

Ashwicken CofE First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121135
Local Authority	NORFOLK
Inspection number	292026
Inspection date	11 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Glynn Storer

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–8
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	67
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sharon Barrett
Headteacher	Mrs Susan Collison
Date of previous school inspection	4 November 2002
School address	East Winch Road Ashwicken King's Lynn Norfolk PE32 1LY
Telephone number	01553 630352
Fax number	

Age group	4–8
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This very small school serves a wide and diverse area. Only one in five pupils comes from the local village. The remainder are from surrounding villages or the nearby town of King's Lynn. Children's skill levels on entry vary markedly from year to year but is generally typical of four-year-olds nationally. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds and of the very few from minority ethnic groups, none are at an early stage of learning to speak English. The number of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is about average, although the number with statements of special educational need is higher than normal for a school of this size. The school has gained the Eco Schools Silver Award and the Primary Quality Mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. Pupils of all abilities flourish in an extremely caring environment and as a result achieve well, attain good academic standards and develop exceptionally strong personal qualities. As one parent put it: 'We all love this school. The staff are great, the lessons are enjoyable and my children are happy!'

One of the keys to the school's success is its drive to place an understanding of ecology and of the importance of caring for the environment at the very heart of pupils' learning. The enthusiasm of senior staff rubs off on all, builds morale and inspires enormous commitment. Consequently, a major strength of the school is that everybody is pulling in the same direction. This is partly because they share the headteacher's vision, but also because effective management systems result in accurate school self-evaluation and a good degree of consistency in most aspects of the school's work.

Achievement and standards are good. Children get a good start to their education in the Foundation Stage. Standards have been above average at the end of Years 2 and 3 for the last five years. The preliminary results for the 2007 Year 2 cohort suggest that overall standards are well above average this year, and that there has been a marked increase in the proportion of pupils attaining above average levels. The results of national assessments and the school's tracking data indicate that most pupils achieve well. However, whilst many boys make good progress, their performance lags behind that of girls, particularly in reading and writing.

Pupils' extremely positive attitudes, behaviour and response are also important factors in the good standards that they achieve. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and learn well because teaching is consistently good. It is lively and engaging and a good, 'hands on' ecologically based curriculum promotes excellence and enjoyment in equal measure. Staff do the best they can with limited resources for information and communication technology (ICT), but current shortfalls in provision prevent pupils from using ICT as an aid to learning across the curriculum.

Relationships between pupils and staff are excellent. There is a real family atmosphere in which good pastoral care and sound academic guidance build pupils' self-esteem and confidence. Staff promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural development to a high standard. Procedures for safeguarding pupils fully meet current requirements and pupils receive an outstanding grounding in how to be safe and lead healthy lifestyles. Extremely positive attitudes and values, along with good levels of basic skills prepare pupils well for their on-going education and for their adult lives. Pupils' contribution to the school and to the wider community, through their exceptional care for the ecological well-being of the environment, is outstanding.

The school is going from strength to strength. The highly innovative plans to build an eco-classroom and a rolling programme of similar premises improvements are set to improve resources and facilities enormously. In this respect, the school's work in partnership with others is excellent. Such projects, along with the school's accurate self-evaluation and well focused improvement planning, give it a strong capacity for further improvement. The school provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Find more ways of improving boys' progress, particularly in reading and writing.
- Improve resources and facilities for ICT and give pupils greater access to ICT throughout the curriculum.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are regularly above average at the end of Years 2 and 3. In 2006, when overall standards in Year 2 were only marginally above average overall, virtually all pupils attained the expected level for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. However, overall scores were no higher because relatively few pupils attained the above average Level 3. Girls did particularly well and pupils with learning difficulties did exceptionally well in comparison with similar pupils in other schools. Whilst boys' scores were broadly similar to those of boys nationally, the gap between boys and girls was wider here than in many other schools. Preliminary results for 2007 show that standards have risen again. Standards are likely to be above average in reading and well above in writing and mathematics because there has been a marked upturn in the proportions of Level 3 scores in all core subjects. The school's pupil tracking data show that from Reception to Year 3, all pupils are making at least the progress that they should and that for many, progress is good. There is, however, still scope to narrow the gap between boys and girls, particularly in reading and writing.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Attendance rates are above the national average. Pupils say that they thoroughly enjoy school because 'teachers are friendly and nice' and they love activities such as pond dipping and counting birds, when they can learn outdoors. They relate extremely well to staff and fellow pupils and behave exceptionally well in lessons and around school. By the time that they leave, most are very mature and confident for their age. Pupils show this in the conscientious way they carry out responsibilities. For example, the 'eco-warriors' even placed a skull and crossbones on the headteacher's door because she had failed to separate her office waste ready for recycling! Such attitudes mean that they are well prepared for secondary education and have many skills they will need for the world of work. Their many on-going ecology projects have a strong impact on them because they deepen their understanding of a wide range of moral and social issues. They also develop pupils' sensitivity to things of beauty and strongly promote their understanding of what is right. Pupils' thorough understanding of safe and healthy lifestyles along with their commitment to protecting the planet means that they are exceptionally able to contribute to school and to society as a whole.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils. From Reception onwards, teachers plan a good range of practical, active learning opportunities that motivate and challenge pupils of all abilities. Teachers' use of assessment data has improved, so in most lessons, tasks are well matched to pupils' prior attainments. Teachers have recently begun to set group targets and are trying out ways of helping pupils to understand more clearly how to improve their work. This initiative is developing well, but is yet to have its full impact on the progress that pupils make. Teachers manage pupils well and successfully establish good working habits and constructive patterns of behaviour that create an effective climate for learning.

