

# Wells Hall Community Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	124558
<b>Local authority</b>	Suffolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	380916
<b>Inspection dates</b>	15–16 May 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Selwyn Ward

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	First
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	435
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Richard Metson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Judith Fardell
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 February 2007
<b>School address</b>	Wells Hall Road Great Cornard Sudbury CO10 0NH
<b>Telephone number</b>	01787 373489
<b>Fax number</b>	01787 883315
<b>Email address</b>	ad.wellshall.p@talk21.com

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<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	15–16 May 2012
<b>Inspection number</b>	380916



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## Introduction

Inspection team

Selwyn Ward	Additional Inspector
Peter Lacey-Hastings	Additional Inspector
Cecelia Davies	Additional Inspector
Paul Bartlett	Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors visited 40 lessons taught by 19 teachers, with a particular focus on the progress boys and girls make in their reading, writing and mathematics. Inspectors listened to pupils read, and spoke with parents and carers, groups of pupils, staff, and members of the governing body. The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at pupils' books, school development planning, school self-evaluation, leaders' monitoring of teaching and the questionnaire responses of 100 pupils, 27 staff and 232 parents and carers.

## Information about the school

This school is much larger than the average first school. Most pupils are White British, with small numbers coming from a range of minority ethnic heritages. There are no pupils at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational need is average. Specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs is based at Wells Hall providing outreach support for autistic pupils attending schools across the locality. This is independently managed and separately inspected, as is the after-school club that is run each day. The school runs a breakfast club at the start of each day.

As part of a local authority reorganisation, Wells Hall is changing to an all-through primary school. Pupils currently in Year 4 are due to remain at the school until the end of Year 6. At the time of the inspection, the school was in the middle of building works for the additional classrooms and facilities needed for this expansion. During the period of the inspection, the headteacher was on compassionate leave.

**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

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Key findings

- This is a good school. It lives up to its motto, 'Learning Together, Learning For Life', and its many strengths are greatly appreciated by parents and carers. It is not outstanding because attainment in reading is not as high as in writing and mathematics and because work in lessons is not always matched closely enough to the wide range of abilities in each class.
- Boys and girls achieve well. Pupils make good progress across all age groups. Their attainment is above that expected for their ages, but more pupils attain higher levels in writing and mathematics than in reading.
- Pupils benefit from good teaching that motivates them to try hard and do their best. Teachers devise activities that stimulate pupils' interest and excitement. Many lessons move forward at a brisk pace so that pupils get a lot done, but the pace of learning slows in some lessons when not enough is expected of all the pupils. Marking varies in quality between subjects. It is notably better for writing and mathematics than for other subjects.
- Behaviour is consistently good. Pupils are unfailingly polite, friendly and treat each other with respect. Their positive attitudes to learning contribute to their rapid progress. Pupils feel safe and have a good understanding of how to keep safe.
- This is a well-run school. Careful analysis of performance, followed up with well-focused action to tackle areas identified for improvement, has raised attainment, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Teaching and other aspects of provision are monitored regularly, but leaders sometimes have an overly positive view of the effectiveness of lessons because their observations do not always focus enough on the learning and progress of pupils of different capabilities.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Further raise attainment in reading by:
  - organising phonics sessions (linking letters and sounds in learning how to read) so that these are pitched at pupils' prior attainment and all pupils are helped to build systematically on what they have learnt before
  - ensuring that all staff benefit from appropriate training in the teaching of phonics.
  
- Accelerate pupils' progress so that learning is always at least good and more often outstanding in lessons by:
  - making sure that the success criteria, set out at the start of lessons, are sharply focused and matched to pupils' different capabilities
  - always giving pupils work that challenges them and moves their learning on at a brisk pace
  - focusing leaders' lesson observations on pupils' learning and rates of progress
  - giving all pupils clear guidance through marking in all subjects that shows them what they need to do to improve their work.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Children join the Nursery and Reception Years with skills and capabilities a little below those expected for their ages, especially in communication and language. In the past, progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage has been satisfactory but it has accelerated this year. As a result of more good teaching, children are now making the same good progress in this stage as in Years 1 to 4. They make especially marked progress in their language and social development. Children particularly enjoy the opportunities they have for first-hand experiences, for example in exploring the tractor that came into school as part of the prelude to an upcoming farm visit. Activities such as these are made exciting for the children and act as a stimulus to learning in language, number and other areas of learning. The improvement in the Early Years Foundation Stage is commented upon by parents and carers, including one who wrote, 'My child has come on in leaps and bounds in his first year at school.'

