

Norton-sub-Hamdon Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123818
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	292802
Inspection date	26 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Colin Lee

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	127
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue More
Headteacher	Kathy Foot
Date of previous school inspection	29 April 2002
School address	New Road Norton-sub-Hamdon Stoke-sub-Hamdon TA14 6SF
Telephone number	01935 881815
Fax number	01935 881920

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school but numbers are rising due to its popularity, and an increasing proportion of pupils live outside the catchment area. Pupils are taught in four mixed-age classes. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is broadly average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with some outstanding features. Pupils show tremendous enjoyment of all that they do at school and this pleases parents and carers as much as the good progress their children are making. Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding as a result of the emphasis placed by the school on their personal, social and emotional development from the moment they start school. Their behaviour is exemplary and relationships with one another are excellent.

Achievement and standards are good and have improved steadily in recent years. When children enter the Foundation Stage, levels of attainment are in line with national expectations. Good provision helps them to progress well and by the end of the year, a good proportion exceed the standards that are expected nationally. The good teaching throughout the school is having a positive impact on all pupils' achievement. Where comparative weaknesses are seen, the school quickly identifies what needs improving and successfully raises standards. This is currently occurring in mental mathematics and writing, although pupils are not showing consistency in their writing in different subjects. Previously low achievement in information and communication technology (ICT) has been turned around and is now a strength. Standards in ICT, as in speaking and listening, reading and science, are now above expected levels in all year groups. By the time pupils leave Year 6, their performance in the national tests has improved over time to a point where the 2006 results were well above the national averages in English, mathematics and science. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities achieve well because they receive a high quality of support.

Teaching and learning have many good features, including the way that the work planned for pupils is so well matched to their abilities. There is some inconsistency in teachers' marking of work, which does not always guide pupils sufficiently on how work can be improved. This makes academic guidance satisfactory although care, guidance and support are good overall due to the high quality of pastoral care. The school provides a good curriculum, and classrooms and other areas, including the school grounds, have been made into exciting environments that stimulate all aspects of pupils' learning. There are excellent opportunities for additional learning activities outside the school day.

The headteacher's drive and clear vision of the school's strengths and weaknesses are at the heart of good leadership and management, with all staff and governors carrying out their responsibilities effectively. There is a clear sense of teamwork committed to maintaining the strong Christian ethos and improving pupils' achievement. The rising numbers are making the accommodation inadequate, requiring one Key Stage 2 class to have its morning lessons in the school hall. This has no adverse effect on provision or the pupils' achievement but is far from ideal and prevents other classes from using the hall.

What the school should do to improve further

- Teachers should raise their expectations of the standard of writing and ensure that pupils are consistently producing the highest standard of which they are capable.
- Ensure that the marking of pupils' work gives a clear indication of how it can be improved.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

There is a trend over time of lower attainment when children start in the Foundation Stage but standards by the time the pupils leave Year 6 reflect good achievement in relation to starting points. All groups of pupils are making good progress, including those with learning difficulties. By the end of Reception, and many other year groups, standards in literacy and numeracy are above expected levels. Throughout the school, pupils' progress is accelerating in writing and mental mathematics, which are areas that have had particular attention this year.

The school's performance in the national tests and assessments at the end of Years 2 and 6 has shown some of the annual fluctuations expected with small year groups. Standards in the current Year 2 are higher than last year, being above average in speaking and listening, reading and science and average in writing and mathematics. Many pupils show they are capable of an above average standard of writing but do not produce this consistently in their work in different subjects. The current Year 6 group is different from the school's usual intake insofar as there is an above average proportion with learning difficulties. Consequently, they are not attaining the particularly high standards of their predecessors in 2006. They have made good progress in writing this year and their overall standards in English are broadly average, as they are in mathematics. Their science standards are above average.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils show very positive attitudes to lessons and all other aspects of school life. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils show high levels of respect for the views of others and are well informed about different faiths and cultures. Attendance is improving but is only satisfactory due to the number of families taking holidays in term time. One pupil made an important connection when talking to an inspector by saying 'If a class stays healthy, its attendance is better'. This also reflects pupils' excellent knowledge and understanding of how to stay healthy, as a result of the school's strong emphasis on the importance of regular exercise and healthy eating. They have a very thorough awareness of keeping safe in and out of school.

