

Little Munden Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117402
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	312602
Inspection dates	30 April –1 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Marianne Harris

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	89
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr S Taylor
Headteacher	Mrs L Feakes
Date of previous school inspection	30 June 2003
School address	Church Lane Dane End Ware Hertfordshire SG12 0NR
Telephone number	01920 438271
Fax number	01920 438055

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This school is smaller than the average sized primary school. It serves the surrounding rural area of The Mundens and consists of four mixed age classes. The majority of pupils come from a White British background. A very small proportion of the pupils have specific learning difficulties. When they join the school children have skills and knowledge that are expected for their age. The school has been successful in being awarded Healthy Schools' status and in gaining Activemark for two years in 2006 and 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils. Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils are mature, keen to learn and behave well. They have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and safe and they make a good contribution to the local community, raising money for various charities. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 take on much responsibility within the school, although this has not yet been extended to include younger pupils. They are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage of their education.

Standards are average in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2, and they are average in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. Pupils achieve satisfactorily, whatever their ability. Those who find learning more difficult receive appropriate support so they too make satisfactory progress.

Staff are particularly successful in providing many opportunities for pupils to have a wide range of experiences outside of lessons. Pupils really look forward to visits and visitors into school, and their parents particularly appreciate all the extra activities that are offered to their children. These opportunities result in a good, rich curriculum that makes learning interesting. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Pupils comment that learning is fun, particularly when activities are practical and they can work together. However, tasks are not always well matched to the various ages and abilities within each class and in some lessons, pupils carry out the same work. This results in some work being too easy for the more able, or too challenging for younger or less able pupils.

Pupils are well cared for. The school is welcoming and pupils know that there is someone they can go to if they have a problem. Work is marked effectively so that pupils know how to improve, but there is no set procedure for setting individual targets to help pupils know how to reach higher levels.

Leadership, management and governance are satisfactory. Governors are very supportive of the school and carry out their responsibilities satisfactorily. Overall, there has been satisfactory improvement since the time of the last inspection. Standards have risen over the last few years, particularly in mathematics, because the role of subject leaders has been developed. They have a good understanding of standards in the school and support less experienced staff. The school acknowledges that there is still work to carry out on target setting and giving pupils lower down the school more responsibility. There is satisfactory capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Pupils in the Foundation Stage make satisfactory progress from their starting points. By the time they join Year 1, their skills and knowledge are similar to those expected, although most pupils make good progress in early reading skills because this is taught effectively. Tasks and activities are planned to cover all areas of learning and there is a good balance of those that adults' lead and those that pupils choose for themselves. Staff assess pupils' progress effectively and much emphasis is put on developing their social skills. However, there are times when the pupils sit for too long on the carpet and they become fidgety and lose concentration. The Foundation Stage is managed satisfactorily.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all work is planned carefully so that it matches the needs and abilities of all pupils in each class.
- Establish a consistent approach to target setting so pupils know what they need to do in order to reach higher standards.
- Enable pupils, other than those in Years 5 and 6, to take responsibility within the school.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The number of pupils in each year group is small and consequently standards fluctuate from year to year. However, overall they are average at the end of Year 2 and Year 6, both in national tests and currently in the school. This represents satisfactory achievement for pupils of all abilities. Recent national test results have shown a rising trend for pupils in Year 6, especially in mathematics, an issue at the time of the last inspection. Pupils who find learning more difficult make satisfactory progress because the school has put in place many strategies to support learning. These include various intervention classes for English and mathematics, and pupils comment that these are really helpful and they look forward to them. The school's tracking system shows that pupils who receive extra support make at least satisfactory progress and catch up on skills that they have previously missed.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

