

Runcton Holme Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121136
Local Authority	NORFOLK LA
Inspection number	313890
Inspection dates	22–23 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Ian Nelson

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	59
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Russell Vernon-Wood
Headteacher	Miss Helen Bates
Date of previous school inspection	17 June 2002
School address	School Lane Runcton Holme King's Lynn Norfolk PE33 0EL
Telephone number	01553 810394
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small Church of England primary school serving an isolated rural area with few facilities. Local employment is mainly in retail, farming or service industries. The number of children entitled to a free school meal is below average. The great majority of children come from White British backgrounds. The proportion of children on the school's register of special educational needs is a little below that of other schools. Children are taught in three mixed age classes comprising Foundation Stage with Key Stage 1, Years 3 and 4 and Years 5 and 6. The school is in partnership with a neighbouring school. The headteacher runs both schools and subject leaders work across both schools. The children start school with the skills and knowledge expected of their age, though this varies from year to year because of the small numbers in each year group. The school gained an Artsmark in 2006 and an Activemark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school, which is how the staff, governors, children and parents see it. Children and their parents particularly like the outstanding quality of the care, guidance and support the staff provide. One parent echoed the children's view with the comment, 'the school is warm and friendly'. Children say the teachers are kind to them and always fair. As a result, children enjoy school and make good progress in their personal and academic development. As well as taking excellent care to address the personal needs of the children, the staff work hard to identify what individuals need to do next to improve their learning. The children commented that teachers set work at the right level for them, with different work for different groups. This arises from a good range of learning activities and consistently good teaching. Children like the fact that the teachers can have a joke with them but also help them with their work when they get stuck.

The school's success derives from effective leadership at all levels. Staff and governors share a clear vision for the future of the school and a strong commitment to continuous school improvement. They have rigorous systems in place to identify how well the school is doing and what they need to do to take it to the next level. They have worked hard to address successfully the issues from the last inspection and to raise the standards in writing at Key Stage 1 and reading at Key Stage 2 to exceptionally high levels. They also recognise the need now to raise standards overall to a similarly exceptional level by focusing on writing at Key Stage 2 where spelling, punctuation and presentation are weak and standards are closer to average and therefore rather lower than in reading. Standards vary from year to year because of the small number of children taking the national tests. At Year 2 they have been above average in the last three years while at Year 6 they have been mainly average but above average in 2007. There are clear indications that the above average standards from Key Stage 1 are now feeding through to Key Stage 2 and achievement overall is good. Given the improvements since the last inspection and the effective strategies for continuing those improvements, the school is well placed to get better still.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Very good induction arrangements ensure that children settle quickly into school routines in the Foundation Stage. They benefit from a good balance between teacher-led and child-chosen activities. The classroom is arranged very effectively to enable them to show initiative and choose activities without distracting the older children from their work. The learning support assistant provides very effective support so that children develop very well socially and emotionally and grow in confidence. There are good resources and activities to help them to learn across all the required areas of learning and they make good progress. Although there is a good balance between indoor and outdoor activities, the outside play area is not yet ideal and staff have plans for further improvements.

What the school should do to improve further

- Help children at Key Stage 2 to improve their spelling, punctuation and presentation so that standards in writing match the high levels they achieve in reading.
- Implement plans to enhance the Foundation Stage outside play area.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. It is best in writing at Key Stage 1, where standards have been exceptionally high for the last three years, although standards in reading and mathematics have also been consistently above average. This is a result of a sustained focus on improving writing standards. At Key Stage 2, standards have been much higher in reading than in writing and the school is working hard to close the gap by giving additional emphasis to spelling, punctuation and handwriting. Standards in other subjects, including mathematics, science and information and communication technology are above average. Standards and achievement are improving because staff have identified that, in some years, not all children who attain above average results at Year 2 do so at Year 6 and have provided effective extra support to resolve this issue. Consequently, children of all abilities, including those who find learning hard, now achieve well in relation to their individual starting points and to the challenging targets that the staff set for them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Children's spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is good. The school has successfully addressed the issue from the last inspection about developing children's understanding of other cultures and this is now satisfactory. Behaviour is good. Children say that if they do something wrong or fall out with each other they 'sit on the carpet and discuss what you've done'. Children say that bullying is rare and that if it does happen, it is dealt with very quickly. Children have an exceptionally good understanding of how to stay safe and have a high regard for the needs of others. Older children enjoy good opportunities to help around the school, including setting out play equipment for the younger ones. The school council is active but the staff recognise the need to develop children's skills in running meetings to enable them to be more effective in showing initiative and influencing school issues. Attendance is average and children say they enjoy school. Parents confirm this with comments like, 'my children both enjoy school and are very keen to attend' and 'he adores school'. Children have a good understanding of how to stay healthy and thoroughly enjoy physical activities in lessons and after school. They are developing well the skills that will equip them to make an effective contribution to the community and be successful in later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is particularly strong in Years 3 and 4, where it challenges children well to show initiative for aspects of their own learning, as when they investigated the links between the height of a light and the length of a shadow. One parent commented on the good quality teaching in this class saying 'my child is being stretched'. The good rapport that teachers develop with their children ensures that behaviour is always good. Learning support assistants work very well to help children so that they succeed with their work. Even though children say teachers give different work for different groups, teachers are refining this even further to ensure that children who do well at Key Stage 1 continue to flourish and reach high standards

