

# Little Thetford CofE VC Primary School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	110803
<b>Local Authority</b>	Cambridgeshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	310422
<b>Inspection dates</b>	8–9 May 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Colin Henderson

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>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	105
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr David Melloy
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Anthony Breese
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	17 November 2003
<b>School address</b>	Green Hill Little Thetford Ely Cambridgeshire CB6 3HD
<b>Telephone number</b>	01353 649260
<b>Fax number</b>	01353 648365

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This is a smaller than average school in which equal proportions of children come from the local village and from outside the immediate locality. Almost all of them speak English as their first language. The number of children who find learning more difficult is below average for a school of this size. The attainment of children who start in Reception class varies from year to year, although it is usually above national expectations. The school has been awarded the Active Mark, Gold Arts Mark and has the Healthy Schools accreditation.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

The many positive comments given by pupils and parents, for example, 'a first class school!' clearly show how highly this school is valued. They reflect accurately that it is indeed a good school. Several parents spoken to during the inspection had chosen to send their children here because 'they benefit hugely from the caring, Christian environment'. As a result, pupils achieve well as they feel happy, enjoy their learning and benefit from good teaching and an outstanding range of learning activities. One parent commented that 'this school is exceptional in the range of activities it provides'. The good leadership and management, as shown in the strong and purposeful leadership of the headteacher, focus consistently on improving the school. The school is well placed to improve further because he has encouraged other staff to contribute to an effective team approach that fully involves an influential and effective governing body. They have an accurate picture of how well the school is doing, for example, by establishing good procedures to track the progress of individuals and groups of pupils. These are used well to improve the achievement of any pupils who are not maintaining the expected progress in English or mathematics. The excellent partnership that the school has developed with parents helps support pupils in their learning.

Children benefit from an outstanding start in the Reception class and this is built on effectively in Years 1 and 2. By the end of Year 2, pupils are attaining above average standards overall. Standards in reading are well above average. Good progress continues overall in Years 3 to 6 and by the end of Year 6, standards are above average. They are consistently well above average in English. Pupils who find learning more difficult benefit from good support and make good progress towards their learning targets. The headteacher has made good use of assessments to identify weakness in pupils' calculation skills. More effective teaching is raising standards in this aspect, although higher attaining pupils are not always challenged enough to apply these skills and attain consistently above average levels. Standards in science by the end of Year 6 are broadly average as teachers do not extend the investigational skills of older pupils sufficiently.

Pupils' good progress is also evident in the standards they attain in some other subjects, for example, music and art, which are well above those expected for their age. They greatly enjoy the outstanding curriculum in which staff work very hard to use their own expertise to create innovative and exciting opportunities, for example through the skills enrichment and enjoyment programme. The extensive range of well-attended extra-curricular activities helps pupils to extend their skills, particularly in music and sports. This is reflected in success on the sports field and in the high quality musical productions.

Pupils' outstanding personal development is a key factor in supporting good achievement. They speak enthusiastically about their school and behave excellently. They understand how to adopt healthy and safe lifestyles. Year 6 pupils enjoy taking responsibility, for example, being House Captains and taking care of younger pupils at lunchtimes. School councillors talk proudly about their work and contribute well to improving their school. The school's caring, Christian ethos is reflected clearly in the way staff work hard to ensure that every pupil is happy, secure and ready to learn. It is promoted effectively by very strong links with the church and the local community. Teachers help pupils improve their literacy work by the effective use of individual and group targets and self and peer-assessment. They are beginning to develop these skills in mathematics but pupils are not yet sufficiently confident in knowing exactly what to do to raise their standard.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 1

Children make an excellent start to their school life because of the outstanding teaching and the very broad range of interesting and well-organised activities. Children love being here and talk excitedly about what they are doing. The teacher, working very successfully with her effective teaching assistant, has created a stimulating learning atmosphere in which everyone cares for each other and is very keen to do well. Parents are very appreciative of the excellent way in which their children have settled into school and how they talk enthusiastically about what they have done each day. One child commented 'my teacher's stories are better than those on television!' The very effective balance between adult-directed and children's choice of activities, supported by excellent ongoing assessment and the very effective questioning skills of the staff, ensure that children make outstanding progress in all areas of learning. Most exceed, by a considerable margin, the standards expected nationally by the time they enter Year 1.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in science by improving pupils' investigational skills, particularly in Years 5 and 6.

