

Ghost Hill Infant and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121006
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	354309
Inspection dates	1–2 July 2010
Reporting inspector	Jill Bavin

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	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	189
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Roger Oakes
Headteacher	Frances Rowell
Date of previous school inspection	25 September 2006
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Age group	3–7
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors, who saw seven teachers in 18 lessons. Additionally the team met with representatives of the governing body, staff and pupils. They scrutinised a variety of documentation, including policies and documents related to safeguarding, data about pupils' progress and school development planning. Responses to questionnaires from 64 parents and 14 staff were also analysed.

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

- how consistently the most able pupils are challenged in writing
- the school's action to raise boys' achievement in writing, and its impact
- how successfully the school promotes pupils' understanding of cultural diversity, especially within the United Kingdom
- the school's action to provide children in the Early Years Foundation Stage with more choice, and its impact.

Information about the school

Ghost Hill is a relatively small infant school with a falling roll reflecting local demographic trends. The current two-form entry to the Reception classes will reduce to one class in September 2010. It has a 26 place morning-only Nursery which children join when they are three. The school provides a parent and toddler group on Monday and Wednesday afternoons, so it was not possible to visit this during the inspection. Most children continue their experience in the Early Years Foundation Stage in the school's Reception classes. The inspection follows a period of some staff turbulence and the falling roll means that this is continuing.

The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well below the national average and the percentage of pupils with English as an additional language is low. The proportion of pupils who have a special educational need and/or disability, including the percentage with a statement of special educational needs, has doubled since the previous inspection and is now above average. Around one third of pupils currently in Year 2 have a special educational need or disability. The majority of pupils with special educational needs in the school have difficulties related to language, communication and social skills.

The school has Healthy School Status in recognition of its work helping pupils to understand and embrace healthy lifestyles.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Pupils thoroughly enjoy this outstanding school, describing the teaching as 'amazing', the teachers 'kind and helpful' and explaining that 'you always learn new stuff.' Outstanding teaching combines with an extremely stimulating curriculum to promote exceptional rates of progress for all groups of pupils, whatever their starting points. The school has developed a culture of high expectations to which pupils respond enthusiastically because activities are fun. As a result, pupils achieve outstandingly well in reading, writing, and mathematics and in key aspects of their personal development. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils demonstrate remarkable maturity for their years in their consideration of each other, their respect for the natural world and their acceptance of diversity within and beyond their school. Their outstanding behaviour and attitudes to learning are a key feature in the exceptional progress they make.

Extremely strong leadership and management have enabled the school to make significant improvements in its effectiveness since the previous inspection, in spite of the staffing and budgetary challenges it has faced over this period. Although individuals vary, most children start school with fewer skills than expected for their age in all areas of learning except number recognition. This is a significant change since the previous inspection when children's skills on entry to the school were above expectations. Nevertheless, boys and girls leave at the end of Year 2 with above average attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. Overall, pupils currently in Year 1 and Year 2 are working at above the levels expected for their age.

Attendance rates, while broadly satisfactory, do not reflect the extent of pupils' enjoyment. Working with parents to reduce absence, especially for term-time holidays, is an ongoing focus for the school. Nevertheless, because pupils consistently reach above average levels of skill in key areas, make outstanding academic progress and develop exceptional personal skills, these young pupils are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Improved systems provide much more frequent and detailed information about how well each pupil is doing than previously. This information is used highly effectively by senior staff to plan for school improvement and by every class teacher to generate the next steps for pupils. This contributes to the outstanding use of assessment to meet individual pupils' needs on a day-to-day basis. Far more links are made between subjects and far greater use is made of computer technology than in the past. These developments mean that the curriculum is now a highly stimulating vehicle for boys and girls of all abilities to apply their skills and extend their knowledge and understanding. The governing body has a good understanding of the issues facing the school and

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makes an effective contribution to school development. Safeguarding arrangements are good. The school's highly effective and comprehensive track record of improvement indicates its outstanding capacity for further development.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' attendance by:
 - involving all staff and governors in promoting parents' appreciation of the importance of regular school attendance.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Lesson observations demonstrated that learning is often outstanding because pupils acquire knowledge while deepening their understanding and extending their skills in more than one subject simultaneously. Pupils in Year 2 acquired new computer skills by creating digital films with special effects, while also making extremely good use of their scientific knowledge of the solar system to ensure details about planet size and location were correct. They also honed their literacy skills to develop, and tell, an accompanying logical story sequence. Pupils in Year 1 made extremely good use of their scientific understanding of food chains and the necessity of air to sustain life in a philosophy session, 'If I were a spider'. In this session, they also practised high quality writing skills by learning how to formulate open questions and develop their ideas into complex sentences. When learning is good rather than outstanding, it is often because pupils have missed an opportunity for active involvement or independent learning.

