

Magdalen Gates Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120932
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	313798
Inspection dates	18–19 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Ann Taylor

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	184
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs H Power
Headteacher	Mrs S Baker
Date of previous school inspection	24 January 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Bull Close Road Norwich Norfolk NR3 1NG
Telephone number	01603 622675
Fax number	01603 767924

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Magdalen Gates changed from a first school to a primary school in 2007. There will be no Year 6 pupils until next year. It serves a very diverse catchment area, of some social disadvantage. Previously, it took pupils from a wide area of Norwich until 2007, when numbers coming in were halved. The school is heavily oversubscribed. An increasing number of families come from different countries and at least 13 different languages are spoken in the school. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups is broadly average and the proportion of pupils whose first language is not English is below that found nationally. An above average number of pupils has learning difficulties, mostly connected to communication skills. The number of pupils with a statement of special educational need is average. A small number of pupils learn in a 'nurture group' setting for part of the time, although this was not operating during the inspection. The attainment of most children when they enter school is below that typical for their age, with a wide spread of ability. The school has gained the Activemark and the Out of School club has gained the Kitemark.

The 'Magdalen Gates Activities' After School club was also inspected at the same time as the main school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Magdalen Gates is a good school which has successfully used the reorganisation into a primary school to its advantage. It is well led by the headteacher, with strong support from the deputy headteacher. There is a skilled team of staff, all of whom are working for the benefit of the children. The experienced chair of governors also leads an effective governing body, all of whom are fully involved in school life. Parents are generally supportive and the school is a very popular choice. The school has a largely accurate view of how well it is doing and where it needs to improve, except that its evaluation of the Foundation Stage is too positive. Attendance has been recognised as an issue the headteacher is working to improve. Overall, attendance rates are below average, much of this due to an increase in the number of children going on extended holidays abroad.

The recording of pupils' progress is currently being re-established because tracking systems are new. This means that the analysis and interrogation of data is also at an early stage of sophistication. Based on the improvement in standards over the last year and the efficient way the school has adapted to huge change, it has a good capacity to continue improving.

Pupils achieve well and by the end of Key Stage 1, standards are broadly in line with national averages. These have improved across the board and pupil' skills in writing are now above average. Pupils who find learning more difficult and those with English as an additional language make the same good progress as everyone else. Current standards for the oldest pupils (Year 5) are broadly average. The good progress pupils make is due to good teaching, particularly characterised by high levels of skilled adult support in classes. The school has prepared well for the demands of older Key Stage 2 pupils. The good, brand new, curriculum has been carefully thought out to meet pupils' particular needs. Pupils are cared for well as individuals and they receive a good level of support and guidance. Three weeks into the term, staff had already gained a clear insight about each pupil's personality and needs. Pupils' personal development is good because the school has good systems, especially for supporting the small minority whose behaviour can be especially challenging.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

From below expected starting points, children achieve satisfactorily. Standards are generally below average by the end of the Foundation Stage. Teaching is satisfactory and enables children to make satisfactory progress. They make best progress in their physical development and do less well in developing their speaking, reading and writing skills. The opportunities for children to say what they would prefer to do and how they would prefer to do it, in order to help their development of language skills are more limited. They have been given some good guidance in learning new routines; expectations are clearly understood and the vast majority have already settled well. Children are well supported by a good number of skilled and experienced staff and their welfare is promoted effectively. Relationships are very good and children who are finding it difficult to behave are very well supported. The new outdoor area is starting to be used imaginatively with more developments planned. Resources are worn, however, and the learning environment has not been revitalised in some time, so it does not stimulate children's desire to learn as much as it could. Leadership and management are satisfactory. An encouraging start has been made in looking at assessment data but analysis does not yet accurately measure progress and correctly identify strengths and areas for development. The monitoring of provision

for the very youngest children is identifying and addressing areas for development but there is no systematic plan for Foundation Stage improvements.

What the school should do to improve further

- Establish fully the tracking of pupils' progress and analyse all school data in order to identify strengths and weaknesses, measure performance and set challenging targets for improvement.
- Thoroughly review provision in the Foundation Stage in order to accelerate children's progress, especially in the development of their communication, language and literacy skills.
- Work to improve attendance, particularly to reduce the number of extended holidays taken during term time.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well and they make good progress. Standards in the two previous years were below average at the end of Key Stage 1. However, assessments indicate that standards have improved this year and are now broadly average. Pupils' writing skills are above average. Numbers reaching the higher Level 3 improved to compare well with national averages in all areas, and especially in mathematics. Current standards are in line with those expected at Year 5, with pupils making good progress. There are no differences in the rate of progress for those whose first language is not English, or for those who find learning more difficult and need additional support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress in their personal and emotional development. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding are also good. They respond well to adults' high expectations for good behaviour. Their good understanding of school routines contributes strongly to their good progress and enjoyment. Pupils feel safe here; a few exhibit challenging behaviour, but in the main they trust adults to address their concerns and take action.