Pupils show genuine concern for others. Older pupils act as 'buddies', looking out for younger ones at playtimes and being quick to respond to someone on the 'friendship bench' wanting someone to talk to. The oldest pupils are exemplary models of good behaviour for the rest of the school. The school has a strong sense of community and the pupils make an excellent contribution to school life. Pupils' social skills are mature for their age and their good basic literacy and numeracy skills mean they are well prepared for future education and eventual economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils have a genuine love of learning and this arises from the consistency of good teaching throughout the school. Classrooms and other areas have attractive, stimulating displays that have a good impact on the quality of learning. Teachers ensure that they explain the main things that they expect pupils to learn in lessons. Learning activities are carefully matched to

the needs and interests of pupils of different ages and abilities. This makes all pupils confident about tackling their work. The pupils say that their work is 'challenging but fun'. Challenge and a good pace are features of all lessons, which is a good improvement in what were weaknesses at the time of the last inspection.

There is very effective collaboration between teachers and teaching assistants so that all are aware of the different children's specific needs. Assessment procedures have recently been improved and teachers are using this information effectively to set pupils specific targets for the next stage in their learning. There is still work to do on this, for example by reminding pupils that they can be working towards writing targets in other subjects. The pupils themselves are encouraged to self-assess, by reviewing at the end of lessons how successfully they feel they have achieved the learning intentions. This is having a good impact on their progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Children in the Foundation Stage love coming to school because they have an exciting range of learning opportunities both indoors and outdoors. Throughout the school, there is a strong and effective emphasis on the development of pupils' core skills in literacy and numeracy. In addition, the school provides a broad, stimulating curriculum in which good links are established between subjects to make learning interesting for pupils. Good use is made of ICT to support pupils' work in other subjects and this has contributed to a significant rise in standards since the last inspection. Teachers are starting to plan how literacy and numeracy skills are to be developed across the curriculum but this needs further development.

The curriculum is enriched by a good range of educational visits and visitors. These are greatly enjoyed by pupils. There is an exceptional range of clubs for a school of this size, with opportunities for all ages and often very high levels of attendance. Curriculum development is greatly aided by the excellent collaboration between local schools.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The staff know the pupils very well and the school works very closely with parents so that pupils' needs are met. Pupils feel safe and know that they can talk to staff if they have any worries. Child protection procedures are robust, and all mandatory checks for safeguarding children are carried out meticulously. The school works exceptionally well with external agencies to provide support for pupils when this is required. Effective arrangements help children to settle into the Foundation Stage and prepare Year 2 pupils for their next stage of education. The school has improved its procedures for educational guidance through good use of target-setting. This is having a clear impact on pupils' achievement, which is now at least good. Teachers are not consistent in their marking of pupils' work, which does not always give pupils sufficient guidance on how they can improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides strong focussed leadership and management of the school. She has created a very effective teamwork approach so that all staff work towards common aims. She and the deputy headteacher carry out effective monitoring and evaluation of teaching and

learning and checking on pupils' standards and progress. As a consequence, pupils' achievement is being driven upwards. Data analysis by senior management is thorough and is used constructively to show where improvement can be made and to determine the action necessary to achieve this. The improving standards and achievement in writing and mathematics and science are examples of the effectiveness of these procedures. Class teachers are not sufficiently involved in this analysis of information about pupil performance and this is recognised as an area for development.

All staff have subject leadership responsibilities and carry these out effectively. They have regular opportunities to carry out monitoring and evaluation of provision and standards in their subjects and provide useful feedback to colleagues.

The school knows itself well and its self-evaluation judgements are accurate. The governing body is fully involved in the day-to-day life of the school, contributes well to school improvement planning and has effective strategies for monitoring the school's effectiveness. There have been good improvements in the areas identified for development at the last inspection. This indicates that the school has a good capacity for further improvement in the future.

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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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

27 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Norton-sub-Hamdon Church of England Primary, Norton-sub-Hamdon, TA14 6SF

Thank you for making us welcome in your school and for talking with us so willingly. We thoroughly enjoyed joining you in lessons and seeing you at work. We think your school is doing a good job in helping you to learn. The school does many things well and some things are outstanding. This is what we particularly appreciated:

- you are making good progress in your work
- you are reaching good standards, especially in speaking and listening, reading, ICT and science
- you behave excellently and this makes your school a very friendly place
- Year 6 pupils do a particularly excellent job looking after the younger ones
- you are taught well and teachers work hard to make your classrooms attractive and to plan interesting things for you to do in your lessons. This is helping you to learn well
- the teachers and teaching assistants help those of you who find some of the work quite hard to do well
- you have an excellent understanding of the importance of healthy eating and exercise and about how to keep safe at school and home
- all the adults look after you well and make sure that you are safe and get help whenever you need it
- the school is led well by your headteacher and all the adults, including the governors, work well together to improve it.
- We think your school could get even better if:
- you are helped and encouraged to make sure your writing is always the highest standard of which you are capable
- you always get advice on how you can improve your work when it is marked.

We hope you will carry on enjoying learning and helping your teachers to make Norton-sub-Hamdon Primary School an even better school.

Yours sincerely

Colin Lee Lead Inspector