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 has consistently been the equivalent of around a term ahead of that seen nationally. Assessments in reading, though above average, have tended to lag behind those in writing and mathematics because fewer more-able pupils have attained the higher Level 3. Current pupils' reading shows an improving picture. A key factor here is the care taken by staff to match books to pupils' reading levels. As a result, pupils read with confidence and fluency. This extends to reading in Years 3 and 4, where pupils continue to make good progress in English and mathematics, and where attainment, both in reading and in other areas,

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is above that expected for pupils' ages.

Phonics teaching has contributed to the improvements in reading but its impact has been blunted because pupils are taught in their mixed-ability classes for phonics sessions. This means that pupils of widely different abilities practise exactly the same letter sounds and blends. This limits the opportunity for pupils, especially the more-able, to build systematically on what they have already learnt.

Almost all parents and carers refer positively to the progress their children make at Wells Hall. This extends to parents of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Inspection findings are fully endorsed by parents and carers, who appreciate that these pupils make rapid progress because they benefit from carefully tailored support. Though many have lower starting points than their peers, their progress means that the gap narrows.

### **Quality of teaching**

Inspectors' evaluation of teaching as good is endorsed by almost all parents and carers. Pupils also agree. They work hard because they like their teachers and because the teachers are successful in devising stimulating and fun activities. Often these bring different curriculum subjects together so that, for example, pupils practising their use of adjectives in Year 4, described creatures studied as part of the topic work on Ancient Greece. Lessons typically start with a learning objective and these are mostly well defined to focus on what the pupils are expected to learn and not just what they are going to be doing. This aids pupils in evaluating their own learning. As a result, self- and peer-assessment are well developed, especially in Key Stage 2. In addition to the learning objective, pupils are given success criteria. These are more sharply focused in mathematics than in other subjects, where they are not routinely varied to cater for pupils' different capabilities. For topic work covering subjects other than English and mathematics, pupils are often given worksheets to complete. Where these are the same for all pupils, they offer too much direction for the more-able and not enough for lower-attaining pupils.

Teachers manage their classes well, and the good relationships throughout the school contribute strongly to pupils' social and personal development. In the main, teachers have good subject knowledge, although not all model phonics accurately, which results in some pupils making errors when attempting to sound out and read unfamiliar words. In the most effective lessons, teachers have high expectations of what the pupils can do. They remind pupils of their individual targets. Activities are varied and lessons move at a fast pace. The pace is notably slower in lessons where all are given similar work to do regardless of their different abilities. In these lessons, more-able pupils, in particular, make less progress than they could because they are not challenged enough. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are taught well because they benefit from carefully targeted support, including through intervention groups. There are examples of good marking, especially in English and mathematics, that set out the next steps that pupils are expected to take to move their learning on, but this practice is not universal across the school or in every

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subject.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Behaviour in lessons and around the school is consistently good, and this is typical over time. Pupils learn well together and they treat each other with kindness and respect, readily volunteering to help one another. They listen well in lessons and are enthusiastic learners. This is recognised by the overwhelming majority of parents and carers, who comment favourably on behaviour and the absence of bullying. A parent of a child who had behavioural difficulties wrote to express gratitude for the help that staff had provided, explaining, 'I know that my child could be disruptive in class if allowed to be. I have always been kept in close contact with the headteacher and class teacher and, with their support, I am pleased to say he is more understanding of others in his class and his behaviour has greatly improved.' The parent went on to point out that, 'This shows that bad behaviour is not tolerated at Wells Hall.'

