and Healthy Schools award.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

At the time of the last inspection, the headteacher had not been in post for long, and although she had a clear vision for the future of the school that the staff shared, this had not had time to have an impact on outcomes for the pupils. Since then, all aspects of the school's provision have improved. This has resulted in almost all pupils making good progress from their starting points. The good relationships throughout the school and the care provided for each individual are manifested in pupils' good behaviour and the care and respect that they show for each other. This good school sets clear and relevant plans for development based on an accurate analysis of strengths and areas for improvement. Progress towards targets is monitored and new initiatives are evaluated for their effectiveness. This generates good potential for future improvement.

Over the last three years, overall standards have been broadly average at Year 2 and Year 4. Standards currently are higher. The school's assessments show more pupils now in Year 2 and Year 4 than last year are working at or above the expected levels in reading writing and mathematics. Pupils achieve well because of the good teaching and support given, particularly to pupils with social, learning or medical difficulties, and the challenging targets that are set for each pupil. The school's assessments are effective in showing how well pupils are doing, but pupils could be more involved in identifying what needs to be improved and how to complete their tasks. The good curriculum ensures that pupils learn effectively. However, the content of the curriculum is almost entirely decided by the teachers and pupils have few opportunities to decide for themselves what, and how, they would like to study as they learn new skills.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In order to accelerate pupils' learning, ensure that they regularly evaluate their own work and that of their peers, making their own decisions about what they need to improve and how to achieve their tasks.
- Focus the curriculum more fully on the development of skills and involve pupils in planning the topics they would like to pursue.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils make good progress in their lessons. They work well together, are eager to learn and take a pride in their achievements. Pupils have good support in lessons and this is instrumental in ensuring that pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities throughout the school make particularly good progress. However, sometimes pupils are given too much advice or support, which limits opportunities for them to make decisions about the best way to complete a task. Pupils are often encouraged to evaluate their success in lessons, which they do well. They rarely assess the quality of their written work in order to decide for themselves what they need to do to improve. There are very few pupils in each cohort and their overall knowledge and skills on entry vary from year to year but are broadly average overall. In the Non-statutory assessments at the end of Year 4 in 2008, overall standards were slightly above average for reading, writing and mathematics. This year, almost all Year 2 pupils have made better than the expected progress from their below average starting points, and all are working at, or exceeding expected levels for their age. Pupils in Year 4 are also working at above average levels this year, having made good progress from Year 2. The progress of the most able pupils in mathematics, although satisfactory, has been slower, as they are sometimes given too much guidance.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and pupils have many opportunities for reflection, through the 'I wonder' scheme. The strong Christian ethos of the school and good pastoral guidance helps them develop tolerance and understanding. As a result, behaviour is good. Pupils enjoy school and are rarely absent. They feel safe in school and, as the school awards demonstrate, adopt healthy lifestyles, eating healthily and making the most of the sporting activities available. They are developing a good understanding of world issues, especially those affecting the environment and make good contributions to the local community. Pupils carry out their many duties responsibly and Year 4 pupils are trained as sports leaders. They are developing the skills they will need for their futures effectively. Pupils weigh and sell apples and walnuts from the school's prolific grounds and the school council occasionally has a budget to manage. Pupils use their good information and communication technology skills effectively across the curriculum.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	2
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	2
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	2
How well do pupils behave?	2
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	2
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	2
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good throughout the school. Although inspectors did not observe all the teachers in lessons because of the job shares, pupils' books show that marking gives good guidance to help them make good progress. Pupils know their targets but rarely have the opportunity to set their own. Teachers' planning clearly identifies the needs of different pupils and work is set at suitably challenging levels. This is because they use the school's data well, identifying and responding to any gaps or weaknesses in learning. Teaching assistants are skilled, working in partnership with the teachers, encouraging and challenging the pupils and assessing their progress. Adults encourage pupils to learn in a range of different ways and they extend learning well through effective questioning. However, although teachers are clear about what outcomes they want pupils to achieve, they give too little emphasis to the skills pupils are to acquire. For example, they may focus on generating a specific chart from a survey rather than applying skills of organising and presenting data.

The curriculum is interesting and varied, with impressive provision for extra-curricular activities. Links with other local schools provide opportunities in music and sport for pupils to play and perform in larger groups. The subject planning generally follows government guidance and this ensures that pupils learn the skills they need. There are good links between subjects, enabling pupils to practise their skills. Teachers ensure that pupils develop a good knowledge of other cultures, environments and customs. However, pupils do not have any influence on the themes or topics they study and have few opportunities to pursue their own interests as they learn. This misses opportunities for them to study in depth and extend their learning further. The school is well placed to give pupils more involvement in the curriculum, because teachers have a secure understanding of the skills pupils need to acquire.