All aspects of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good and they have a good understanding about other cultures, as well as the rights and responsibilities of being good citizens. Pupils explain clearly about keeping healthy and safe and in Years 5 and 6, they are particularly proud of initiating the cycling proficiency process in school so that they learn 'to be safe on the road'. Pupils from these year groups also take on the role of school councillors, 'buddies' in the playground and peer mediators. They report that there are very few occasions when the latter are needed, but they are confident that they can sort out any problems should they occur. Younger pupils comment that they have few opportunities for them to take an active role in the life of the school, although many believe that they will 'get their chance'. Attendance is above average because pupils enjoy coming to school. They are particularly proud of the money they have raised for local and national charities. Most notable among these is the large amount raised for 'Dogs for the Disabled'.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Lessons usually move at a brisk pace and pupils concentrate well and work effectively together. There are good relationships throughout the school and this has a significant effect on the calm learning atmosphere. Teachers and pupils use the interactive whiteboards effectively and this promotes pupils' information and

communication technology (ICT) skills well. Strategies such as using 'talk partners' are effective in keeping pupils involved in their learning because they can discuss their ideas with another before sharing them with the whole class. However, there are times when work is not accurately matched to the age and abilities within each class. Sometimes pupils carry out the same tasks, whatever their age, and they report that work, at times, is too challenging or too easy. This affects the progress pupils make as they move through the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The staff provide a rich curriculum that has many extra activities to make learning interesting. Pupils and parents comment on the wide variety of clubs, trips and visitors that enhance learning, and pupils especially enjoy themed weeks where they experience extra art and music, as well as science and mathematics. Pupils enthusiastically attend the good number of after school clubs. In Years 4 to 6, pupils participate in a residential trip, and in Year 6 they eagerly anticipate their day trip to Paris. All pupils have the opportunity to learn French and pupils in Years 3 and 4 learn to play the violin. Younger pupils make trips into the local rural area and learn much about their environment. The new strategies for literacy and numeracy have been implemented effectively and as a result, standards are rising in the school. The provision for ICT is good and pupils are very confident when using the resources in the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff take good care of all pupils. Child protection procedures are well established and legal requirements are fully met. Pastoral care is particularly strong and this has a significant effect on pupils' personal development and well-being as they learn to become responsible citizens. Teachers' marking helps them to improve their work, but pupils are less sure about what they are aiming for overall. They say that teachers tell them what to do, but comments are not written down so that they can remember what they need to aim for in order to reach higher standards. Pupils who find learning difficult have their needs identified and appropriate support is given so that they can participate in all lessons.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has led the drive to raise standards and there is now a system in place that tracks the progress pupils make and accurately assesses what standards they have reached. The leadership and management of the school have been particularly successful in promoting pupils' personal development and in addressing the issues from the last inspection. Consequently the role of subject leaders has improved with the senior leadership team having a good understanding of standards and how much progress pupils are making. However, this information is not being used effectively to set individual targets for pupils. Standards are rising at the end of Year 6 and the staff team work well together. Governance is satisfactory. The governors are very supportive of the school and hold the school to account for the standards pupils reach.

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Annex A

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?	3
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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

2 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Little Munden Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Ware,
SG12 0NR

Thank you for welcoming me into your school a few days ago. I really enjoyed talking to many of you and finding out about your work. I am now writing to tell you what I found out.

Yours is a satisfactory school. You make reasonable progress in English and mathematics and I have asked your teachers to help you make better progress by setting work that is not too challenging or too easy for you. When I was in some classes, I noticed that sometimes work was the same for everyone and that is why I have asked your teachers to think carefully about the tasks they set you. I have also asked them to set targets for you so that you know what you are aiming for to reach higher standards.

Many of you told me about the many activities that go on after school. There are certainly many to choose from. I know how much some of you are looking forward to your residential trips, and how much Year 6 are anticipating their trip to Paris - even if they do have to get up in the middle of the night to catch the plane!

I was very impressed by how well you behaved. This was very noticeable in the exciting assembly when your vicar did all kinds of clever things with paper and postcards. You were all very sensible and listened carefully to what he said. I was also very pleased to hear about the money you have raised for various charities and I really liked looking at the pictures of the 'Dogs for the Disabled'. Those of you in Years 5 and 6 certainly take on a lot of responsibility in the school. You do a very good job and are rightly proud of the improvements you have made to the toilets, and in starting the school's cycling proficiency scheme. I have asked your headteacher to let the pupils in the younger classes help you so that they can have some responsibility too. You can all help by continuing to work hard.

Thank you once again. I wish you all the best in the future.

Marianne Harris

Lead inspector