

North Elmham VC Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 121049 |
| Local Authority | NORFOLK LA |
| Inspection number | 313852 |
| Inspection date | 28 February 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | David Herbert |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 121 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr Paul Watton |
| Headteacher | Mr Robin Turner |
| Date of previous school inspection | 8 May 2002 |
| School address | Holt Road North Elmham Dereham Norfolk NR20 5JS |
| Telephone number | 01362 668318 |
| Fax number | 01362 668832 |

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|--------------------------|------------------|
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average primary school that serves the village of North Elmham. A substantial number of pupils come from other local villages and the school is oversubscribed. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. A below-average number of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and none are in the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or a statement of special educational need is above average. Attainment on entry fluctuates from year to year but is broadly average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

'There is a real feeling of nurture throughout the school at every level,' says one parent. This view accurately reflects the good personal development and the excellent behaviour in this good school. The clear vision of the headteacher, effectively supported by staff and governors, successfully maintains a supportive family atmosphere. Pastoral care is outstanding. The staff know and value every child, giving them confidence and a strong sense of security. The school provides good value for money.

Overall, pupils make good progress from their starting points, reaching standards that are above average. Children start at the school with broadly average attainment. They settle quickly into the happy and lively Foundation group and make good progress. Pupils continue to make good progress through Years 1 and 2, leading to standards that are above average by the end of Year 2. Thoughtful selection of curriculum materials and teaching strategies creates particularly high achievement in reading for this age group. From Year 3 to Year 6 progress is less consistent because of the mix of satisfactory and good teaching. Most pupils have to accelerate during Year 6 to make up lost ground in English and mathematics. Over time, progress and standards in English remain slightly lower than in mathematics and science, mainly due to weaknesses in writing. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities make good progress as their needs are understood well and teaching assistants support them effectively.

The generally good teaching, based on very positive relationships and a good curriculum, helps to ensure that pupils enjoy their education. In the best lessons there are challenging objectives identified for different groups of pupils. However, in some lessons, teachers' planning shows less clearly what pupils of different abilities are expected to learn. Pupils are not always sure about their personal targets or the further skills they need in order to achieve them. Teachers' marking sometimes gives pupils feedback about what they have achieved and their next steps, but this is not consistent. The school offers every pupil an outstanding range of opportunities to take part in one course of challenging, after-school activity each year. This includes courses such as sailing and skiing. Pupils really enjoy these activities and recognise their benefit, saying they 'can inspire you for when you're older'.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher, supported well by governors, strives to use new opportunities to extend pupils' achievement, as is evident in the successful impact on reading in Year 2. More regular tracking of the rate of individual pupil's progress is now providing valuable information for whole-school and class teacher planning. The school is currently using an innovative and flexible system in Years 3 to 6 to support different small groups of pupils in their work. Improvements made since the last inspection, together with a determination to do even better, demonstrate that there is good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children settle quickly because of the effective arrangements to help them and their families make a smooth transition to school. Good support from all staff ensures that everyone feels valued and secure. Children enter with skills that are broadly average. Close monitoring of children identifies their particular needs. The outcomes are used successfully by teachers to plan well-targeted activities. As a result, children quickly develop their confidence, mix socially,

work together well and make good progress. There is a good range of adult-led and child-initiated activities during each day, using stimulating indoor and outdoor areas. Children move between these areas and activities with purpose, confident about what they want to do and how to use the different resources available.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure consistency in the quality of lesson planning, teaching and assessment so that all pupils make the same good rate of progress.
- Make sure that all pupils know the short-term improvements they need to make in order to achieve their longer-term targets.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress in the Foundation Stage and across Years 1 and 2, reaching standards that are above average. Particularly good progress enabled Year 2 pupils to reach very high standards in reading in 2007. At the end of Year 6 standards have been consistently above average in mathematics and science, though nearer to average in English. This pattern was maintained in 2007. Current work in the school indicates that pupils are on track to achieve high standards again. The progress made by pupils between Year 3 and Year 6 is inconsistent. Many have to work hard, increasing their pace in Year 6 to achieve the standards of which they are capable. Staff support pupils with a learning difficulty or a disability effectively to achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their behaviour is excellent, creating a calm and happy climate throughout the school. One parent correctly observed: 'The children are encouraged from the very start to look out for, respect and treat each other with kindness'. Pupils feel safe and secure and adopt safe practices. They are self-disciplined and confident in their relationships together and with adults. Pupils understand and respect each other's needs, leading to the very successful inclusion of pupils with disabilities. As a result, they enjoy school and attend well. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles and develop good skills for their future careers. They have a positive involvement in the school and wider community. Those on the school council make significant decisions about equipment purchases and charitable activities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good overall. Good teaching in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2 successfully builds basic skills in literacy and numeracy. Carefully differentiated activities are supported well by teaching assistants. Teaching in Years 3 to 6 varies from satisfactory to good, resulting in variable progress and inconsistent achievement in mathematics and English. Most teachers make the learning objectives for each lesson clear, but pupils do not often receive clear enough feedback in teachers' marking to know how well they have done. There are some opportunities for pupils to assess their own work but these are not used frequently enough. This means that