at Key Stage 2. There is some very good marking in children's books that tells them what they have done well and how to improve their work in future.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Staff provide a good range of activities to help children to learn. They ensure there is an appropriate range of activities in class one for the children in Foundation Stage as well as those in Key Stage 1 so that they all make good progress. There is a very good range of after school clubs that children thoroughly enjoy so that many join them. Staff go out of their way to enrich the children's learning with visits to places of interest and through visitors to school. Good links with the emergency services, for example, help children to understand how to stay safe. Residential trips give them experiences they would not otherwise get. The school has successfully resolved the issue from the last inspection about the amount of teaching time at Key Stage 2. It has plans to improve the outside area for Foundation Stage in order to remove current limitations to this area of the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school rightly prides itself on the outstanding quality of care it provides for the children. Its small size helps to ensure that staff know children particularly well and quickly identify those who need extra help with their learning or behaviour. All the systems for ensuring children's welfare and safety are in place. There are rigorous systems to check how well children are doing in their learning, particularly in English and mathematics. These help the school to identify potential underachievement and to set challenging targets. Very close links with neighbouring schools and other agencies ensure a smooth transition to secondary school and effective support for those with special needs. The school has successfully addressed the issue from the last inspection about improving communication with parents. Parents appreciate the half-termly newsletters and the regular parents' evenings.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

All staff and governors share a common vision for the future of the school. They work well together to check how well the school is doing and to identify accurately the areas for improvement. The headteacher's very good leadership has enabled her to build a confident and successful management team that works across this and the partner school. She successfully delegates responsibility for subjects to her staff. She also supports them effectively in their responsibilities, so that they know how well their subjects are doing and what they need to do to improve them. The governors have an accurate view of how well the school is doing. They are confident enough to ask hard questions when needed and provide effective support. Although there are currently vacancies on the governing body, the governors are working hard to fill them.

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

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 disabilities make progress	2

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	1
How well 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 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?	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.

Annex A

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	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

24 January 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Runcton Holme Church of England Primary School, Runcton Holme, King's Lynn PE33 0EL

Thank you for making me so welcome when I came to visit your school recently. I enjoyed talking with you and watching you at work and play. This letter is to tell you what I found out about your school.

You and your parents told me this is a good school and I agree. Your teachers work hard to help you to learn so that you do well. You do exceptionally well in writing at Key Stage 1 and in reading at Key Stage 2. I have asked the teachers to help you older children to get better at spelling and punctuation. You can help by trying really hard to learn your spellings and by writing neatly. You told me you enjoy the activities teachers give you to help you to learn, especially the after school clubs. These help you to keep fit and healthy as well as improving your learning. You are very sensible and know how to keep yourselves safe. Your behaviour is good and you told me there is hardly any bullying. You like having jobs to do. Your teachers take exceptionally good care of you. They help you to know how well you are doing and what you need to do to get better. The youngest children settle quickly into school. They have good activities in the classroom and outside. Your teachers are planning to improve their outside play area.

Your teachers have plans to make your school even better. You can help by continuing to work hard and behave well. I wish you all well for the future.

Ian Nelson

Lead inspector