

Earl Soham Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124578
Local Authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	328168
Inspection dates	2–3 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Ian Jones

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)	75
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	Ms Alison Bowman-Garrett
Headteacher	Mr Karl Pearce
Date of previous school inspection	28 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	The Street Earl Soham Woodbridge Suffolk IP13 7SA

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	2–3 February 2009
Inspection number	328168

Telephone number
Fax number

01728 685359
01728 685350

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small rural school of three classes serving Earl Soham and surrounding villages. Many pupils attend from outside the catchment area. The percentage of children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with statements of special educational needs, is above average. Most pupils with special educational needs have either moderate learning or behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.

Almost all pupils are of White British backgrounds and all speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils who join or leave the school, other than at the expected times, is high. The school's provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage comprises a Reception class which is shared with Year 1 pupils. The school has recently received the 'Activemark' award for sport and has achieved Eco Schools Bronze status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school with some important good features and some areas for further improvement. The parents are rightly appreciative of the care and guidance their children receive. Comments, echoing the views of many, included: 'Children thrive at the school because of the happy, secure environment it creates.' and, 'My child is known as an individual and thus has his individual needs met. He is supported in a caring and positive way.' The new headteacher has quickly gained the commitment of his colleagues and the confidence of parents. He has accurately identified areas for future development and devised useful action plans to help deliver the improvements needed.

The school provides good care and guidance for pupils and meets their pastoral needs very effectively. Consequently, pupils' personal development is good. Pupils enjoy school, reflected in their above average attendance. They know how to keep safe and healthy, and trust the staff to look after and care for them. Pupils take responsibility through a range of roles offered in school. Good personal skills, along with sound basic skills, prepare pupils appropriately for the next stage of their education and their future lives. Academic guidance is satisfactory. A new system to check how well pupils are doing and to help teachers increase the pace of learning has been introduced, but it is too soon to see the full impact of this work upon standards. Pupils have suitable personal targets in writing and mathematics, but these are not regularly referred to in lessons or in marking. Thus, they have a limited impact, because they do not inform pupils of the steps they should take to improve their work. Pupils achieve average standards and make satisfactory progress overall. Standards fluctuate from year to year and between subjects, as does the rate of progress. Preliminary 2008 national test results for pupils in Year 6 indicate above average standards of reading and science, with average standards in mathematics. Standards in writing are improving although they remain below average.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Staff develop effective relationships with pupils, who behave well and show good attitudes to learning. The rate of progress varies in lessons because pupils of different abilities are not always challenged to do their best. The curriculum is satisfactory. It promotes good personal development and provides enjoyable enrichment activities. However, the quality of planning for how the curriculum is delivered is weakened because assessment information is not used consistently well to challenge learning and increase the rate of progress. The school's success in ensuring it is a cohesive and inclusive community is satisfactory. It has good links with organisations locally and pupils have a growing awareness of what it means to live in a global community.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The governing body is enthusiastic in its support of the school. Nevertheless, systems for monitoring and evaluating the school's work are not systematically focused on the key areas for development. However, the improvements that have been made already, and the determination to do even better, demonstrate that the school has satisfactory capacity to improve further and that it offers sound value for money.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make good progress in the Reception class, often achieving above the standards expected of them by the time they enter Year 1. Attainment on entry varies from year to year because of the small number of children who join the school. This year, attainment is broadly

above national expectations but in past years has been more typical of the skills, knowledge and understanding expected of four-year-olds. Children do well because the phase is well led, with high expectations for what children can achieve. They settle well into the happy and positive environment. Good support and care, together with adults' high level of skill, ensure children's welfare and inspire confidence from them and their families. Children enjoy a range of creative and stimulating activities that have a positive impact on their learning. Children's progress is carefully evaluated with skilfully planned activities that meet their learning needs well. Personal development and well-being are good, because children are encouraged to work both independently and collaboratively, demonstrating a good understanding of what they are learning. The school is developing further the quality of information available to parents, so that they can support their children even more. Opportunities for outdoor learning are limited by the small outside space available and the absence of a covered play area to protect children from the elements, but staff do their best to use all the accommodation effectively.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards of writing by providing challenging work which is more carefully matched to pupils' needs.
- Use individual targets and next steps in learning more effectively to enable pupils to routinely review and improve their own work.
- Bring rigour to systems for monitoring and evaluation which the school can better use in order to drive forward school improvement.

