

Clackclose Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121012
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	339829
Inspection dates	14-15 September 2009
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	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	271
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Reeve
Headteacher	Ronnie Koon
Date of previous school inspection	25-26 September 2007
School address	Nursery Road Downham Market Norfolk PE38 9 PF
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Age group	3-11
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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 the data the school has collected on pupils' attainment and progress, procedures for keeping pupils safe, the school improvement plan and 82 questionnaires completed by parents and carers.

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

- the achievement of higher attaining pupils at both key stages to determine whether teaching is consistently sufficiently challenging.
- the impact of the school's current focus on improving writing, to contribute to ascertaining the school's capacity for sustained improvement.
- the effectiveness of the curriculum in enabling all pupils to make links in their learning, including the use of basic skills in all subjects, to contribute to establishing the suitability of school development priorities.
- The extent to which senior and middle managers effectively drive school improvement.

Information about the school

Clackclose is a larger than average primary school. It occupies a split site. Pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2 are taught in the original school building, about 250 metres from the main school building. The school has a 52 place nursery. There were no children in the nursery during the inspection. Work to build 8 new classrooms on the main site has just begun. There is pre-school and after-school provision, which are not managed by the school governors and did not form part of this inspection.

The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and /or disabilities is higher than average, as is the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need. The school is working in partnership with the local authority to provide special provision where there are pupils with complex needs. More pupils join and leave the school during the school year than is usual in most schools. Most pupils are of White British heritage. Approximately 7% of pupils are from minority ethnic groups and about 3% of pupils speak English as an additional language.

Since the previous inspection most governors have changed and there have been several changes to staff. The new deputy headteacher joined the school this term.

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

The school has been through a difficult period, but the commitment of the headteacher, with growing support from senior leaders and staff, is producing steady improvement in pupils' attainment and achievement. From a start in the Early Years Foundation Stage that is below expectations for their age, pupils now reach closer to average levels in English, mathematics and science by the time they leave Year 6. Improvement has been quicker for younger pupils because older pupils have had more to catch up. The school's data demonstrates marked improvement for some pupils in 2009. For example, those pupils who have been in school the longest reached above average levels of attainment in mathematics. Pupils currently in Year 6 are on track to attain similarly improved levels. Those pupils who have no special educational needs are on track to reach above average levels in English in 2010.

Pupils enjoy school because they have good relationships with staff, describing them as 'cool', 'great' and 'fun'. Adults skilfully help new pupils to settle quickly and support pupils in challenging circumstances. A consistent approach successfully promotes good behaviour around school and in lessons. The school works painstakingly to promote satisfactory attendance. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and safe, as evidenced by the school achieving the national Healthy Schools accreditation in 2008. Pupils willingly embrace the responsibilities available to them. They have a good understanding of 'right' and 'wrong' and can apply these principles to wider social issues, such as protecting the environment. When given the opportunity to reflect on serious issues they do so willingly and sensibly, but these occasions are intermittent. Opportunities for their spiritual development and an understanding of cultural diversity, while satisfactory, are not sufficiently embedded in all subjects to promote good development in these areas. The recently improved curriculum is practical and relevant for pupils, contributing to their good level of enjoyment and satisfactory learning. Links between subjects that are intended to give pupils good opportunities to apply their skills in a variety of contexts are at an early stage of development.

Teaching is improving because assessment is more effective. Teachers now use this information routinely to modify work for different groups of pupils. Nevertheless, the extent to which all pupils are challenged remains inconsistent and pupils do not always receive clear guidance about how to improve their work. The new system for checking each pupil's progress throughout the school, introduced this term, gives teachers more detailed information. As a result, teachers have begun to fine tune their planning and increase their expectations. Middle managers are motivated to

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support school improvement, but their role and contribution to the leadership of the school is relatively under-developed. Opportunities to share good practice across the school to ensure consistently good teaching have begun, but are limited. Senior staff and governors have a realistic understanding of the school's strengths and priorities, but insufficient clarity and precision in the development plan means that school evaluation is not sufficiently rigorous. As a result, the school's judgements about its performance tend to reflect its aspirations rather than its current position, which have yet to be fully reached. These factors reflect the school's satisfactory capacity for further improvement. This capacity is also supported by steady improvements in pupils' attainment and achievement and the recently improved curriculum and tracking procedures. It is also supported by the new staff teams with new responsibilities, including the new team in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They share a commitment to continued improvement, but it is too soon for them to have had a full impact.

