

Sexton's Manor Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124553
Local Authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	328163
Inspection dates	7–8 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Roderick Passant

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	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–8
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	182
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 Jo Last
Headteacher	Dr Tony Harvey
Date of previous school inspection	28 March 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Greene Road Bury St. Edmunds Suffolk IP33 3HG

Age group	3–8
Inspection dates	7–8 July 2009
Inspection number	328163

Telephone number
Fax number

01284 754371
01284 716472

Age group	3-8
Inspection dates	7-8 July 2009
Inspection number	328163

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than average. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is a little below average. About 10% of pupils are from minority ethnic groups. There is a very small number of pupils at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average as also is the proportion of pupils with statements detailing their educational needs. The number of pupils joining or leaving the school at various points other than the start of the academic year is increasing, although overall is broadly average. In recognition of its work, the school has received the Artsmark Gold Award, Activemark, Basic Skills Quality Mark and the Bronze Award as an Eco-School. Generally, attainment on entry to the Reception class in the Early Years Foundation Stage is broadly typical for children of this age. The current acting headteacher is the second acting headteacher since spring 2008. A permanent headteacher has been appointed for September 2009. The Early Years Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2 of a local Special School are co-located on the school site.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

'Fantastic school. Children thrive here,' was how one parent succinctly summed up her feelings about this good school. Another wrote that she: 'Couldn't be happier with the level of teaching, care, effort and hard work from everyone involved in the running of this school.' These comments were typical of the large majority of parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire; they were happy with all aspects of the school. Leadership at all levels is good so that the school has continued to improve since the last inspection. The acting headteacher, with the close support of the acting deputy headteacher, and staff at all levels have worked very successfully to maintain the momentum for improvement through an unsettled period. The school has a clear view of its strengths and what needs to refine and improve. There is the depth of leadership equipped with the skills to maintain good improvements in the school.

Pupils achieve well and make good progress. Standards at the end of Year 2 are generally securely above average and they continue to make good progress in Years 3 and 4, building on these standards. The children are extremely enthusiastic learners who clearly enjoy learning a very great deal. According to them lessons are 'fun' and 'exciting'. The attitudes and maturity of the older pupils are impressive. Their behaviour is excellent, they value and respect other pupils' views and demonstrate their organisational skills, for example, when setting up and refereeing their creative football-version of rounders, at playtime. The school is a very friendly and inclusive community. There are, according to the pupils, 'little arguments' but pupils were confident that staff would sort them out. Pupils have an excellent grasp of how to keep themselves safe, and the importance of healthy eating and exercise. They take their various roles and responsibilities very seriously and make an excellent contribution to the community. Pupils develop a very mature attitude towards and respect for differences between people. The school knows its community very well and works with local groups effectively on initiatives planned to broaden pupils' awareness of the diversity of the society. For example, links are close with the children from the special school. However, such initiatives are not drawn together and made explicit in an overall coherent plan.