Girls and boys of all abilities and backgrounds make equally outstanding progress. Although the results in national tests over recent years indicate that pupils exceed national averages in all areas, writing has not been quite as strong as reading and mathematics. This has been a particular focus in school and there was no evidence of any disparity in the quality of learning in writing and other subjects during the inspection. Pupils develop a love of language, evident in their willingness and pride in expressing their ideas either verbally or on paper, and their skills are good. In some lessons, they demonstrate a very high level of skill for their age. Pupils in Year 1 used sophisticated vocabulary and phraseology such as 'as sharp as a freezing diamond bride' in poems inspired by spiky sculptures.

Pupils' outstanding understanding of the importance of safe and healthy choices is demonstrated through their initiative, and reflects the school's award for this work. They enthusiastically design informative posters to promote hygienic hand washing, and volunteer comments, such as remembering the danger of looking directly at the sun, at highly relevant moments. Roles such as 'energy busters' are performed conscientiously, with a strong sense of responsibility to the environment. Links with the immediate community, such as the gardening club's contribution to the local flower festival, are good. Pupils' impressive interest in, and respect for, various religions, cultures and periods of history, is evident in the amount of information they retain, as well as their animated conversation. Pupils in Year 2 are fascinated by Hinduism and explain the

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benefits of welcoming a Hindu classmate into school. One pupil in Year 1 reflected the remarkable depth of thought often seen in this school when he asked the question, 'I wonder how the world is for everyone?'

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

Highly-skilled teaching and a dynamic curriculum are a winning combination in promoting outstanding pupil achievement. For example, in a religious education lesson teaching strategies used drama, role-play and a powerful 'conscience alley' which enabled pupils to empathise and develop moral arguments about Jonah's turmoil and decisions. Adults value pupils' ideas, so pupils willingly share them. Teachers have an extremely good understanding of pupils' individual needs and make meticulous use of assessment to plan lessons. Teaching assistants make an invaluable contribution to pupils' learning. As a result, comments, questions and tasks are modified to challenge different groups of pupils highly effectively. When such skills combine with a 'virtual tour' of a shopping mall in Ghana, teachers are highly successful in challenging potential stereotypes and deepening pupils' understanding of the world around them.

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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The close emphasis upon each pupil as an individual means that sensitive adjustments are made to the curriculum and its delivery to ensure that all pupils benefit equally. Opportunities are sought and provided to develop identified talents in a variety of ways, such as school productions and school clubs. Radio aids have been installed to ensure that pupils with hearing impairment are not disadvantaged. The school makes extremely effective use of a wide range of external professionals and organisations, such as speech and language therapists, and sports coaches to ensure that the skills within school are augmented to the benefit of all. Such strengths contribute to the equally outstanding progress made by all, including those pupils facing particularly difficult circumstances. Transition arrangements for pupils moving from one stage of their education to another are good. The school is still working towards ambitious targets to improve pupils' attendance rates.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The driving force behind the school's successes is the headteacher's determination, and the extent to which senior and other staff share with her, an ambition for the school and every pupil. This is outstanding. Its impact is evident in the significant improvement to both provision and pupil outcomes since the previous inspection. The very strong school commitment to equality of opportunity is apparent in the highly challenging targets that are set for each pupil, based upon their starting points. It is also evident in the close analysis of information about how well different groups of pupils are doing. This triggers special intervention if there is any sign of possible concern, such as the recent successful review of boys' writing to ensure that they are as motivated as girls.