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

Pupils are well cared for. The emphasis on individuals ensures that each member of the school is valued and success, both academic and in developing personal and social skills, is celebrated. Good links with parents, other schools and agencies ensures pupils' needs are catered for. The good personal, social and health education curriculum provides a solid foundation to stand pupils in good stead for their futures.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has generated a united workforce, committed to inclusion and the welfare of all pupils and their families. Teachers have several responsibilities within this small school and all are involved in evaluating performance and setting targets for improvement. Governors are equally involved and readily bring their talents to support the school. All governors have specific responsibilities for aspects of the school's work and they monitor performance regularly. They have sought the views of pupils and parents and adjusted the provision accordingly. The headteacher monitors teaching and the outcomes are used to inform teachers' professional development, although teachers are not yet looking at each other's practice in order to extend their skills. All these measures have been instrumental in improving all aspects of provision and pupils' achievement. Teaching responsibilities are organised so that pupils' gain from each teacher's specific talents and both the building and resources are deployed well.

The school meets government requirements for ensuring the safety of the pupils. Teachers, and especially teaching assistants, work very well with other specialists, some holding specific qualifications to support pupils with speech and language difficulties. Very good dialogue with parents and the 'open door' policy ensures any concerns are dealt with swiftly. Parents are extremely supportive of the school and raise thousands of pounds to support school causes. Excellent relationships with the local nursery help to make children's learning seamless. The nursery and parents are consulted about the times of the transfer and individual needs are catered for. This is especially effective for the youngest children to ensure they join their peers with confidence and little disruption to their learning. The school often joins other schools for educational visits, providing wider social as well as academic experiences. Community links extend to other schools and organisations locally and internationally. Visitors from different religious and cultural backgrounds extend pupils' understanding of others' beliefs and lifestyles and pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for world issues such as climate change.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
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 community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Almost all children join the school having had pre-school education, most at the local nursery school. They are confident and settle into school quickly because of the very good links with the nursery. They join the school for two afternoons each week in the term before they attend full time. This year, a quarter of children joining the Reception class have statements of special educational needs for learning or speech and language. They have very good support from adults and their peers and thrive in the well-organised and stimulating environment. Children make good progress, whatever their starting points, the more able benefiting from working with Year 1. All feel safe and learn how to keep healthy. Their activities are designed to ensure they have many opportunities to engage in role-play, write and extend their mathematical skills. They really enjoy their learning, especially in the well-planned outside area. Sometimes, however, opportunities to make decisions about the way they organise their learning are limited because they receive too much guidance from adults.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is well managed and children's welfare is at the heart of its work. All staff are skilled practitioners. They make regular and frequent assessments of children's response to their learning which feed into the school's tracking to measure their progress. Records follow on from the nursery and into Year 1. There is an interesting curriculum where skills are taught through topics. Activities within the classroom and outside are geared towards developing children's imagination. Adults make learning fun. For example, children used large decorating brushes with water on blackboards outside as they linked sounds to letters. Sometimes, however, in more formal lessons, teachers are too focused on the physical outcomes of the lesson rather than the skills involved in achieving them.

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 in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents are pleased with the work of the school, especially its involvement in the community. They feel welcome in school and almost all feel that any problems are sorted out swiftly. A minority have some concerns about the way the school deals with unacceptable behaviour, but the inspectors found procedures for this to be robust and that behaviour is good. One parent praised the way the school nurtures the children to promote a good education while another considers the school to be caring and well organised. The inspectors agreed with these comments.

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Creeting St Mary Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. If a parent has more than one child at the school, we ask them to record an answer against all the questions, for each of their children.

The inspection team received 13 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 60 parents and carers registered at the school.

	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Never
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	10	2	1	

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
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. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

- Attainment:** the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
- 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.
- Achievement:** the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, training or development. This may refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding or desired attributes. Attributes include qualities or personal competencies which are important to the development of the pupil; for example personal, social, cultural, emotional or health.
- 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.



15 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Creeting St Mary Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Creeting St Mary, IP6 8NF

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 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, like the play leaders and the school council, carry out your duties responsibly. Thank you for sharing your views with us. You are part of a good school and you all work together to find ways of making it even better. You make good progress during your time in school, learning the skills you need for your futures and how to be mature and responsible people. This is because you are taught well and have interesting things to learn.

There are some things we have asked your teachers to do to help you all achieve as well as you can. You have told us that your teachers give you good advice in lessons and when marking your work and set you targets you can achieve. We would like more of you to decide for yourselves what you and your classmates need to do to make your work better. You can then set your own targets and take more responsibility for your own learning. The teachers know exactly what skills you need to acquire to achieve well. They plan interesting things for you to do to help you master these skills. We would like you to help them plan what you will learn about so that you develop skills in ways that interest you most. Sometimes teachers give you too much advice about how to do your work. You have shown us how responsible you are. We know that you will relish the challenge of taking more responsibility for planning, organising and improving your work.

The grownups in charge of your school manage the school well. Your parents provide a lot of help in school and help you learn at home. You have good links with other schools and local people. We are impressed by the care you show for the environment and people across the world less fortunate than us. You are gaining good skills that will stand you in good stead, as you grow older. We wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Judy Dawson
Lead inspector

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