

Dennington Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124728
Local Authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	328202
Inspection dates	2–3 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Mike Best

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	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	66
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	Mr Simon Cartmell
Headteacher	Mrs Val Jones
Date of previous school inspection	15 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Laxfield Road Dennington Woodbridge Suffolk IP13 8AE
Telephone number	01728 638206

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	2–3 July 2009
Inspection number	328202

Fax number

01728 638368

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an additional inspector.

Description of the school

This smaller than average primary school serves the village of Dennington and the surrounding rural area. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The vast majority of pupils are of White British background. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average.

Currently, children start in the Early Years Foundation Stage at the beginning of the term in which they celebrate their fifth birthday but the school is in the process of reviewing its admissions policy.

An interim headteacher from a nearby primary school took over the school in April 2009 following the absence and subsequent resignation of the headteacher. There have been other staffing changes recently.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with Section 13(3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to: the standards and progress of pupils in Years 5 and 6; teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve; and the roles and responsibilities of subject leaders and other managers.

Standards overall at the end of Year 6 are broadly average but are too variable between subjects and groups of pupils. When they start school in the Early Years Foundation Stage, children's skills and experiences are broadly similar to those expected for their age and make satisfactory progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. This continues through Key Stage 1 to the end of Year 4. However, progress slows in Years 5 and 6 and in three of the last four years boys in particular have not met their predicted targets at the end of Key Stage 2. Pupils who find learning more difficult are not making enough progress because their needs are not sufficiently well managed or supported. A major barrier to pupils making better progress has been the absence of realistic and challenging targets, and effective whole-school systems for assessing and tracking their progress. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough and they have not given pupils sufficiently clear guidance as to what they need to do to improve their work.

These shortcomings have now been identified by the school and the governing body has acted incisively to address them. Governors are working closely with the interim headteacher and local authority to improve the quality of teaching where it has not been good enough. They are establishing and developing clear lines of responsibility for subject leaders and other managers as these have been lacking in the past. This is enabling governors and staff alike to be more effectively involved in monitoring, evaluating and improving the work of the school. Although progress in addressing the issues raised in the previous inspection report has been slow, much has been achieved in a short time through the commitment and willingness of the staff and the robust vision and purposeful actions of the interim headteacher. She has rapidly gained the respect and support of pupils, parents, staff and governors by establishing stability, clear routines and high expectations of pupils' attitudes and behaviour. As a result, behaviour has improved and the school is now a calm and orderly community where lessons take place without interruptions. Pupils currently make satisfactory progress in lessons but this is not good enough to overcome the legacy of underachievement. While this is being tackled more effectively and things are improving, there is still a long way to go. However, the impact of the decisive actions the school has taken shows that the school's current leadership has the necessary capacity for improvement.

The quality of teaching and the curriculum are now satisfactory. There is a recognition that this is not good enough to compensate for the previously inadequate provision. The interim headteacher has monitored lessons and identified important elements of teaching and learning for improvement. She has worked with staff to address these, including deploying support staff more effectively to meet pupils' needs. Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory, with a number of good features. In discussion, pupils of all ages say that their enjoyment of school has improved this term because older pupils are better behaved. The care, support and guidance provided for pupils are satisfactory overall. There are effective policies and procedures to ensure the health and safety of pupils and safeguarding arrangements meet

current requirements. However, pupils are not sufficiently involved in taking responsibility for improving their work and setting their next steps in learning.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children quickly settle into the day-to-day routines and make satisfactory progress toward the goals expected for their age. The school has taken appropriate action to address identified weaknesses in children's communication, language and literacy development and their personal and social education. Suitably planned activities provide children with an appropriate range of experiences across the six areas of learning. A good range of learning resources are available, including an interactive whiteboard and other information and communication technology equipment. Children regularly use a suitably equipped and fenced outside area but this is not readily accessible from their classroom. As a result, opportunities for them to make choices, work independently and move freely between indoor and outdoor activities are limited. The new Early Years Foundation Stage leader, who joined the school at the start of this term, is working enthusiastically with the local authority and governors on the agreed plans to improve provision by moving the outside area next to their classroom. Staff have good regard for children's welfare and systems for checking on their progress are developing purposefully. The school's plans for development are well focused on promoting improved achievement and smooth transition to Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' progress, especially in Years 5 and 6, by setting challenging targets and making effective use of tracking systems to raise teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Ensure that pupils are actively involved in improving their own work by agreeing, and regularly reviewing, individual targets with them.
- Develop the roles and responsibilities of subject leaders and other managers, particularly in monitoring the standards of pupils' work and supporting improvements in teaching.
- Implement the appropriate plans to improve the provision for outdoor activities in the Early Years Foundation Stage to support increased opportunities for children to make choices and learn independently.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1 and attain average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. By the end of Year 6 standards overall are broadly average although they show too much variability between subjects and groups of pupils. Standards in English are close to the national average, although pupils' perform better in reading than in writing. Standards in science are below average. Girls perform well ahead of boys. The good progress pupils make in reading from the end of Year 2 to the end of Year 6 is not matched in writing or science. Pupils' writing is weak. Boys underachieve compared to girls and their peers nationally. In mathematics the picture is more mixed, with about half the pupils meeting or exceeding their targets and others missing them in 2009. The progress pupils make in their learning has slowed since the last inspection. The satisfactory teaching does not challenge all pupils sufficiently well to enable them to reach the standards of which they are capable. Throughout the school,