The school has a very clear understanding of its strengths and priorities for further improvement. Astute governance is very supportive of the school and contributes effectively to the good safeguarding procedures found at the time of the inspection. A particular strength within safeguarding is the extent to which the school helps pupils to understand how to keep themselves safe. The governing body contributes sagely to the budget considerations that arise from the falling pupil roll and so underpin the school's considerable success in improving pupil achievement.

Governors and staff have a very clear understanding of the school's social context and their responsibility to prepare pupils for experience of greater diversity. As a result, staff use the curriculum very effectively to promote impressive harmony within school and

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extremely positive attitudes from pupils to less familiar communities. The school is currently reviewing this aspect of its work. It has rightly identified that the next steps are to provide pupils with more direct links with other communities in the United Kingdom, and evaluate the school's impact of this work more systematically.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

This provision is extremely well led and managed. The leader has ensured that the school has made a thorough and thoughtful response to reflecting the latest national guidance for children at this age. Staff share a very good understanding of how children at this age learn best and provide consistent messages to children. This helps girls and boys of all abilities and backgrounds to settle rapidly and quickly accelerates their curiosity, confidence and learning. Throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage, children make outstanding gains in key skills in preparation for joining Year 1.

When adults are leading activities children's learning is often outstanding. For example, those children in the Nursery, who used containers of water to try and flush a plastic spider from piping, had enormous fun while learning impressively through direct experience about forces, gravity, weight and measurement. They persevered impressively for an extended period of time. Their learning was enhanced by highly-skilled adult support that facilitated and extended their ideas, with occasional comments and questions without over-directing them. Progress in writing was outstanding in a Reception class because of an extremely well-pitched level of challenge for children with different skills that enthused them all, and the invaluable contribution of support staff.

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On occasion, children make outstanding gains in their skills and understanding without direct adult intervention. For example, learning was outstanding across most areas of learning for a group of children in a Reception class who chose to develop a shared 'story' about being in the jungle, independent of adult support. Some harnessed co-ordination skills and used their understanding of the world around them to make binoculars, telescopes and a hide in order to observe wildlife. Others applied their previously learned bark rubbing technique to make 'trees' for their role play area, with much energy, co-operation and enthusiasm. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader recognises that resources for children to make independent choices are not always equally stimulating, and so independent learning is not outstanding as often as adult-led learning.

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

All parents who returned questionnaires agreed that their child enjoys school and teaching is good. A few expressed concerns about how well the school manages behaviour and a small minority did not feel that their child's individual needs were met well. These concerns were not shared by the pupils who spoke with us, nor substantiated by the behaviour or support for individual pupils seen during the inspection. A very few expressed a concern relating to communication issues, which was neither shared by the majority of respondents, nor by the inspection evidence of a good range of communication channels. All who returned questionnaires were happy overall with the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ghost Hill Infant and Nursery 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 64 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 189 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	40	63	24	38	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	44	69	18	28	1	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	30	47	29	45	3	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	35	55	25	39	2	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	45	70	19	30	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	36	56	26	41	2	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	44	69	18	28	1	2	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)	30	47	30	47	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	34	53	23	36	3	5	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	28	44	27	42	6	9	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	22	34	34	53	1	2	2	3
The school is led and managed effectively	28	44	32	50	1	2	2	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	36	56	28	44	0	0	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



5 July 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ghost Hill Infant and Nursery School, Norwich, NR8 6PJ

Thank you very much for being so friendly and welcoming when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you, seeing your work and hearing your ideas, very much. We think you go to an exceptionally good school. There are so many good things in your school I cannot list them all, but here are some:

- you do better than most children of your age in reading, writing and mathematics
- you make much more progress than is expected because so much of the teaching is brilliant and because you behave extremely well
- you are very kind to each other
- you are extremely grown up in the way you think and talk about important things, like making decisions about doing the right thing, caring for the environment, and respecting what other people believe
- you feel very safe and have a very good idea about how to keep safe and healthy
- all the adults in your school care about you a great deal and work hard to keep you safe
- the headteacher, governors and teachers all want the very best for you and have plenty of good ideas about how to keep making the school even better.

We have asked the school to keep working with your parents to make sure you come to school whenever you possibly can. You can help by continuing to behave so brilliantly. We hope you always enjoy learning so much.

Yours sincerely

Jill Bavin

Lead inspector

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