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.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching and learning from satisfactory to good throughout the school by:
 - encouraging teachers to use assessment information more consistently to challenge all groups of pupils
 - more routinely giving pupils clear guidance for the next steps in their learning
 - giving staff more opportunities to share and build on good practice.
- Enhance the effectiveness of senior and middle managers by:
 - revising the school improvement plan so that targets, and how their success will be measured, are consistently clear
 - clarifying middle managers' roles and increasing their responsibility for promoting school improvement and measuring success.
- Embed the recently revised curriculum by:
 - providing children in the early Years Foundation Stage with more consistently stimulating resources to support their independent learning
 - providing more opportunities for all pupils in Years 1 to 6 to consolidate and extend their learning through making links between subjects
 - including more regular opportunities to promote all pupils' understanding of cultural diversity.

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In several lessons observed, boys and girls of all abilities made good progress and on these occasions pupils were clearly enthused, but this level of progress and focused enthusiasm is not consistent. Significantly stronger learning was seen in mathematics, more so than in English and the school's own data indicates that this is fairly typical, largely because outcomes have been weaker in writing, especially for boys. In addition, in the past the proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 5 has been below national averages. The school has worked hard and increasingly effectively in the last year to tackle these issues. As a result, the proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 in mathematics and English increased in 2009 and the gap between girls and boys attainment in writing is decreasing.

In the lessons visited there was no discernible difference between boys' and girls' achievement. The school's focus on improving boys' writing is apparent in the choice of subject matter, successfully engaging their interest. For example, boys were learning as well as girls in a Year 6 class writing about the motivation of fantasy characters. Boys and girls of all abilities generally behave well in lessons. They are interested in the lesson content because teachers are secure in their knowledge and understanding of subjects. Pupils want to please adults because they enjoy positive relationships with teachers and teaching assistants. When they are challenged to consider moral issues, such as the nature of selfishness in a character study in literacy, they do so thoughtfully. They participate in assessing their own learning sensibly, but the usefulness of this varies because on occasions it is rushed. When given the opportunity to work collaboratively they remain focused on the set task.

Evidence from lessons supports the school's data that pupils with special educational needs and/ or disabilities make similar rates of progress as their peers because of the support teaching assistants provide. In the highly staffed special provision a very few pupils with complex needs make outstanding progress.

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

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 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	3

How effective is the provision?

The quality of provision is improving. For example, the recent focus on encouraging pupils to express their ideas verbally in preparation for writing is beginning to have a positive impact. Pupils express their ideas confidently about a range of topics. There is a well-structured programme for pupils' personal and social education, ensuring positive behaviour and attitudes, while also under-pinning their academic work effectively. The curriculum is planned systematically so that pupils build their knowledge and skills sequentially as they move through the school, and there is equal access for all.

Good teaching is characterised by well-pitched expectations of all groups of pupils. On these occasions a variety of strategies are used to successfully enthuse and involve all pupils, with a good level of challenge for higher attaining pupils. For example, all pupils made good strides in their understanding of plants in a Year 2 science lesson because they were actively involved from the beginning in knowing what they were aiming for, reading information on the interactive white board, and reviewing their progress periodically during the lesson. More able pupils recalled scientific vocabulary and used it to label a technical drawing of a plant. Similarly, in a Year 5 mathematics lesson, the most able pupils' skills were extended well by mentally rounding up numbers in their thousands, and recording them. The quality of feedback to pupils in books varies considerably, and their next steps for learning are not always made clear. The school rightly recognises the value of extending opportunities for staff to share best practice.

Teachers often make good use of technology to enhance learning and enjoyment for all groups of pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are helped mostly by support in class, rather than special programmes of work that focus specifically on their area of difficulty. There are few special events or programmes for gifted and talented pupils. The curriculum is enriched effectively by a variety of visits and visitors, which include a good focus on the culture and traditions of the local community. Strengths in safeguarding and pastoral care contribute to pupils' good behaviour and readiness to learn, and are appreciated by parents. Links with local businesses and the town council enrich an understanding of citizenship for those pupils involved.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher successfully motivates staff to strive for school improvement, so that expectations of pupils are increasing. He has a good understanding of the strengths and development areas within his team and increasingly deploys staff effectively to make the most of their strengths. The new deputy headteacher has made a good start in embedding further an ambitious drive for improvement. Senior colleagues have made a good start to developing their roles in the newly structured senior leadership team. Because so many systems and responsibilities are recent, it is too soon for their full impact to be felt and for all areas and outcomes of the school's work to be good. In particular, there is not enough opportunity at present for staff to share effective practice in order to lift the quality of teaching further. Nevertheless, improvements at the higher levels of attainment and to writing demonstrate that the school is now ensuring greater equality in opportunity for all pupils. There are several channels of communication that enable parents to be widely consulted on a range of issues. This enhances the school's understanding of individual pupils and so contributes effectively to their well-being, as does the school's links with other schools and pre-school settings.

