

Redcastle Furze Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120905
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	339808
Inspection dates	7–8 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Madeleine Gerard

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	195
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Pat Pearson
Headteacher	Dr Andy Sheppard
Date of previous school inspection	4 March 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 19 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at work in pupils' books, at tracking data showing the progress pupils are making, the school's development planning, reports from advisers working with the school and 45 responses to the questionnaire sent to parents.

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

- how consistently teaching ensures that all groups of pupils are appropriately challenged so that they make swift gains in their learning
- how successfully leaders and managers monitor the school's work and set priorities to improve outcomes for pupils.

Information about the school

Redcastle Furze is a slightly smaller than average primary school. The proportion of pupils who come from minority ethnic backgrounds has increased over recent years and is close to the national average. The proportion of pupils learning English as an additional language is average. Many of these pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly higher than average. The majority of these pupils have difficulty with basic literacy and numeracy, behavioural difficulties or speech, language and communication difficulties. The school has achieved the national Healthy Schools 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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Redcastle Furze Primary is a satisfactory school. The school's strengths are in the personal development of the pupils, the welfare of the pupils, the curriculum provision and particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Almost all parents who responded to the questionnaire confirmed that their children enjoyed school. The school is working hard to harness the support of the parents and involve them in their children's learning. For example, parents are encouraged to support their children with weekly homework projects. Despite the school's good systems to encourage pupils to attend regularly and on time, attendance is only average.

Children join the school with a range of skills and capabilities that are generally below those expected for their age. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage to reach average standards by the end of the Reception Year. In recent years, test results in national tests at the end of Year 6 have been broadly average. This represents satisfactory learning and progress through Years 1 to 6.

The curriculum ensures that pupils have a wide range of interesting work to do and contributes to their good personal and social development. For example, pupils in Year 1 enjoy cookery lessons with the school's cook. They learn to make bread rolls, pizza and Christmas cake for themselves from basic ingredients. This supports their good awareness of healthy eating and food hygiene. Relationships between adults and pupils are strong and classes are managed well so that behaviour is good. Teaching enables pupils to make satisfactory gains in their learning. Teaching is sometimes good, although it is not consistently good enough through the school in literacy and numeracy to ensure that all pupils learn and progress well. Some pupils are not achieving as well as they should, particularly more able pupils, because planning does not always ensure that all pupils are set appropriately challenging tasks. Teaching is often lively, but the pace of learning is not always as swift as it should be. The school has systems in place to check the progress pupils are making. But this information is not always analysed sufficiently promptly and precisely enough to ensure that it is fully effective as a tool to raise standards further. Although marking gives feedback on strengths, it does not always make clear to pupils how they can improve their work. There is some useful target setting but this is not reviewed regularly enough to ensure all pupils are moving rapidly up to the next level in their work.

The school has a satisfactory understanding of its performance. However, priorities for action, which stem from the process of self-evaluation, do not always focus sufficiently on the most significant issues. Given its recent track record and the quality of work observed, the school's capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and rates of learning and progress in literacy and numeracy by ensuring teachers have a shared understanding of the challenge and pace required to ensure that all pupils make swift gains in their learning.
 - Use information gained from tracking pupils' progress, assessment and marking to match work consistently to pupils' needs and ensure they know their targets and how to improve their work.
 - Sharpen the skills of leaders and managers at all levels in identifying priorities for development by increasing the rigour with which the school's performance is monitored.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils' achievement and enjoyment are satisfactory overall. Attainment at the end of Year 6 is average in English, mathematics and science. Work in pupils' books shows that attainment is generally average across classes. Rates of progress across the school as a whole are satisfactory. All groups of pupils make similar progress.

Observations and pupils' work show that in some classes, pupils are learning and progressing well, but this is not consistent. Good learning and progress were observed in a Year 5 mathematics lesson when pupils explored fractions by dividing pieces of dry pasta into equal parts; in Year 2, pupils were developing their literacy skills through writing instructions for a physical education lesson using time phrases and punctuation well.

Pupils are polite and friendly. They feel safe and are confident that adults will help them should any problems occur. One pupil typically said, 'There is always someone to talk to and give us advice.' Visitors from the local emergency services, cycling proficiency training and guidance about using computers ensure pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. The school's success in gaining Healthy Schools status reflects pupils' positive attitudes to keeping fit and healthy. Good gains in spiritual, moral, social and cultural development help pupils to show care and consideration to one another and appreciation for the successes of others. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and local community. For example, the school council is rightly proud of improvements to the school playground, including a spider's web climbing frame and new surfacing on the football pitch as a result of their suggestions. They are keen to take on greater responsibility for organising the council for themselves. Pupils' well developed personal and social skills, average attendance and average attainment in basic skills prepare them satisfactorily for the next stage in their education.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is sometimes good but it is not consistently good enough across the school to ensure that pupils progress consistently well. Teachers make good use of resources including computers to explain tasks and clarify pupils' thinking. This helps to motivate pupils. However, when pupils spend too long listening to the teacher, or when those who finish tasks swiftly spend time waiting for the rest of the class to finish, the pace of learning drops and their learning and progress slows. The data gathered from assessments is not always used to ensure all pupils are doing as well as they can. Although in most classes there is quite a wide range of ability, planning does not always ensure that work is suitably challenging for all pupils, particularly for those who find learning easy. Although satisfactory, marking and target setting do not always make clear to pupils what the next steps are in their learning. Pupils who struggle with basic literacy and numeracy, as well as those with speech, language and communication difficulties receive targeted support from additional adults in class and in small groups, which helps them to keep up.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and supports pupils' personal skills well. Literacy

