



Ravensmere Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 124571
Local Authority SUFFOLK
Inspection number 293037
Inspection date 21 February 2007
Reporting inspector John Francis

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	St Benedict's Road
School category	Community		Beccles
Age range of pupils	4-7		Suffolk NR34 9DE
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01502 712367
Number on roll (school)	53	Fax number	01502 719658
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs M Andrew
		Headteacher	Mrs M Mills
Date of previous school inspection	18 February 2002		

Age group 4-7	Inspection date 21 February 2007	Inspection number 293037
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a much smaller than average infant school taking children from the northern side of Beccles. There are many more boys than girls. An average proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals. While attainment on entry to the school is above that normally expected for children of this age, an average proportion have learning difficulties. There are very few pupils from minority ethnic groups, and none learning English as an additional language.

The school became federated with Albert Pye Primary School in September 2006, with the headteacher at Ravensmere Infants having responsibility for the two schools.

The school has an Activemark award for sport.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school that gives excellent value for money. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the way the school prepares their children: 'The sense of family that the school has, gives both children and parents a great deal of pride in what they produce.' An exceptionally good curriculum, supported by high quality teaching, ensures all pupils achieve extremely well. The school has a history of high standards and achievement and the most recent assessments for pupils in Year 2 in 2006 show, yet again, that standards are very high and particularly so for boys. This is the result of consistently high expectations and teachers giving all learning a clear purpose that is shared with the pupils. These qualities are seen right across the school and have their roots firmly embedded in the excellent provision made for children in the Early Years class and the very high standards they achieve. Exceptionally good leadership by the headteacher, supported by a very effective partnership between staff with leadership roles and an active and knowledgeable governing body, has taken the school from strength to strength. It will be vital to ensure that these leadership strengths continue to be developed and embedded into the new federation, enabling pupils to benefit from the best found in both schools.

Pupils are very confident, articulate and highly motivated. This is down to the flexible, play based approach to the curriculum adopted throughout the school. Pupils say: 'Lessons are fun ... we don't always know we are learning'. Excellent provision has led to outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils' exceptional personal development, the many roles and responsibilities they take on in school and the high standards they achieve leave them extremely well prepared for the future. However, despite the school's best efforts, attendance remains below average. Pupils' welfare has a very high priority in the school. All the necessary systems for ensuring pupils' health and safety are in place and regularly reviewed. Excellent systems for assessing and recording pupils' progress lead to well planned and very effective teaching and learning. Pupils have an excellent understanding of what they can do, their own targets and what they need to do to further improve their work.

The school has made excellent progress since its last inspection and given the consistently high standards and achievement over time has an outstanding capacity for continued improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Broaden the range of strategies aimed at improving attendance.
- Develop the new senior leadership team to consolidate their roles and build on the strengths of the federated schools.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

There has been a pattern of very high standards and outstanding achievement over many years. The most recent assessment results from 2006 continue this trend of exceptionally high standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Boys achieved exceptionally well; not only did they outperform the girls in all subjects, but achieved quite outstanding results in writing, significantly above the national trend. Much of this success is down to a love of writing that is instilled in all children from the Early Years class onwards, by staff using thoughtfully planned activities and high quality resources. The excellent teaching and leadership in special needs also enables pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities to do very well. They attain standards that are close to the national average and achieve outstanding results when compared with similar pupils nationally.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The outstanding provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has led to pupils having excellent relationships, a strong sense of responsibility and great confidence in their own abilities. From an early age, they know they are effective learners. Excellent attitudes and behaviour can be seen in all that they do, as they actively immerse themselves into their work and play. Pupils' have an excellent understanding of healthy eating: 'We have to eat five a day of fruit and vegetables and fewer sweets'...'we should have a mixture in our tummies'. Their exceptional level of involvement in sports activities during and after school, 'makes us fit and healthy,' as one pupil commented. This is recognised by the school's award of an Activemark for sports. Pupils take their responsibilities, for example as play leaders or for phoning through the daily lunch orders, very seriously. There are also very good links with nearby residential homes and businesses in the town, as well as excellent links with other schools. All of these give pupils a real sense of contributing to both the school and the wider community, as well as preparing them extremely well for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Clear understandings of what is expected of them and what they need to do to get even better are the cornerstones of pupils' learning and of their outstanding achievement. Careful evaluation of their own work enables teachers to provide clear objectives and a purpose for learning in everything they plan. Through this careful analysis, the needs of all pupils are met. Regular and perceptive monitoring by the leadership of the school and governing body ensures the standard of teaching and learning is kept high. The headteacher sets high expectations for learners and teachers,

and has worked successfully to embed good practice throughout the school. Excellent work by well qualified teaching assistants provides additional strength, particularly when supporting those pupils who have learning difficulties. The principle that everyone in the school values learning can be seen through the popular celebration assemblies that reward both achievement and attitudes to learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

