

Sir Robert Hitcham's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	124774
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	380979
Inspection dates	14–15 June 2012
Lead inspector	Godfrey Bancroft

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	226
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Howard Simpson
Headteacher	Jane Taylor
Date of previous school inspection	13 November 2007
School address	School Corner Debenham Stowmarket IP14 6PL
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Age group	4–11
Inspection date(s)	14–15 June 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

Godfrey Bancroft

Additional inspector

Sally Lane

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 14 lessons taught by eight teachers and parts of other lessons. All of the lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher or deputy-headteacher. Meetings were held with parents and carers, groups of pupils, members of the governing body and staff. In addition to observing the school's work the inspector looked at information about pupils' attainment and progress and about the management of their safety and behaviour. The inspector took account of the views expressed in 105 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, and others returned by pupils and staff.

Information about the school

The number of pupils on roll is broadly average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for a free school meal is below average, as is the proportion coming from a minority ethnic background or who are known to speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils supported by school action plus is low, but the proportion who have a statement for their special educational need is broadly average. The numbers of pupils who join the school at other than the usual times is relatively low but has risen during the last year. The school meets current floor standards, which are the government's minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. Among other national awards the school holds Artsmark, Sportsmark and is a Green Flag Eco School.

A privately managed pre-school group is housed on the school site. This provision is not managed by the governing body and as such is inspected separately.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. It is not yet outstanding because attainment in mathematics lags behind that for English and sometimes the work set for higher attaining pupils does not challenge them sufficiently. Parents and carers and pupils are pleased with the quality of education. One parent commented, reflecting the views of many in saying, 'This is a fantastic school, with caring staff and a strong sense of community.'
- Pupils achieve well. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make exceptional progress. At the end of Year 2 and Year 6 attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is consistently above average. Even so, attainment in mathematics lags behind that in reading and writing. Standards of pupils' speaking and listening are very high.
- Teaching is good. Lessons are often exciting and capture pupils' interest. Questioning is used effectively to promote pupils understanding; although in some activities teachers do not do enough to extend the skills and knowledge of more able pupils.
- Behaviour and safety are outstanding. Pupils consistently work hard during lessons and are caring and supportive of each other at all times.
- Leadership and management are good. The school's capacity to sustain improvement is shown by the way in which attainment is maintained at above average levels from one year to the next. Arrangements for performance management and continued professional development contribute well to the promotion of effective teaching. The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the rate of pupils progress in mathematics and raise standards to

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match those in English by:

- focusing precisely and frequently on the promotion pupils mental and oral mathematical skills and knowledge
 - identifying and eliminating any gaps in pupils' learning in mathematics.
- Ensure that the highest attaining pupils are challenged consistently, during all activities, by setting work that extends their experience, knowledge and understanding.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Parents and carers are rightly confident that their children make good progress. Children join the Nursery with a broad spectrum of knowledge and skills that are broadly in line with those expected for their age. They make outstanding progress in the Nursery and Reception classes and join Year 1 with attainment that is well-above average in all areas of their learning.

Progress in Years 1 to 6 is good. By the key points at the end of Years 2 and 6 the school's data shows that pupils have progressed sufficiently to being a term in advance of where they are expected to be. Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 1 and when pupils leave at the end of Year 6 is consistently above average. Pupils' attainment in writing at the end of Year 2 currently places them over a year beyond where they might reasonably expect to be. Many pupils also make rapid progress in reading, with the youngest acquiring a good, early understanding of the sounds made by letters and words (phonics). This is confirmed by accurate school assessments and by the work seen during lessons and in pupils' books. Standards in speaking and listening are also very high; pupils' answers are often articulate and detailed. Pupils typically apply the basic skills of reading, writing, mathematics and information and communication technology well in other subjects. While attainment in mathematics is above average it is not as high as that in reading and writing. Pupils of all abilities have some gaps in their knowledge and understanding of mathematics as demonstrated by their mental and oral skills.

Pupils whose special educational needs are assessed at school action plus and those who have statements for their special educational needs also make good progress. Pupils who join the school at other than the usual times settle in quickly. Those who arrive with attainment which is below that expected for their age are supported well. They too, with the help of teachers and teaching assistants make good progress and soon catch up to the age related expectation.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is good. Almost all the parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire are confident their children are taught well. Pupils also feel they

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receive good teaching. In the Early Years Foundation Stage children receive outstanding teaching in all areas of their learning. The learning experiences, of every child, are planned precisely, including opportunities to learn in the outdoor area; these compliment their work and play in the classroom exceptionally well. Teachers have high expectations and lessons are planned carefully to meet the needs of the full range of abilities. There are times when the highest attaining pupils are challenged and extended effectively; however, there are also occasions when the work set for these pupils is too easy, particularly in mathematics.