pupils are often unaware of exactly what they need to do to improve their work further. Pupils show respect for teachers, listen carefully in lessons, follow instructions and enjoy their learning very much because staff have good relationships with them. Lessons are usually well paced and good use is made of learning resources, including information and communication technology (ICT). Additional specialist teaching in ICT provides good, extra opportunities for pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum. A recent innovation is the creation of an extra, small teaching group for each session of the day in Years 3 to 6. This allows for additional teaching in the core subjects for specifically targeted groups. The planning between class and group teachers is not yet collaborative enough to ensure that teaching meets the needs of each individual pupil. Provision for pupils' personal, social and health education and citizenship supports their personal development well. Curricular enrichment is good. It is sometimes extended by valuable partnerships such as with the Royal Shakespeare Company. Gardening activities enable pupils to improve their own environment whilst learning about sustainability. The range of extra-curricular activities is exceptional. Pupils have unique opportunities to take annual, extended courses in challenging activities such as climbing and sailing, which help to foster their 'can do' attitude across the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pastoral care is outstanding. The focus on promoting the social and emotional development of pupils permeates the school, leading to excellent behaviour and relationships. The school supports pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities well through close individual knowledge of their needs. Leaders effectively collaborate with external agencies when additional support for pupils is beneficial. There are close relationships with parents, extended by the Family Learning Group, that consolidate the home-school partnership. Arrangements for child protection, health and safety and the safeguarding of pupils are securely implemented.

Academic guidance is satisfactory. The school is working hard to find the best system of providing academic guidance to help pupils progress as well as they can, and which will involve them more in assessing their own work. This has yet to be agreed and implemented consistently across the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

One parent appropriately refers to the headteacher's leadership as 'firm but wise'. The headteacher and other leaders remain open to suggestions. School self-evaluation is accurate. Initiatives for further improvement are well focused, proactively seeking to impact on specific aspects of pupils' learning. Recent developments in the tracking system for pupils are enabling leaders to monitor pupils' rates of progress across the year groups and are already yielding valuable information. There is a very good understanding of each pupils' personal, social and emotional needs that underpins their capacity to learn effectively. Governors are well informed and play a key strategic role in setting direction and challenge for the school. The school uses

challenging targets well. There is no sense of complacency from school leaders and governors, who work together well to seek new ways of taking the school forwards to further achievements.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

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

Achievement and standards

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| 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

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|---|---|
| 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 | 1 |
| 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

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|--|---|
| 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

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| 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 | 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

29 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of North Elmham VC Primary School, North Elmham, NR20 5JS

Thank you for making me and Mrs Thompson welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking with you about what you do in school, looking at your work and watching you learn in lessons. We think that you develop well during your time in the school, growing into thoughtful and polite young people. You told us that you like all the different activities that you do in school, in lessons and especially in the extra clubs.

We were pleased to see that you behave excellently and enjoy being together. This means your teachers can get on with helping you to learn. You work hard and make good progress but we think that some of you can do even better. We have asked the headteacher and your teachers to check the progress you are making regularly so that they help you learn really well in your lessons and group work. We have also asked them to make sure that you know what your next learning steps are. This will help you to know what you need to do to keep improving.

All the staff and governors are working hard to make your school even better. With your hard work and help, we think that you can achieve this together.

Thank you again for helping us find out about North Elmham Primary School. Keep on doing your very best and keep enjoying your time at the school.

David Herbert

Lead inspector