

Northaw Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117569
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	339035
Inspection dates	12–13 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Raminder Arora

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	92
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Graham Disbrey
Headteacher	Ray Clarke
Date of previous school inspection	0 July 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited nine lessons and held meetings with governors, staff, and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation, which included the school's analysis of pupils' progress, teachers' lesson plans, the school's improvement plan and also pupils' work. In addition, the questionnaires returns from 43 parents, 63 pupil and 17 staff were analysed and their comments were taken into account.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the level of children's skills on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage, and how well they develop through Nursery and Reception
- the key factors in pupils' progress in Years 1 to 6 that lead the school to judge that learning is good
- the level of consistency in the quality of teaching and how well assessments are used to boost learning
- the effectiveness of leaders in securing consistent improvement and how well governors contribute to the school's leadership and management.

Information about the school

Northaw is a small school. It serves the immediate village community, although most pupils come from surrounding areas. Pupils are mainly of White British heritage with a few from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. There are no pupils at an early stage of learning English. Pupils are taught in four mixed-age classes. The proportion of pupils that have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average. Most of these have learning difficulties. The school has gained the Activemark award.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good and constantly improving school that has some significant strengths. There is a warm and very inclusive atmosphere where all the pupils are supported and cared for really well. Almost all parents are happy with their children's experience of school and one rightly said that 'the school has a busy purposeful atmosphere; all staff are caring and know the individual children well'. And as one pupil said, 'We're incredibly happy here and love coming to school.' The good quality of the curriculum and care, guidance and support ensures that pupils develop the skills and positive attitudes required for a lifelong love of learning. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is nurtured well. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. They readily take responsibility for their health and safety.

Pupils of all capabilities and backgrounds achieve well. Teaching and learning are consistently good and some lessons are outstanding. Pupils are fully engaged in, and motivated by their learning. Children do particularly well in the Nursery and Reception class thanks to excellent provision, including a highly stimulating learning environment. Pupils' progress across Key Stages 1 and 2 is good and by the time pupils leave school, their overall attainment is significantly above average. Their proficiency in basic skills, their good personal and social skills and above average attendance prepare pupils well for the future.

The senior leadership team and governors work together well to ensure that pupils enjoy their learning and take responsibility for themselves and their environment. The governors are given good information regarding the school's performance. They are keen to develop their role as critical friend and become more involved in the monitoring and evaluation of the school's work. The carefully planned management structure includes all teachers well in monitoring progress and planning for school improvement. Teaching assistants make a strong contribution to the good progress made by pupils with additional learning needs. Good systems are in place to track and analyse data on pupils' progress and identify appropriate action to be taken. For example, the school has rightly identified that the use of pupils' learning targets needs to be improved to help them gain higher levels in writing by the end of Year 2. All teachers are responsible for managing the performance data for their class and using the resulting information in planning. The impact of this work is seen in the considerable improvement in teaching, monitoring and standards since the previous inspection. All these factors mean that the school has a good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Make better use of pupils' learning targets to help them to know what to do to gain higher levels in writing at the end of Year 2.
 - Develop the role of governors so they are fully and systematically involved in school self-evaluation and thus planning to bring about improvements.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Achievement in all subjects has improved considerably since the previous inspection. The close monitoring of pupils' progress by the staff has enabled an accurate tailoring of work to meet pupils' needs. Observations carried out during the inspection confirmed that pupils are now making good progress in Years 1 and 2 and that it is accelerated in Years 3 to 6, where there is much outstanding teaching. As a consequence, attainment is well above average in Year 6, and strongest in science due to particular strengths in the teaching of this subject. The provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is particularly effective and records show that personalised programmes ensure that these pupils make good progress.

Good gains are made in pupils' personal development. The youngest children in the Nursery and Reception class show very well developed social skills. They enjoy working in small groups and help each other extremely well. By the time that they reach Year 6, pupils are mature and reflective young people who have a keen appreciation of the difference between right and wrong. Pupils say that they are determined to ensure that 'everyone is happy'. They delight in taking on responsibility and many Year 6 pupils 'buddy' the youngest children. They act as group leaders and this helps children to settle well. The school's achievement of the Activemark awards demonstrates pupils' very good understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate	
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Good relationships between staff and pupils motivate pupils to learn and do their best. In most lessons, teachers use their good subject knowledge and accurate assessment information to plan activities that build well on pupils' previous learning. Pupils are made aware of the purpose of lessons and this keeps them well engaged and excited about learning, especially when lessons proceed at a brisk pace and include interesting activities. Most lessons present pupils with a good level of challenge, helping them to extend and develop their ideas through skilful questioning and creative teaching. This was noted in a science lesson about sound and whether it can travel through gas, solids and liquids. Pupils learnt all the facts through practical work and skilful links to music and singing. Most teachers involve pupils in evaluating their own learning, but this practice is inconsistent. Teachers' marking does not always refer to pupils' learning targets to support their understanding of how well they are doing and what to do next, particularly in writing. In some lessons, the well-planned curriculum provides a wealth of exciting experiences such as forest walks and theatre visits, and has been successful in encouraging pupils to produce quality writing. There is a wide range of after-school clubs on offer, the most popular being the gardening club.