Teaching promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well. This is typified during lessons by pupils' thoughtful and often detailed responses to questions and by the ways in which they care for and support each other. There is an effective system for tracking pupils' progress. This enables teachers and teaching assistants to quickly become aware if, for any reason, a pupil is falling behind or their progress diminishes. When this is the case, pupils receive all the help they need and are soon back on track. This is especially so in reading, where excellent support is provided by teaching assistants and by a regular army of volunteers who listen to pupils reading. However, for a few pupils gaps in their learning in mathematics have not been addressed. Teaching assistants make a valuable and effective contribution to the school's intervention work to increase the progress of pupils supported by school action (special educational needs) plus and those who have a statement for their special educational need.

Teachers are careful to keep pupils well informed about their progress and how to improve their work. In discussion with inspectors one pupil said, 'We are kept very informed about how well we are getting on and about how to get to the next level.'

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour and safety are outstanding. This is particularly so in terms of pupils attitudes to learning and their conduct during lessons. In this respect pupils behaviour in lessons and around the school is managed exceptionally well by teachers, support staff and by school leaders. They are very aware of the small number of pupils who find behaving appropriately very challenging and are on hand to anticipate and provide the support that these pupils need. The majority of parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire believe behaviour is good. Pupils, during formal and informal discussions, said they also think behaviour is good. They say that instances of bullying are rare and that, should any occur, they are managed well by teachers and school leaders. Pupils are well informed about what constitutes bullying and have a well developed understanding of how to keep safe in a wide variety of contexts. For example, they have a very clear understanding of the potentially dangers posed by using the internet. They are also sensitive to the needs of those they know face challenges in their lives and to those who come from other backgrounds and cultures. Older pupils make an excellent contribution to school life; for example by caring for and supporting younger children. Older pupils are particularly eager to take on responsibilities. The status of becoming a prefect or being elected to the Pupil Council is greatly prized by pupils. They also understand

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and value the school's system of rewards and sanctions.

The efforts of school leaders to improve attendance have paid dramatic dividends. For several years attendance was below average. Improvements are firmly established and attendance is now well above average.

Leadership and management

School leaders are effective in promoting good teaching and learning through performance management and through the continued professional development of staff. They also evaluate the performance of the school and the quality of provision accurately and are fully aware of what aspects need to be improved. Expectations are high and no one is complacent. The school's capacity to sustain improvement is clearly evident in the pattern of above average attainment and in the marked improvements in attendance.

School leaders, staff at all levels and the governing body all work effectively to promote equality of opportunity and to eliminate all forms of discrimination. The vast majority of parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire are confident that the school is led and managed well. Even so, a small number are unhappy with the access to and the response of the governing body to issues that they raise. In evaluating the work of the governing body inspectors concluded they provide good support and are knowledgeable about all aspects of the school's work. The work of the governing body has benefited from carefully targeted training. A good example of this is the effective work to improve the governing body's understanding of how pupils' progress is evaluated and to analyse the data provided by test results. Arrangements for ensuring that pupils are safe and for child protection meet current requirements.

The school engages effectively with parents and carers, who are kept well informed about their children's progress and school events. For their part the vast majority parents and carers have positive views and are pleased with the quality of the school's work. Typical of the views expressed were, 'A first class school with strong leadership which meets my children's needs most effectively' and 'We, as parents, are very happy with all aspects of this school.'

The curriculum meets pupils' needs well. There is a good balance between ensuring their academic progress and nurturing their personal development. The programme of learning for children in the Nursery and Reception classes is of high quality. A good range of additional clubs and activities; included residential visits are enjoyed and appreciated by pupils. Good use is made of the school grounds to promote learning and appeal to pupils' interests. The Forest Schools initiative has effectively widened the range of learning opportunities for younger pupils. Within the curriculum and beyond the promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is highly effective. This includes pupils' sensitive contributions to their learning and the learning of others during lessons. Music, singing, art and drama all have a high profile. Assemblies provide excellent opportunities for pupils to reflect and to

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consider the needs of others. Pupils raise considerable amounts to support those who are less fortunate than themselves, both abroad and closer to home.

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).

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.



18 June 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sir Robert Hitcham's Church of England Voluntary Aided School, Stowmarket, IP14 6PL.

Thank you for taking the time to talk about your work and for the help you gave to Mrs Lane and me when we recently visited to inspect your school. A special thank you goes to the children in the Nursery class who made me a very tasty strawberry milkshake. The playing of the recorder groups also provided a special treat.

We agree with you and with your parents and carers that yours is a good school. We are impressed by your excellent behaviour, by how you care so well for each other and by how hard you work during lessons. We were delighted to see how older pupils care for the youngest children and by how willing you are to take responsibility and to help around the school. We think you are taught well and were pleased to hear that you feel you get all the help you need. Your attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is better than found in most schools. The quality of your speaking and the way you answer questions and explain your ideas is far in advance of the majority of children of your age. Even so, your attainment in mathematics is not as high as in reading and writing.

We have asked your teachers to find ways of helping you to make even better progress in mathematics. We have also asked them to make sure that those of you who sometimes find learning easy are always challenged, so that your thinking and skills reach the highest level of which you are capable. You can help your teachers to do this by continuing to work as hard as you can and by attending school as frequently as possible.

I would like to wish you all the very best in the future and hope you achieve your ambitions.

Yours sincerely

Godfrey Bancroft
Lead inspector

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