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

At Key Stage 1, standards at the end of Year 2 are a little above average. This is mainly due to improvements in reading and mathematics where standards have risen steadily over the last four years. Although standards in writing rose last year, they remain below average. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are currently making satisfactory progress and are on target to reach the standards expected of them when they leave Year 2. At Key Stage 2 the standards reached by the end of Year 6 are above average in reading, and to a lesser extent, in science. Standards are broadly average in mathematics. In writing, progress is limited and standards are below average, mainly because tasks are not consistently well matched to pupils' needs. At the time of the inspection, the rate of progress varied between age groups but pupils are on track to achieve increasingly challenging targets by the end of Year 6. Improvements to information and communication technology resources have helped to raise standards here, and pupils make good progress in this subject. Pupils who need additional help with their learning are supported well and make good progress. This is largely because they are supported well in small groups or individually, and their progress is monitored more carefully and work given is closely matched to their needs. The welcoming and friendly nature of the school ensures that pupils, including those who join the school in other year groups as well as Reception, settle in quickly.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school successfully fosters strong, supportive relationships among its pupils. They have positive attitudes and enjoy coming to school. Pupils say that bullying is rare and that they have confidence in their teachers to deal with it. Pupils respect and care for each other. They readily take on responsibilities around the school, such as 'playground monitors', actively giving support to their peers. Pupils are polite and considerate and co-operate well with each other in lessons. The school effectively supports a small number of pupils who find maintaining standards of good behaviour more difficult. As a result, their behaviour does not impede the learning of others. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Within this, cultural development is satisfactory, reflecting pupils' satisfactory understanding of the multicultural nature of Britain's society. Most pupils understand and adopt habits that contribute to a safe and healthy lifestyle, as reflected in their snacks and lunches, and their positive attitudes to exercise. They enjoy regular opportunities to make good contributions to the school community and beyond, and are successful in supporting a number of charities and good causes.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning ensure pupils make satisfactory progress. There are some good features to the teaching. Lessons are often planned well around clear objectives that are shared with pupils. Relationships are very good and little time is lost in gaining pupils' attention. This is because most lessons provide interesting activities. Pupils work productively with 'talk partners', helping them to reflect on ideas and make considered responses. At times, some pupils are not challenged enough in their learning, or are required to complete more mundane tasks before they can tackle difficult problems. The effective support of the good quality teaching assistants enables those who find learning difficult to make good progress. Although most pupils have targets for writing and mathematics, these are not used to best effect. Teachers are beginning to review pupils' progress towards achieving them. However, pupils are not sufficiently familiar with their targets, and thus cannot independently review and improve their own work. Furthermore, marking mainly affirms and encourages, but does not consistently tell pupils precisely what they need to do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

As part of the school's drive to raise standards, the improving curriculum has been recently revised. This is in order to place a stronger emphasis on developing pupils' skills whilst improving the way subjects are covered. As a result, the satisfactory curriculum is now better suited to the needs and aspirations of pupils of all abilities, and is beginning to have a positive impact on their progress. However, the school has begun to increase the number of opportunities for pupils to write, especially in other subjects. There has been a recent focus on improving provision for pupils with specific gifts and talents. They have detailed plans tailored to their needs, helping to accelerate their progress. The curriculum is enriched by the provision of French and pupils have the chance to learn a musical instrument. There is a good range of after school clubs, visitors and visits that helps promote pupils' good personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school robustly meets legal requirements for safeguarding pupils. Very secure procedures to ensure health and safety are in place. A good range of risk assessments are carried out and procedures for child protection are thorough. Pastoral support for pupils is very strong and pupils know who to go to if they are worried or upset. They talk about the high level of trust they have in their teachers. Arrangements to prepare pupils for secondary school are appropriately developed, and help to ensure a smooth transition to the next stage of education. Support and guidance for pupils' academic development are satisfactory. Assessment information is now being used more effectively to identify early any who are falling behind and so put in place extra support. This is contributing to the better progress pupils are starting to make. The guidance given by teachers to let pupils know how to achieve their next steps is not fully effective in moving their learning on. The school works closely with a range of external agencies to support pupils' personal and academic development, and it has strong links with parents and carers.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory, and school leaders are improving the quality of academic guidance. The effective leadership of the new headteacher is providing the school with a clear direction and a more streamlined process for evaluating the school's success. He has swiftly gained the confidence of colleagues and the trust of parents, who welcome his commitment and drive to furthering school improvement. Together with the subject leaders, he ensures that this is an inclusive school with a welcoming and friendly community. The school has a growing understanding of its strengths and where action is required. A useful plan accurately identifies what needs to be improved and how this is to be achieved. Thanks to the determination of the headteacher, there have been recent improvements to curriculum planning and in the use of tracking information to promote pupils' progress. However, it is too early to see the full impact of this work. Governance is satisfactory, and governors are keen to enhance their role as 'critical friends' and develop the school's strategy for community cohesion.

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
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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

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/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	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 learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
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?	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 eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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**

4 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Earl Soham Community Primary School, Woodbridge, IP13 7SA

Many of you will remember my visit to your school a little while ago. It was a very snowy time, and I was impressed by all the wonderful snowmen you built! Thank you for making me so welcome. I was pleased to find how keen you were to share your thoughts about your school. This letter is especially for me to tell you what I found out about it.

I think that yours is a satisfactory school. Your teachers help you to make sound progress, and you achieve standards that are broadly average by the time you leave Year 6. Many of you work hard to help others and improve your school, and you carry out your tasks well. I was pleased to see how committed the school council is to making improvements and helping things run smoothly. Your behaviour is good and you take a pride in what you do. You told me that you enjoy school and try your best, and I can see this in the things you do. Your parents are very pleased with the school. They can see how well Mr Pearce and the staff look after you and are working hard to make your school better. All of the adults take good care of you and work to provide a safe and caring place for you to come to.

To help you do even better, I have asked the teachers to give you more challenging and interesting tasks in your writing, and to give you more help to understand what you need to do next to improve in your work. I have also asked the governors to keep a careful check on how well you and the school are progressing.

I hope you continue to enjoy school and work hard for the future.

Best wishes,

Ian Jones

Lead inspector