The school promotes understanding of the cultures represented within its own community and beyond through art, music, drama and celebrations of different festivals. The school, in effective partnership with families, the local church and the Small Schools Network, successfully promotes a caring and supportive ethos. The recent visit to school by the Fire Brigade was greatly enjoyed by pupils and enhanced their understanding of fire safety. Transition arrangements are carefully planned and are appreciated by parents. Robust systems have led to improved attendance and behaviour, and these are fully embedded.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

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How effective are leadership and management?

A clear management structure and rigorous systems have resulted in good improvement since the last inspection. There is a continuing drive to improve the school and to embed the clear vision for its further development. The headteacher and two senior teachers work well together in leading the school to better outcomes and they communicate their vision clearly to staff. The school has strengthened its tracking and assessment system. Pupils' progress is regularly tracked and the assessment information is used well by the teachers to inform curricular planning. Equal opportunities are at the core of all the school's activities and all pupils are helped to succeed without discrimination. Governors fulfil their statutory duties and have a good balance of expertise between them. They are, however, inclined to readily accept the school's view of itself, especially in matters of attainment and progress, rather than evaluating the outcomes for themselves.

Arrangements for safeguarding are secure and checked carefully by governors. There are good procedures for ensuring the safety of pupils and school leaders ensure that staff receive effective guidance to enable them to identify issues that would raise concerns about pupils' well-being. Good arrangements to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are enhanced by careful record-keeping and effective links with outside specialists. Pupils develop a good understanding of how to keep safe and talk to staff when they are worried.

The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion and successfully reaches out to the local communities. A strong ethos of care and respect permeates the work of the school and encourages pupils to understand and value people's differences, beliefs and lifestyles. Global links are not quite as well developed. The school is in the process of appropriately extending provision by creating links with Tanzania and different communities in the United Kingdom.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money

2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children have an excellent start in the the Early Years Foundation Stage. They join a class of mixed Nursery and Reception with skills and understanding that are broadly at the levels expected for their age. Children make very good progress in all areas of learning. An effective programme of letters and sounds effectively supports the development of reading and writing skills and compensates for their relatively weak initial attainment in the area of language and literacy, particularly in writing.

Children settle very happily due to the warm welcome and the strong induction procedures. The promotion of children's welfare and safety is excellent. All routines are very well established and this increases children's feeling of security. Staff form excellent relationships and encourage children to enjoy themselves. Children develop their speaking and personal skills extremely well. Plenty of practical play and stimulating focused activities, for example learning about a range of cleaning appliances, excite children about learning. There is a very good balance of focused, adult-led sessions as well as purposeful, child-selected play activities. Learning opportunities are rich for both indoor and outdoor learning and role-play areas are linked well to topics to provide excellent opportunities for children to develop their creativity, independence and enquiry skills.

Leadership and management are outstanding. A very good assessment system has been developed and staff are working closely together to promote continuity in practice.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

The majority of parents have positive views of the school. They are particularly pleased with the caring, friendly and welcoming ethos. Evidence from the inspection supports parents' views that children enjoy school and that care for children's health and safety is good. Many parents acknowledged that there has been a distinct and noticeable improvement in the school. A small minority of concerns centred around behaviour at playtimes, but behaviour during the inspection was found to be good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Northaw Church of England Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 43 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 92 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	32	74	10	23	1	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	36	84	7	16	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	25	58	17	40	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	24	56	18	42	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	27	63	16	37	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	26	61	16	37	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	27	63	16	37	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	20	47	16	37	2	6	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	27	63	14	33	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	14	32	24	56	5	12	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	21	49	17	40	2	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	21	49	19	44	3	7	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	20	47	21	49	1	2	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



16 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Northaw Church of England Primary School, Potters Bar EN6 4PB

Thank you for being so friendly when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting with you and listening to what you had to say about your school. Yours is a good school and this letter is to tell you what we found when we visited.

We can understand why you love school and learning because all the adults look after you well and make sure that you are happy and safe and that you thoroughly enjoy your time at school.

Children in the Acorn class (Nursery and Reception) receive an excellent start to their education.

Your headteacher is doing a good job and, together with the staff, he makes sure that your school runs smoothly and well.

You work hard, behave well, and your teachers make sure that you make good progress by making lessons interesting. Teachers also make sure that there is a good range of things for you to do, both in lessons and in the many clubs that you enjoy.

You have an excellent understanding of how to keep healthy. You told us about what you like to eat and the sports you like to play.

Even in such a good school as yours, there are things that could be improved.

We have asked that the children in Years 1 and 2 make better use of their learning targets to help them get on to higher levels, especially in writing. We have also asked your governors to be fully involved in bringing about improvements in the school.

I hope that you will all keep on working hard and enjoy your time at school.

Yours sincerely

Raminder Arora

Lead inspector

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