increased opportunities to develop their independent thinking and problem-solving skills are popular with all pupils, but particularly the boys who are rising well to the challenge.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. In their responses to the inspection questionnaire and in discussion, a significant number of parents expressed their concern about standards of behaviour but many also praised the interim headteacher for tackling the issues and bringing about improvement. Pupils endorse this, saying that the introduction of the awards scheme has helped them increase their self-control and awareness of others. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe. They are confident that the interim headteacher will deal effectively with any incidents of bullying, and older pupils value the Cycling Proficiency training programme. Pupils have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and enjoy a good range of sporting and other activities. Vegetables from the school garden feature on the lunch menu and pupils have agreed to eat only healthy snacks at breaktimes. Attendance is above average. Pupils contribute their ideas and opinions through the school council, and they are involved in supporting local events. Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of sustainability issues in the local, national and global context. However, they have limited first-hand experience of different faiths and cultures. Pupils' preparation for the next stage of their education is satisfactory overall and is enhanced by their good information and communication technology skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching has improved and is satisfactory because the school is tackling the shortcomings that led to inadequate achievement. Relationships between adults and pupils are generally good and successfully promote a business-like approach to learning. The purpose of lessons is regularly shared with pupils at the beginning and often referred to as learning progresses. However, at times these aims refer more to the content of the lesson rather than the skills pupils will learn. Although lesson plans indicate how tasks will match the different abilities within the class, expectations of what pupils might achieve are not consistently high enough so that the work they are given is sometimes too easy. The targets set for pupils lack challenge, and are not sufficiently shared with staff and pupils. Systems to check and track pupils' progress have not been implemented with sufficient rigour. As a result, pupils have not been fully engaged and the quality of their work has suffered. The interim headteacher's monitoring and support are securing pupils' better engagement and progress in learning through accelerated pace and more varied styles of teaching. However, such improvements are recent and have yet to lead to a sustained rise in standards and achievement by Year 6.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school makes appropriate provision for developing pupils' personal, social and health education and citizenship. There is a rolling programme of topics so that pupils in mixed age classes do not repeat work unnecessarily. The curriculum is enhanced by weekly lessons from a visiting specialist modern foreign language teacher and there is a good range of extra-curricular

sporting and other activities that are well supported by pupils. Visits and visitors, including a residential trip, further enhance pupils' learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Governors and staff have recently reviewed a range of school policies relating to pupils' care and welfare, and training in child protection matters has been updated. Risk assessments are carried out appropriately. The school has now adopted the local authority's computer-based tracking system for monitoring pupils' standards and progress. This is, however, still at an early stage of implementation and its full benefit has yet to impact on standards at the end of Key Stage 2. Pupils' work is marked regularly but advice as to how they can improve is not given consistently. The school has satisfactory and improving links with parents, outside experts and other schools that support pupils' development.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The interim headteacher is involving the enthusiastic and willing staff team in planning and implementing improvements, and beginning to develop their leadership skills and expertise which have been underused in the past. They value her experienced leadership and are keen to develop their own skills, particularly through working with colleagues from partner schools. Staff are gaining a more accurate picture of the school's present position, and where it needs to focus its priorities, through working alongside the interim headteacher to evaluate its performance. The new school improvement plan, currently being developed with staff, is well structured. There has been little performance management for teachers, though this is being re-established, with priorities for in-service training linked to the school's improvement plan. The governing body is led well and its members have a good grasp of the school's strengths and shortcomings. With up-to-date information from the interim headteacher, particularly in respect of more challenging target setting, they are developing their role as the school's critical friend. Promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory. Building on a fresh analysis of its context, the school is reviewing and evaluating its provision, especially to improve pupils' global awareness of different faiths and cultures.

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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?	4
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?	3
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?	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?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	4

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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
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	3
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
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?	3

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?	Yes

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

7 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Dennington CE VC Primary School, Woodbridge, IP13 8AE

Thank you very much for making me welcome when I visited your school last week. I promised the members of the school council that I would write to you all to tell you about what is in the inspection report.

There have been a number of changes in the staff during the year and some of you have found these unsettling. However, you say that since Mrs Jones has come to the school, things are much better, particularly the behaviour. You are quite right. You like the new rewards scheme and you are to be congratulated on your efforts to improve. You are also trying hard to work without so much direction from adults - keep practising those thinking and problem-solving skills! You have a good understanding of keeping healthy and know how to keep safe - I hope those of you taking your cycling proficiency test pass with flying colours.

Most of you make satisfactory progress in your work but, in recent years, some of the children in Years 5 and 6 have not made good enough progress. I have asked your teachers to make better use of what they know about your work to help plan their lessons. I have also asked them to find ways of helping you to improve your work and to regularly check on how well you are doing. Finally, I have asked the school governors to make sure that the children in Reception have a new outside area right by their classroom so that they can move easily between indoor and outdoor activities and become more independent. These are very important matters.

In a few months, another inspector will be checking how well the school is making progress and later in 2010, the school will be inspected again. Mrs Jones and your teachers are working hard to make these improvements. You can all help them by working hard and getting on well with everybody.

Yours truly

Mike Best

Lead inspector