Pupils' outstanding personal development and good academic achievement are strongly fostered by four key features of the school: the overall outstanding quality care and guidance provided; excellent curriculum; consistency of skilled teaching and the school's warm, positive and secure ethos. All staff are very committed to the pupils. They know them very well so that they are sensitive to their needs. One pupil expressed this as a 'kind and generous school'. Safeguarding and child protection procedures are robust; pupils trust their teachers and relationships between pupils and adults are excellent. The school has reworked the curriculum to develop meaningful links between subjects and emphasise practical creative approaches. The quality of teaching and learning is good and sometimes outstanding. Teachers make the process look deceptively easy because of the thoroughness of their planning. Teaching assistants are particularly effective in their support of individuals or groups of pupils. The school is using new materials to assess pupils' progress in mathematics which, along with new curricular approaches, have led to improvements in progress in mathematics. This is because teachers have been helped to refine their planning and as a result are able to be precise about what pupils need to do in order to improve. The use of these materials has yet to be embedded across other subjects in the curriculum.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter the Nursery with a mixed range of experience, particularly in aspects of their personal and social development. At this stage, their attainment overall is slightly below expectations for their age. They make good progress across the Early Years Foundation Stage reaching standards that are broadly average at the start of Reception and just above average by the time they start Year 1. They are provided with particularly high quality welfare, care and support, enabling them to flourish and develop well within a very safe, secure and welcoming environment. The setting is extremely well resourced, providing a rich and stimulating learning environment both indoors, and especially outdoors. Imaginative planning promotes exciting, creative and well-focused activities, with particular priority given to developing children's literacy, numeracy and social skills. Children really enjoy the challenges they are presented with. In response to, 'Can you hop on one leg like a Pirate?' they relish the opportunity to sing, move, balance and count with immense zest and satisfaction. They find equal joy in choosing activities for themselves, concentrating hard, making decisions and working together well. Their respect for others is much enhanced by their contact with children from the special school who share their outdoor space with them. Occasional lapses in concentration are dealt with appropriately. The Early Years Foundation Stage is led and managed well. Clear direction, strong teamwork, and detailed planning and assessment provide the cornerstones for the good practice that is consistently evident in the unit. All aspects of children's learning and progress are methodically recorded in individual learning journals, enabling staff to know exactly what each child can do and what they should do next. The Early Years Foundation Stage has developed well since the last inspection and has a good capacity for continued improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Embed the use of new assessment materials across the curriculum
- Draw together the school's various initiatives to broaden pupils' experience of children from different backgrounds into a coherent plan so that its success can be evaluated

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Overall standards at the end of Year 2 are securely above average and generally standards in reading and writing have been higher than in mathematics. Improving mathematics has been a recent focus, using new assessment materials and improved curricular approaches. This development work has had a positive impact because pupils are currently working at levels above the average expected for their age in mathematics in Years 1 and 2. Pupils make good progress in Years 3 and 4, building on their Year 2 standards in reading, writing and mathematics. In mathematics, for example, two thirds of the class are working above the expectations for their age in mathematics, while a third of pupils are working well above expectations. Pupils achieve well over time and produce work of good quality across all subjects. The newly designed curriculum is having a positive impact on standards. Pupils with learning difficulties progress well because of the good quality of support that they receive. The school monitors boys' and girls' performance carefully and boys and girls progress equally well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school fosters pupils' self-esteem and confidence extremely well. Pupils understand the school rules and, more importantly, the reasons behind them. They know, for example, that they should not run in the corridors because there are children in the school who would find it difficult to get out of the way. They develop mature social attitudes because they have many opportunities to work collaboratively, including with pupils from the special school. Cultural development is also strong because the arts are an important feature of school life and through the religious education programme pupils develop an understanding of other faiths. The school has also established links with a school in Calais and is developing links with a school in India to extend pupils' experience of different communities. Pupils' keen enjoyment of school is reflected in their good attendance. Pupils have good English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) skills, which along with their mature social skills, prepare them extremely well for the next steps in their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils experience consistently good, enthusiastic and skilled teaching, which fosters good learning. Teachers' constant use of practical examples and activities stimulate and promote pupils' interest, challenge and develop their understanding. In a lesson on ratio and proportion, pupils clearly understood the concept through their use of the apparatus and then could apply their understanding to the various problems that they were solving. There is a consistent emphasis on developing pupils' learning skills, as well as their motivation to succeed and ability to work together in problem-solving. Pupils are not frightened of admitting that they are 'bit stuck' because they know that this is part of learning and that they will get help from the adults or from other pupils. Marking is supportive and indicates how to improve. Older pupils know what level they are operating at and their targets to improve. In outstanding lessons, pupils made excellent progress because the teacher was extremely clear where the pupils were in their learning and planned with precision the next steps. This precision in planning has been developed through teachers' use of the new assessment materials and was less evident in subjects other than mathematics.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school's newly designed curriculum emphasises active learning and the development and application of skills. Its impact is evident in pupils' enthusiasm, learning skills, the quality of their thinking and level of understanding. Their work is generally of high quality and they take pride in it. The new curriculum has been a major factor in establishing pupils' personal development as outstanding, an improvement since the last inspection. The curricular developments are the major force in driving up academic standards, particularly in mathematics, writing and ICT. The cornerstone to this success is the meticulous planning to ensure that topics are taught, and subjects are linked, to provide a variety of creative contexts. Pupils develop key skills in a progressive and coherent manner, which is also 'fun'. The curriculum is extremely rich. It draws on the personal expertise of staff, for example, in the arts, as well as outside