Governors have a sound understanding of the challenges the school faces and where it is making most improvement. Governors monitor the school's work and key governors play a valuable role in setting priorities for further improvement. These systems are, as yet, still largely informal and targets in the school's improvement plan are not always sharp enough to help governors measure success. Governors and senior staff successfully ensure that safeguarding is effective, because, for example, good arrangements ensure that relevant training is up-to-date and policies are regularly reviewed. Consequently, staff have a high level of awareness regarding pupils' safety. Governors play an active part in both contributing to the school's secure understanding of the local community and enhancing positive links within it. These contribute effectively to pupils' learning. Promoting an understanding of wider communities is at an early stage of development.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and	3
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driving improvement Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
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

Within the overall satisfactory picture for this aspect of the school’s work, there are a number of strengths. Good relationships between adults and children, for example, help children to settle quickly and become ready to learn. There is a sound balance between activities led by adults and those initiated by children, which contributes to children becoming increasingly purposeful and selective. There are examples of good teaching and learning in adult led sessions, but resources are not always sufficiently stimulating to sustain a good level of learning for children who are working independently. The school recognises that in the recent past assessment was not always accurate, and this has improved very recently. Currently, school data indicates that overall satisfactory progress means that when children join Year 1, most typically their attainment is still below expected levels in elements of early literacy, mathematical and creative skills.

While much of the teaching shows a good understanding of how children at this age learn best, some tends to over-direct children’s activity and their thinking. Overall, there is a good emphasis on promoting children’s personal, social and emotional development. Recent assessment information indicates that children make good progress in this area, which prepares them well for the next stage of their schooling. Children’s welfare is paramount. They are kept safe in school and transitions into nursery, from nursery and into Year 1 are generally smooth. The recently appointed manager of the Early Years Foundation Stage has made a sound start to co-ordinating this provision.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	3

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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Most of the responses from parents and carers were entirely supportive of the school's work. The percentage of parents who felt that their child enjoyed school was particularly high, this was reflected too in comments that pupils made and in their responses as observed by inspectors. The parents' views that their children are safe in school, reflects the school's good safeguarding procedures. A very few parents expressed concerns about site security, but inspectors observed a good level of staff presence when pupils moved around the site. A few parents did not feel well-informed about their child's progress and would welcome more opportunities to receive information. Evidence from the inspection indicates that the school provides a good level of information to parents and works hard to maintain regular and open dialogue with families.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Clackclose 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 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 82 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 271 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	54	66	27	33	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	44	54	34	41	4	5	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	34	42	35	43	9	11	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	33	40	41	50	2	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	45	55	33	40	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	34	41	38	46	6	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	41	50	37	45	2	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)	34	41	37	45	2	2	2	2
The school meets my child’s particular needs	37	46	38	47	1	1	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	34	41	35	43	9	11	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	29	35	45	55	4	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	39	48	37	45	3	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	44	45	34	41	3	4	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 all 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

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 pupils' 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.

16 September 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Clackclose Primary School, Downham Market PE38 9PF

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when we visited your school recently. A particular thank you goes to those pupils who shared pieces of work they were proud of. We enjoyed visiting your lessons, seeing your work, looking at your books and hearing your ideas. We were particularly impressed with the idea that to make the school even better, you would stop the teachers eating chocolate! Here are some of the things we found.

- You are making the progress you should in your work.
- Your standard of work in these subjects is improving and each year more of you reach higher levels and make better progress.
- You told us that you mostly enjoy your lessons and like your teachers.
- You behave well in lessons and around school.
- You have a good understanding about making safe and healthy choices.
- The school staff take good care of you, which helps you to feel safe.
- When you are given responsibilities you accept them willingly and sensibly.
- Your school is doing what it should to help you learn and all the staff and governors are working hard to make it even better.

To help everyone make the school even better we have suggested that the most important things to do next are these.

- To make sure that everyone is challenged as much as possible in lessons, that teachers make clear to you exactly what you need to do to improve your work and that they share their best ideas with each other more.
- To make sure that everyone who runs your school is very clear about what they are doing to improve it, and how they will know what has worked well.
- To make sure there are even more interesting links between subjects, more really fun things for the youngest children to work with, and more times when you learn about beliefs, customs and cultures that may be different from your own.

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We wish you every success in the future.

Yours faithfully
Jill Bavin
Lead Inspector

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