Pupils respect each other's differences very well. Their willingness to understand those from different cultures and others with specific learning needs is a marked feature of this school. They enjoy school and are particularly enthusiastic about clubs, such as the very popular gardening club and the many musical opportunities. Attendance is below average, although last term's figures show good improvement.

Pupils contribute well to the school community, with the school council leading several initiatives and actively involving themselves in charitable events, such as the City Walk. The good development of pupils' social skills supports their good progress in literacy and numeracy, in developing skills for their future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers have good subject knowledge, set clear expectations and develop good routines. Relationships in the classroom are friendly and supportive, helping pupils to learn well. When some activities are occasionally a little lengthy, for example, when pupils are sitting on the

carpet for a long time, they do their best to keep concentrating. Teaching assistants supporting pupils with specific learning needs and those with English as an additional language do so well, which contributes strongly to purposeful teaching in often quite diverse classes. Pupils are regularly assessed and find the more detailed periodic marking helps them to understand where they have done well and what they can improve on. The quality of setting tasks to meet pupils' individual ability is generally good, but with some variability in practice. Teachers exploit ways of getting on-going feedback from pupils to assess how well they are learning but this is not yet consolidated sufficiently to extend learning. Training has already been arranged to develop this.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school is making good progress in developing a curriculum for Years 4, 5 and 6 as it becomes a complete primary school. French and Spanish lessons have been established and there is a good balance of topic work linked with trips out, bringing learning to life. The wider curriculum is promoted effectively through good provision in the arts, music and humanities. A good range of clubs are well attended. The school is largely surrounded by playgrounds, which have been developed imaginatively to provide interesting play areas for all ages. The time given to physical education is appropriate. However, with the shared sports fields being some distance away, it does take up additional time travelling between these facilities and school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Caring staff provide pupils with lots of individual consideration and attention during school and in the after-school club. Arrangements such as the nurture group, where the most vulnerable learn for some of their time, typify this good level of care. Initiatives such as Family Learning help parents understand what their children are learning about and help build relationships. The school's procedures for keeping pupils safe and secure are firmly in place. Individual educational plans for pupils with learning difficulties are in place and appropriately reviewed, involving outside agencies as required. Pupils receive good guidance to help them improve and they speak positively about the benefits of having targets to aim for in their work.

In the well-led Activities Out of School Club, children benefit from an interesting range of enjoyable activities and some companionable opportunities for conversation and friendship. Children have an impressive degree of autonomy in deciding what they want to do. For example, the older ones decide how to equip and furnish their own room. Tea is filling, healthy and imaginative, often with children helping to prepare it. Toys and equipment are in good condition, right for the age group and interesting. Governors provide good management support and encouragement for this valued facility.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and deputy headteacher lead the school effectively. The headteacher knows pupils well and takes an individual interest in each one. She is passionate about giving every pupil an equal chance, as the school's 'no charging' policy demonstrates. Subject leaders have made great efforts to become familiar with the demands of the Key Stage 2 curriculum, and

good links with other schools locally have enabled this to happen. They have a good grip on standards in their subjects and how they will improve them. Governance is also good.

Attendance issues, particularly extended holidays, have taken up much headteacher and governor time, and while there were improvements last term, there is no formal action plan to address this. The practice of setting targets has helped improve standards in Year 2 and it helps individual pupils perform better. Targets are not yet routinely used to raise the performance of other year groups or specific groups of pupils. Several worthwhile activities reach out into the community to help bring it together such as the annual Family Learning event, and the headteacher represents the school at a number of local forums. However, with changes to the school's intake, systematic planning for community cohesion has yet to be established.

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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?	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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	3
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

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	2
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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

22nd September 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Magdalen Gates Primary School, Norwich

Thank you for being so polite and friendly when I visited with Mr Mason last week. This letter is to let you know what we found out.

We know you are happy here, enjoy school and that the adults look after you well. You are very nicely behaved and this is very important. One or two of you find this very difficult, but the adults really help you to do the right thing. Mrs Baker and everyone have successfully organised everything very well so that you can be proud to call yourself a primary school (meaning you also have older children) rather than the first school you were before. You are doing well in your lessons and making good progress. The standard of your reading, writing and mathematics is getting better. I also looked at Magdalen Gates Activities After School Club and found it is a good club to go to.

To help your school carry on improving, we would like Mrs Baker and everyone to work on the following things:

- decide what needs to change in the Reception class so that the youngest children learn as well as the others, especially in reading, writing and conversation.
- record all the information they have about how well you are doing, and then use it to find out what you do well and where you need to improve.
- help some of you to attend school more regularly, by working with some of your parents so that they do not take you on long holidays abroad in term time.

We both wish you lots of success in all you do,

Mrs A Taylor

Lead inspector