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

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

and numeracy are rightly prioritised. However, as the school is aware, opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy through regular opportunities to write at length in a range of different styles are limited. Links are developing well between subjects and pupils use computers across a range of subjects. Children in Reception and pupils in Years 1 to 6 enjoy a variety of sporting activities with a specialist sports teacher and pupils in Year 3 to 6 also go swimming. There are a number of popular extra-curricular clubs including singing, and mathematics for pupils and parents. Themed days and weeks bring the curriculum to life. Visits to local places of interest develop pupils' knowledge of the local area and support their learning effectively.

Pastoral care is good and contributes to pupils' self-assurance and security. Arrangements are well managed to ensure that pupils receive the appropriate care and guidance that they need. There are good links with a wide range of outside agencies that the school uses well to support vulnerable pupils. Partnership with the local secondary school helps to prepare pupils for transfer to secondary school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher works closely with the deputy and other senior and middle leaders to ensure that the pupils' well-being is at the heart of the school's work. Leaders drive improvement and embed ambition soundly. Equality is promoted and discrimination tackled adequately because the school's systems for monitoring teaching, learning, and outcomes for pupils are not always as effective as they should be to bring about swift improvements. The governing body is very supportive of the school but does not always hold the school sufficiently to account over pupils' attainment and their rates of learning and progress. Procedures to safeguard children's health, safety and well-being are rigorous and all staff have received appropriate training. The school's promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory. Pupils' awareness of themselves as part of the school and local community is strong. However, their awareness of those who live in communities other than their own in Great Britain and globally is more limited.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3

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 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	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed. Children get off to a good start and settle quickly in the Nursery because induction arrangements are good including opportunities for parents to evaluate how well their children have settled when they start at the school. In the Nursery and Reception classes, staff know children well. Close partnerships with parents and outside agencies ensure that children are well supported and their welfare is a priority. As a result, personal, social and emotional development is particularly strong. Children work and play well together. They take turns and share equipment well. Across the Early Years Foundation Stage, provision is good because adults plan a wide range of stimulating activities in the classrooms. For example in the Reception class, children were observed enjoying singing songs to help them to recall their knowledge of letters and sounds, and practising writing using small whiteboards. There is a good balance between opportunities for children to select activities for themselves and tasks led by adults. The outdoor areas are used regularly, although planning does not always ensure that all areas of learning are evenly promoted in the outside. Records of continuous observation are kept from the time children join the Nursery and are used to plan children's learning as they progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

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

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Views of parents and carers

The overwhelming majority of parents responding to the survey are happy with their children's experience of school. Although most confirmed that the school is helping them to support their children's learning, a few expressed a desire to receive more information about how well their children are making progress. Inspectors found that systems to check how well pupils are making progress are not as effective as they should be and that the pupils are not consistently clear how to improve their work. There are sound but limited approaches to keeping parents informed about how well their children are doing. In the survey, the very large majority of parents judged the overall management of the school to be effective, although a few felt the school could do more to take account of their views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Redcastle Furze 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 45 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 195 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	26	58	18	40	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	22	49	21	47	2	4	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	18	40	19	42	7	16	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	22	49	21	47	2	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	21	47	21	47	3	7	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	22	49	18	40	5	11	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	19	42	24	53	2	4	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)	15	33	28	62	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	17	38	26	58	2	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	18	40	20	44	4	9	3	7
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	7	16	29	64	7	16	2	4
The school is led and managed effectively	21	47	17	38	3	7	2	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	24	53	20	44	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.



9 December 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Redcastle Furze Primary School, Thetford, IP24 3PU

Thank you for your friendly welcome when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed our visit and were pleased to hear the singing club performing in assembly and particularly enjoyed tasting the Christmas cakes that pupils in Year 1 have been making. Redcastle Furze is a satisfactory school. These are some of the things we found about your school.

The youngest children get off to a good start in the Nursery and Reception classes. In the rest of the school, your learning and progress is satisfactory, but it could be better.

Teaching is satisfactory and you get on well with the adults and each other.

The curriculum ensures you have a good variety of interesting work to do.

You told us you like coming to school and your parents confirm this.

Your attendance at school is satisfactory.

You have a good understanding of how to keep yourselves fit, healthy and safe.

You get on well with each other and most of you behave sensibly in class and around the school.

You like the opportunities you have to take on responsibility in the school and are keen to play and even greater part.

All the adults work hard to look after you well.

To make the school even better, we have asked the school to make more checks on the work that it does in order to ensure everything is as good as possible. When teachers mark your work, we would like them to make clear what you need to do to make it even better. We have also asked that teachers use the information the school collects about your standards of work to plan work that is the right level of difficulty for you. You can help by telling the teachers if the work is too easy or too hard for you, and by coming to school every day.

Yours sincerely

Madeleine Gerard

Lead Inspector

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