Pupils also comment positively on behaviour. They are insistent that physical bullying, name-calling or nastiness is rare and they express confidence that any incidents will be dealt with effectively by staff. They confirm that they feel safe at school, and they learn how to keep safe, including when using the internet. Pupils confirmed, for example, that they were aware of the hazards of cyber-bullying and what they could do to minimise this risk.

## **Leadership and management**

'Wells Hall is a very well run school where my children enjoy going every day. The school has a wonderful feeling of being a family community and great place to learn.' This comment from a parent sums up the views of the vast majority of parents and carers. Leadership and management are good. Leaders have had notable success in maintaining and building on the strengths identified in the last inspection. Achievement, behaviour and teaching are, good and, together with accurate self-evaluation, this shows the school's good capacity for continued improvement.

The monitoring and management of performance have been key to the school's success. For example, the headteacher holds regular one-to-one meetings with each teacher to check on pupils' progress and on the strategies for boosting performance of any pupils identified as falling behind. This has been an important factor in narrowing the attainment gap for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs between what they achieve and the national average for all pupils. The good promotion of equal opportunities is also illustrated in the successful focus on boys' writing, which dipped below that of girls in 2010. An initiative boosted boys' writing but without any adverse impact on the performance of girls. There is no discrimination in this harmonious school community. Leaders regularly monitor all aspects of provision, including teaching, but not all lesson observations are focused sharply enough on the progress being made by all pupils. This means that leaders have sometimes judged lessons to be outstanding even where they have not recorded evidence of such very strong learning.

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The governing body has not allowed the upcoming expansion of the school and concomitant building works to distract it from its focus on standards. It keeps a keen eye on the school's strategic development. Its members visit regularly and are not solely dependent on reports from the headteacher and staff for their information about how well the school is performing. The school's 'single plan' for improvement sets the strategic direction. It incorporates measurable success criteria, although the targets set are not sharp enough when, for example, they lump together the percentage of pupils who are to make 'expected or exceeded progress'. A notable strength of the 'single plan', however, is the inclusion of 'evaluation questions' that help governing body members to quiz leaders and staff on school improvement. The governing body ensures that safeguarding arrangements meet regulatory requirements.

The curriculum is made exciting for pupils because, increasingly, literacy and numeracy are being learnt alongside, and as part of, other subjects. Opportunities are sometimes missed, however, for pupils to extend their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects where all are given worksheets to complete. There are lots of enrichment activities, including an extensive range of well-attended extra-curricular clubs. Pupils, parents and carers are rightly positive about the start to the day provided by the breakfast club. Art and music are given prominence and result in work of a high standard. Year 2 pupils vote on their favourite classical composers and have developed a penchant for *Il Trovatore*. As part of a local authority initiative this year, every pupil in Year 4 has been loaned an orchestral stringed instrument and is taught music weekly by a visiting specialist. As a result, pupils have developed confidence in singing and playing music. Along with a focus on Western and other art, and empathetic writing, this has greatly stimulated pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.



## Glossary

### 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.
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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**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.**



17 May 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Wells Hall Community Primary School, Sudbury, CO10 0NH**

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful on our recent visit to your school. I would like to pass on a particular thanks to those of you who talked to inspectors and to those who completed questionnaires. You told us that you think Wells Hall is a good school. We agree. It is well run, and you benefit from good teaching that is ensuring that you make good progress and attain above-average standards. Though it is improving, your reading is not quite as strong as your writing and mathematics. For that reason, we have suggested some changes to the way phonics is taught so that you make faster progress in reading. We have also suggested some changes to lessons so that you always make good or outstanding progress, including by ensuring that the work you are given helps you to build more firmly on what you have learnt before.

We were very pleased to see how well you all get on together, and that you behave well and listen attentively in lessons. Your positive attitudes to learning make a strong contribution to your success at Wells Hall. You can help to do even better by always taking care to read and follow the advice teachers give you when they mark your work. You can also help by telling your teachers if the work you are given is too easy or too hard.

Thank you again for being so helpful during our visit, and our very best wishes for the future, especially for those of you in Year 4 who will be going on to be this school's first ever Year 5 and Year 6 groups.

Yours faithfully

Selwyn Ward  
Lead inspector

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