expertise and community opportunities, visits and visitors. These are integrated into a seamless thread of high quality learning in lessons. Further enrichment, extending pupils' interest and excitement, comes from the clubs and after-school activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Through the regular progress meetings and periodic teacher assessments, there is a sustained focus on supporting and guiding pupils. Staff have a clear understanding of the school's assessment data, carefully monitoring pupils' progress. Expectations are high about the progress pupils should make. Monitoring of data allows staff to identify early pupils who may be slipping behind or doing particularly well, and to target them for appropriate additional support. The school has excellent systems to support pupils who need additional help. Teaching assistants and other support staff are well trained and very effective. One-to-one support is sensitive and pupils clearly trust their 'helper'. There are very effective links with specialist agencies to support individual pupils and the school has developed a strong partnership with parents.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The acting headteacher has quickly gained the confidence of pupils and staff and kept morale high by being very visible around the school. There is strong teamwork, professionalism and mutual support amongst staff. Governance is good and improved since the last inspection. Governors play a clear strategic role and are prepared to make difficult short-term decisions, as when they felt the field for the headteacher appointment was too small. Governors were also responsible for the initial links with the special school as part of its work in developing links with the community. The school has a number of planned initiatives to extend pupils' experiences of mixing with children from different backgrounds but has not brought these together into an explicit, coherent plan to allow it to judge its success more easily. Governors have of necessity been a source of support to the two acting headteachers but they are prepared also to act as critical friends. They keep a close eye on standards and many are able to visit the school regularly to see it in action. The chair of governors meets the acting headteacher on a regular basis.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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 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?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

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/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?	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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
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 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?	1

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 eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

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

9 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sexton's Manor Community Primary School, Bury St Edmunds, IP33 3HG

Thank you for making my colleague and me so welcome in your school. We were very interested in the fascinating work you were doing in your classrooms. My particular thanks go to those pupils who gave up so much of their lunchtime to talk to us. What you had to say was very helpful and interesting.

Yours is a good school. You are clearly proud of it, as you have every right to be. It is helping you make good progress and you reach standards above those seen in many schools. Your school is also helping you grow up extremely well. Your behaviour in lessons and around the school is excellent. In lessons, you settle to work very quickly and you don't waste any time. It is good that you feel safe in school and that is because it is a very friendly place. It is also good to know that you are confident to go to an adult if you are troubled over something. You clearly know how to look after yourselves and the importance of exercise and eating healthily. We were impressed by how enthusiastic you were about your learning. You take your responsibilities very seriously around the school. Your school is preparing you extremely well for the next steps in your education. You have skilled teachers who plan very carefully how they teach all the subjects which make up the school's outstanding curriculum. In addition to the lessons, there are all the trips and visitors and clubs. No wonder you think learning is 'fun' and 'exciting' and that you are extremely enthusiastic about it. All adults care a great deal about you and keep a very careful eye on the progress that you are making. The headteacher is leading the school well because he is helped by the deputy head and all staff. The teamwork among the adults in school is very strong and everyone works together to improve the school.

Your teachers are using new assessment materials to check how well you are doing in mathematics. I have asked the teachers to use these in other subjects as well. Your school does lots of things to give you opportunities to meet other children. I have also asked the headteacher to bring all these things together in one plan, which will make it easier for the school to judge how successful it is in doing this.

Your school has continued to improve since the last inspection. With your help, it will go on improving.

All good wishes for your future school careers.

Roderick Passant

Lead inspector