An innovative curriculum and an active, practical approach to learning engage pupils' interest and builds well on the skills they already have. The development of writing skills through the use of 'small world play' from the Early Years class onwards provides a high level of motivation, for boys in particular. Flexible groupings, such as 'Mixed-up Mondays', when pupils across all age groups work together and weeks devoted to particular themes, ensure a lively, relevant and vibrant curriculum. The curriculum also broadens pupils' understanding of the wider world, for example, through their topics on other cultures. With the good range of visits and visitors to the school to enhance learning, pupils are very positive about this approach. Excellent personal, social and health education develops pupils' understanding of what it is to be healthy. This also enhances their social skills and sense of personal responsibility. Strong links with other local schools leads to the sharing of new ideas and expertise and further broadens the curriculum. Extra-curricular activities are very well supported and, with the active involvement of parent governors in particular, the school is currently developing its outdoor curriculum further.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

This is given an extremely high priority by the school and is recognised and appreciated by parents as a significant strength. The systems in place also ensure that pupils are very aware of their responsibilities. As one parent commented, '....all the children look out for, and look after, each other'. Pupils are taught how to be self-reliant and how to solve problems for themselves in the first instance. They know what to do if they are having problems with others and say they use phrases such as, 'Stop it, I don't like it!' and know to say this as if they really mean it. However, they also know what to do and who to turn to if they need help. Excellent assessment and tracking systems ensure pupils know what their targets are, and marking tells them both what they do well and what they need to do to improve. Pupils say they find it very helpful using their target cards to follow their own progress. Excellent links with the pre-school group and the primary school ensure seamless transfers into and out of school. This has been given additional strength with the federation of the two schools and the way the headteacher has created opportunities for staff to move between schools to make this even more effective.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The outstanding commitment of leadership at all levels is seen in everything that happens in school. The maintenance of consistently high standards over many years and excellent progress on many other aspects of school life shows an outstanding capacity for continued improvement. The impact of leadership in influencing change has been given added importance through the recent federation. The leadership and management roles of all have been revised and the senior leadership team, comprising of staff from both schools, is settling into its new role well. This team must now ensure the best practice identified becomes embedded and leads to consistently high expectations and standards across both schools. This process has already started with the sharing of high quality training.

While governors are very supportive and welcome the high standards, they are not complacent. They fulfil their role conscientiously by constantly holding the school to account for its achievements. The monitoring by the senior leaders and the governors is astute and exemplifies the drive for continuous improvement. There is a well thought out and effective separation of roles between the monitoring of teaching, done by the professional staff in school, and the monitoring of learning, done by the governors. The discussions with teachers and pupils that follow are extremely effective. Through these discussions, everyone gets a clear view of the links between the provision and the outcomes and of the general strengths and areas for development across the school.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

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	3
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
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	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

22 February 2007

Dear Children

Ravensmere Infant School, St Benedict's Road, Beccles, Suffolk, NR34 9DE

Thank you for making me welcome in your school. I enjoyed meeting you and liked the way you shared your views about your school with me. This letter is to tell you what I think of your school and how I think it can be even better.

You go to a wonderful school which helps you do really well in everything you do. In the classrooms I visited I would certainly agree with what you told me about your teachers making your lessons interesting. I was also very impressed by the way you listened carefully to your teachers, worked together and did all that was asked of you. This is why you do so well in your work. You said that everyone in school cares for each other and I could see this by your excellent behaviour and the way you play together. I liked the way that the play leaders carried out their jobs and the other things you all do to help the school run smoothly. All of the other interesting things you do such as the visits and your clubs give you wonderful opportunities to widen your education.

To make the school even better I have asked the teachers to do two things. One is to try to make sure some of you come to school more regularly so you don't miss out on all of the excellent things going on. The second is for the headteacher and governors to use all the good things that go on in both Ravensmere school and Albert Pye so that everyone can share the very best that is in both schools.

I am sure that your headteacher and the teachers will continue to work as hard as they do to keep the school interesting and exciting. You can be part of this by keeping up your wonderful attitudes and continue to enjoy all you do so your school becomes even better.

Mr Francis Lead inspector