

Bluebell Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	134942
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	381759
Inspection dates	14–15 June 2012
Lead inspector	John Worgan

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 of pupils on the school roll	229
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Callaghan
Headteacher	Trudi Sharred
Date of previous school inspection	14 October 2008
School address	Lovelace Road Norwich NR4 7DS
Telephone number	01603 452196
Fax number	01603 259895
Email address	office@bluebell.norfolk.sch.uk

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

John Worgan

Additional Inspector

Christine Mayle

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 12 lessons or parts of lessons, taught by 10 teachers. They also observed a range of intervention and phonics (the sounds that letters make) sessions, listened to pupils reading and looked at their work. Discussions were held with groups of pupils, parents, staff and members of the governing body. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation documents and action plan, pupils' progress records and safeguarding procedures. Questionnaires returned by 58 parents and carers were received and analysed, along with those from pupils and staff.

Information about the school

This is slightly smaller than the average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, is above average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above that found in most schools. The percentages of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language are above the national average.

The school does not meet the current floor standards, which set the minimum standards expected by the government.

The school has a Nursery and Reception unit for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. A specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs provides places for up to 10 pupils on the autistic spectrum. Nine pupils from Nursery to Year 6 are currently supported within the Specialist Resource Base. The school also has a breakfast club on the site that is managed by the governing body.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. It is not yet good because, while pupils are making satisfactory and improving progress, achievement is not consistently good. The school has identified weaknesses in some aspects of teaching and in pupils' writing and has begun to take action to remedy these. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Pupils make the expected amount of progress from low starting points. Following a dip in results last year, the school identified areas of weakness and has taken action to overcome them. Children's personal development is good in the Early Years Foundation Stage, which provides a good platform for future learning. The school's assessment data indicate that pupils' progress in Year 6 has improved this year, which was supported by inspectors' examination of their work. Pupils' writing is a weakness.
- Teaching is satisfactory. There is effective teaching in the school but it is not yet consistent enough in all areas to ensure that all pupils make good progress. The school has introduced a range of initiatives to improve teaching, with some success. The quality of marking and assessment is inconsistent.
- Behaviour and safety are good. Attendance is average and has improved in the last year. Pupils have good attitudes to learning, behave well and show respect for each other and for adults in the school. Pupils are encouraged to manage their own behaviour and to care for and support others.
- There is a secure, safe and inclusive learning environment, promoting pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development well. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and extension activities enrich pupils' experience. Leaders and managers monitor and support teaching and the school's performance effectively. They are aware of areas where improvement is necessary and have taken action to remedy weaknesses. The leadership team

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has been strengthened since the last inspection by the appointment of designated subject leaders.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Help pupils to improve their writing by:
 - giving them opportunities for extended writing across the curriculum
 - assessing their written work carefully and providing detailed guidance on how to improve.
- Improve the quality of marking in all subjects by giving pupils clear guidance on the steps which they need to take in order to reach the next level.
- Increase the amount of teaching that is good and outstanding by:
 - providing opportunities for teachers to observe the best practice within the school so that they share ideas to make lessons more interesting and challenging
 - ensuring work is consistently matched to the needs of different groups of pupils
 - limiting the amount of time pupils listen to the teacher and increasing the time they spend actively involved in their learning
 - ensuring that more-able pupils in particular have opportunities to exercise their independent learning skills.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children start in Nursery with knowledge and skills that are much lower than expected for their age. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, they make good progress in most areas of learning, especially in their personal, social and emotional development, where good teaching and appropriate modelling of social skills have a clear impact. Progress in communication, language and literacy and in number work is slower but overall pupils' attainment is average by the time they start in Year 1. In the national tests in 2011 for Year 6, attainment was below national averages. The school's data for the current Year 6, together with inspection evidence, indicate that there has been significant improvement in progress in both English and mathematics.

The school's self-evaluation indicates that there have been significant areas of underachievement in 2011. These included poor performance in reading at Key Stage 1 and by girls in mathematics at Key Stage 2. These issues have been addressed successfully and the gaps have narrowed considerably. The school has correctly identified writing as a current cause for concern and strategies are in place to support pupils in improving their writing skills. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to their peers because of well-targeted support which encourages independent learning. The specialist resource

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base supports pupils with significant learning difficulties and they are making exceptional progress because of outstanding teaching which was adapted to their needs.

Inspectors found that pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 read well and most said that they enjoy reading. Pupils in Year 2 are developing their reading skills and are able to use letter sounds to decode some unfamiliar words. Good teaching of reading was seen, which is adapted to the needs of pupils at different stages. Year 6 pupils generally read fluently but girls are more confident than boys and read with greater expression. In both key stages, reading matches national standards.

Parents and carers, in their questionnaires expressed the view that their children are making good progress.

Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is satisfactory and examples of good teaching were seen. Teaching is clearly improving but this has not yet had a sustained impact on standards of achievement. Initiatives to improve teaching include assertive mentoring, which involves teachers in monitoring pupils' progress thoroughly, enabling them to set targets and to adapt teaching to their needs. The teaching of mathematics throughout the school has improved, due to good subject leadership and the introduction of a 'Big Maths' programme. Pupils, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well in lessons, for example, through the way in which pupils are encouraged to work together and to learn from each other.