Continue to improve pupils' number skills by:

- - ensuring teachers' expectations are consistently high enough, particularly of more able pupils;
- - using improvement targets in numeracy as effectively as those used in literacy.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Achievement is good and supports above average standards, although test results vary as the numbers in each year are small. Reading is particularly good because of the very good teaching of key skills and an excellent partnership with parents to support their children's learning. A stronger focus on writing in Years 5 and 6 has increased the number of pupils attaining above average standards. More pupils are attaining expected standards in mathematics because of improving mental calculation skills, although higher attaining pupils do not consistently apply these skills to solve more challenging number problems. Standards in science at the end of Year 6 are lower than those in English and mathematics because, although pupils have a good factual knowledge and understanding of their science topics, their investigational skills are not developed enough. Teachers introduce these skills very effectively in Reception and they develop well as pupils move through the school. However, pupils in Years 5 and 6 have too few opportunities to extend these skills and this limits their attainment. Gifted and talented pupils, for example, musicians, achieve very well because of very good specialist teaching and the many opportunities to perform and improve their skills.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are promoted very successfully by a caring Christian ethos that is reflected clearly in every aspect of school life. Relationships are excellent and pupils' enjoyment of school is shown visibly in their very enthusiastic approach to learning and

their very good attendance. Pupils say that they feel safe and happy in school. Their knowledge of how to stay healthy is excellent, especially regarding the importance of regular exercise, for example, through the lively 'Wake and Shake' activities at the start of each day. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school makes very good use of collective worship and discussions in lessons to encourage pupils to reflect upon their feelings and values and their contributions to the school and wider communities. Pupils prepare very successfully for their future economic well-being, for example through the 'Young Enterprise' project in Reception and the 'World of Work' programme.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching in the Reception class is outstanding because of the teacher's excellent knowledge of the children's needs and how to provide activities that stimulate their imaginations. This provides an excellent start to learning. Teachers build on this successfully throughout the school by planning and organising their lessons well to meet pupils' different needs. They use interactive whiteboards effectively to gain pupils' interest. Teachers encourage pupils to contribute their ideas in discussions. However, they do not always direct challenging questions to higher attaining pupils to ensure that they apply their skills, for example, to solve difficult mental mathematical problems. Teachers maintain an effective pace to lessons with regular time reminders, although in mathematics lessons observed teachers did not clearly inform pupils how much they expect them to complete in lessons. As a result, they did not all achieve as much as they could.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

The curriculum is outstanding in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 to 6 and is valued greatly by pupils and their parents. The headteacher and staff use assessment data regularly to review the organisation and planning of the curriculum to check that it meets pupils' needs. For example, this has led to an increase in teaching time to provide greater enrichment activities and more time for mathematics. The excellent programme enables pupils to extend their skills and gain recognition and success both locally and nationally for their efforts, for example, in technology competitions and high quality music and drama performances.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teachers and support staff provide high quality individual personal care and support that are valued highly by parents and pupils. There are secure systems for ensuring pupils' safety and protection. Pupils say that they feel extremely safe and happy in school and that any bullying or harassment is very rare. Teaching and support staff work very successfully together to ensure that pupils receive the support that they need, particularly those who find learning hard. Guidance to help pupils improve their work in literacy is good, although recent developments in helping pupils understand more about what they have to improve in mathematics are not established fully.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

The headteacher provides strong and purposeful leadership that is valued highly by parents. One commented: 'He is dynamic, motivated, committed and approachable and this is reflected clearly in this school'. He is well supported by a strong, cohesive team of staff and governors. Together they have developed effective review and development procedures, for example, by tracking each pupil carefully and setting challenging improvement targets. They have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school development plan provides a clear direction for improvement and shows how actions to tackle weaknesses will be measured. This thorough approach is raising standards, for example in mathematics, and is evidence of the school's good capacity to improve. Subject leaders improve provision in their subjects, for example, by leading staff training, although their checks to evaluate standards and classroom practice are in the early stages of development.

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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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	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?	2
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?	2

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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 May 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Little Thetford CofE VC Primary School, Ely, CB6 3HD

Thank you for making me feel so welcome when I visited your school recently. I enjoyed talking to you about what you do in school, looking at your work and watching you learn. You clearly enjoy school and, together with your parents, you think that it is a good school and I agree.

I was pleased to see how well you get on together. Your behaviour is excellent and this means that teachers can get on with the job of helping you learn. It was interesting to talk to school councillors about how they are helping to improve the school.

You told me that you learn a lot in school and enjoy your work, especially the many interesting extra-curricular activities. I think that you are all making good progress in your lessons. This is because your teachers make lessons interesting and you try hard to do what your teachers ask. Mr. Breese and his staff are trying to help you learn as well as possible. I agree with them that you could do even better in your mathematics by improving your mental recall skills. It is pleasing to note that work on this has already started. I hope that you continue to try hard to improve your multiplication tables and to achieve your targets in numeracy as well as you achieve your literacy targets. I have asked your teachers to provide more opportunities in lessons to challenge those of you who are particularly good in mathematics. Many of you told me that you enjoy your science work, particularly the 'Messy Science' days. I have also asked your teachers to help pupils in Years 5 and 6 use their skills in scientific investigations more often - I know that they will enjoy this and will work hard to improve their work in science.

Thank you again for helping me to find out about your school and I hope that you will continue to be happy and to work hard.

Colin Henderson

Lead inspector