Classroom assistants give good support, especially to pupils with learning difficulties, who often make very good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Although good overall, the curriculum is, in many respects, excellent. There is a consistent emphasis on promoting literacy and numeracy skills throughout the curriculum. However, the school's current lack of up-to-date resources for ICT restricts pupils' access to computers and other devices as an aid to learning in all subjects. The school's commitment to ecology is evident in all areas of the curriculum. It is a unifying theme which, because it is extremely well thought out and planned, adds enormously to pupils' enjoyment and achievement across a wide range of subjects. Other cross-curricular links are also highly effective because they make pupils' learning more relevant and appealing. The school enriches its good basic curriculum with an outstanding range of educational visits, visitors and special events. Visits from a local beekeeper and an agronomist and events such as 'Springwatch' and Outdoor Environment Week bring learning to life and add much to pupils' academic and personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Standards of care, guidance and support are good. Pupils thrive in the school's very positive atmosphere. They feel secure because teachers and supervisory staff are attentive to their needs and readily provide guidance in matters of personal development. There are good arrangements for safeguarding pupils. Pupils say that bullying is rare and that staff deal quickly and effectively with any incidents that occur. Checks on the suitability of staff and procedures for child protection are thorough and meet current requirements. Procedures for checking pupils' progress are good. Staff use performance information effectively to identify and support any pupils who are at risk of underachieving. However, the use of targets and advice to individuals on how to improve their work, though satisfactory, has yet to impact fully on pupils' progress. Teaching assistants give sensitive support to pupils with learning difficulties, which ensures that they are fully included and, at times, make very good progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is a highly effective leader whose example in the classroom and in the office inspires strong teamwork from all who work there. She motivates staff by giving them all a real part to play in improving the school. Their role is planned systematically and results in accurate school self-evaluation and well focused planning for school improvement. The quality of leadership from all staff is excellent and has been central to building a consistency of expectation and approach that adds considerably to the quality of teaching and learning. Governors support the school well. They bring a wealth of community and professional experience that adds to the school's capacity to improve further. They monitor the school's work satisfactorily and are becoming increasingly confident at holding the school to account for what it achieves.

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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?	1
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	2
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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	1
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	2
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

12 June 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Ashwicken CofE First School, King's Lynn, PE32 1LY

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school. The work that you all do to look after the environment and to protect living things makes yours a very special school. I really enjoyed talking to the school councillors and to the eco-warriors about all of the good things that you do there.

This is what I found out about your school.

- Almost all of you work hard, do well in your lessons and make good progress.
- You enjoy your lessons because your teachers are 'friendly and nice'.
- You know a lot about living things and how to care for the environment.
- You all get on very well together, look after one another and do lots to make the school a better place.
- Mrs Collison, the other staff and governors work hard to improve the school.

In order to help, I have asked Mrs Collison and the other adults to do two things.

- I have asked everybody to find more ways to help the boys do even better, particularly at reading and writing.
- I have asked the governors to get you more computers and other ICT 'stuff' to help you to learn all subjects even better.

I hope that you all continue to work hard and do well at Ashwicken and that your plans for an eco-classroom work out well. I would love to see it if ever I visit again.

With best wishes

Glynn Storer

Lead Inspector