In the more successful lessons, pupils are actively involved and work together well in pairs and groups. Consequently, they make good progress and independent learning is also a feature of the best lessons. In these lessons, teachers' good questioning skills promote learning well. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, activity stations provide children with a range of opportunities to make choices and to learn independently. Children work well together, talking positively to each other and to adults. In a Year 2 reading lesson, pupils read to one another in pairs, working together to produce lists of connectives, while the teacher and teaching assistants worked with other groups, encouraging and assessing their reading. In an outstanding mathematics lesson, pupils were developing numeracy skills through a variety of practical tasks, catering for a range of abilities. Pupils' work was monitored carefully, ensuring that progress was rapid.

In less successful lessons, pupils spend long periods listening to the teacher; consequently, opportunities for independent work, especially by more-able pupils, are limited. In these lessons, the needs of different groups of pupils were not always assessed, consequently their progress was slow.

Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are well supported through a range of successful activities. Assertive mentoring is particularly effective for these pupils, identifying areas of need, allowing teachers to plan effective support

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and interventions. Teaching in the specialist resource base is of high quality, allowing pupils to make exceptionally good progress; for example, puppets were used in a reading lesson to encourage pupils to predict the next part of a story.

All staff have been trained in the teaching of reading, which is well taught. This ensures that pupils are developing as confident readers. Guided reading lessons are well planned and purposeful, supporting pupils at different stages in their reading. Pupils' work is marked regularly and written work is carefully corrected. Although pupils were aware of their National Curriculum levels, marking does not always guide them on the next steps to reach higher levels.

Parents and carers, in questionnaires and in discussion, were complimentary about standards of teaching and were appreciative of initiatives to involve them in their children's learning. Pupils say that teachers help them to make progress through feedback and support.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The school is a well-ordered community where careful attention to safety and good pastoral care help pupils to develop good personal skills, fostering their positive attitudes to learning. Parents and carers who responded to the questionnaires agree that the school keeps their children safe and that behaviour is good. As one parent said: 'As the parent of a child with special educational needs, it is so important to know that they are safe, understood and supported in school. The support I have received has been outstanding, beyond anything I could have hoped for.'

In the majority of lessons, inspectors saw good behaviour with occasional exceptions only when teaching was less engaging. In their questionnaires, pupils said that there are few instances when lessons are interrupted by inappropriate behaviour. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their own behaviour and in several lessons, they supported and encouraged each other's learning. Discussions with pupils and the school's own behaviour records show that this is typical.

In their questionnaires and in discussion, pupils said that they feel safe in school and that teachers deal with any incidents of inappropriate behaviour promptly and well. Behaviour management is firm, yet supportive. Pupils in the specialist resource base behave well despite their difficulties because carefully planned strategies encourage good behaviour. They are encouraged to integrate with the rest of the school whenever possible. Bullying is very rare and pupils report that when minor instances occur they are dealt with quickly and effectively. Pupils have an understanding of different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying.

Leadership and management

The strong leadership of the headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, is recognised by pupils, staff, parents and carers. Leadership at all levels, including that of subject leaders, has clearly been a key factor in

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improvements which have had a significant impact during the last year. Self-evaluation revealed areas of weakness in reading and mathematics in 2010/11 which have been addressed; evaluation is honest and grounded in careful data analysis. Pupils' writing has been identified as a current area of concern and leaders and managers are developing strategies to secure improvement in this area. Improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement over the past year demonstrate the school's growing capacity to improve further. An ethos of improvement is shared by all, this is particularly apparent in the involvement of support staff in the assertive mentoring programme, ensuring that pupils receive individual support and guidance, adapted to their needs. The leadership of the specialist resource base is particularly strong, ensuring that the pupils in the unit make exceptionally good progress and play a full part in the life of the school.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and is enhanced by a range of extra-curricular activities and themed weeks. This was seen during the inspection when pupils participated in an opening ceremony for the school olympics and when Year 3 visited a woodland centre, learning about ecology through an active experience. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well in lessons, assemblies, where pupil participation is a strength, and in extra-curricular activities.

Professional development is focused on improving teaching and learning, and staff spoke highly of the training they received in the teaching of reading which has helped to improve their teaching and consequently improved pupils' progress. Support staff are involved in appropriate training and meet regularly to share good practice. Middle managers are new to their roles; they are enthusiastic and focused on raising attainment and are developing their management skills effectively.

The school actively promotes equality and tackles discrimination. Pupils have a sense of belonging, fostered by the inclusive ethos. This is illustrated by the participation of pupils from the specialist resource base in school activities. A parent support advisor plays a key role in supporting families from different cultures and helping to ensure that pupils attend regularly.

Arrangements for safeguarding are robust. Policies and procedures are effective and the governing body plays an active role in promoting and monitoring pupils' safety. Governance is increasing in strength with a supportive governing body which challenges and monitors school effectiveness well.

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 Bluebell Primary School, Norwich, NR4 7DS

Thank you very much for the welcome you gave us when we visited your school. You were polite and friendly and we appreciated the way you helped us find out about your school through questionnaires and discussions and by showing us your work. Bluebell Primary is a satisfactory school, which means that some things are good and some things need to be better.

These are some of the things that stood out about your school.

- You and your teachers have worked hard to improve your progress and results are getting better.
- Your school is a safe place and staff care for you well and help you when you have problems or difficulties.
- You get on well with each other and work together thoughtfully to improve your learning.

We have asked your school to do the following things to improve.

- Give you more opportunities to develop your writing skills in all subjects and to let you know how to improve your written work.
- Improve marking by giving you clear guidance on the steps which you need to take in order to reach the next level.
- Make teaching even better by teachers sharing ideas to make lessons more interesting and challenging.

You can help the school to improve by always working hard and doing your best.

Yours sincerely

John Worgan
Lead inspector

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