

Mile Cross Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134958
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	319592
Inspection dates	11–12 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Roderick Passant

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	395
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Jane Lamb
Headteacher	Mr Stuart Allen
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Braiser Road Norwich Norfolk NR3 2QU
Telephone number	01603 425186
Fax number	

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This new school is larger than average and has been operating for one year. It moved into new buildings two days prior to the inspection. Most of the pupils are from the immediate vicinity. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is high. There is a small number from minority ethnic backgrounds and a few who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is high as is the number of pupils who have statements detailing their educational needs. The school has a learning support centre for pupils with moderate learning and social, emotional and behaviour difficulties. Pupils attending the centre come from wider afield. The school operates a nursery. It also provides additional lunchtime care for nursery children and an after-school club. Neither of these were in operation in the first week of school. The knowledge and skills, particularly in language and communication of many children starting nursery, are well below those normally seen in children of this age.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This new school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. It has quickly established significant strengths by putting in place essential building blocks to tackle a legacy of underachievement and low standards, particularly of its older pupils. The school's leadership has the necessary good skills to take the school forward, building on its established strengths and raising standards.

The school is a harmonious community where pupils feel safe and valued. The parents overwhelmingly support it. There is a very positive ethos in lessons and around the school, which stems from the school's established core values. Pupils' personal development is good. An outstanding feature of the school is the welfare, guidance and support it gives to pupils. This bedrock of support is a crucial feature of this school, not only for those who have specific learning difficulties but others too who face difficult and challenging circumstances. Key workers work hard and effectively with pupils and parents to ease their anxieties while they adjust to school routines and expectations, and to provide effective learning support. Pupils see the adults in school as 'kind' and relationships between staff and pupils are excellent. The result is that pupils enjoy school.

There is strong teamwork and professionalism amongst staff, which means that they think carefully about what they are doing, share skills and are open to suggestions. Raising standards and achievement is a whole-school focus with all staff accountable for their pupils' improvement. Standards in Year 6 in 2008, the school's first year, were very low in English, mathematics and to a lesser extent, science. There are clear signs of improvement; current standards are better, although still well below average and there is still much to do. In relation to pupils' prior attainment, their achievements are satisfactory. The quality of teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Staff work particularly hard to overcome pupils' lack of self-belief and academic confidence, manifested in pupils' tentative, muted answers and limited oral presentation skills. Many pupils also lack independent learning skills and do not see themselves as partners in the learning process but instead rely on adults. Staff work hard to address these issues for such pupils. However, those pupils who are more secure in their learning and higher attainers are not progressing as well as they could because they are not sufficiently challenged.

The school has emerged from a particularly turbulent and difficult period with morale high, strong teamwork, established routines that all uphold consistently, the support of parents, and a clear positive ethos. This is testimony to the effectiveness of the school's leadership team and the commitment of all staff. The sustained focus on achievement and recognition of the importance of establishing an effective Early Years provision as a key element in this, coupled with improving basic skills, is leading to pupils' improved progress. This is helped further by the professional development that has taken place over the year to improve teaching and assessment. The school has effective monitoring systems in place to enable better planning of provision and has an accurate evaluation of the school's current strengths and weaknesses. Members of the senior leadership team have complementary skills and a clear vision for the school's development. The potential for further improvement is good.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make good progress because of the good teaching and learning opportunities they receive. By the end of the Reception Year, the majority of children reach the expected level of development in all areas of learning except in writing skills. Children are very happy and secure. The very strong focus on the development of personal and social skills helps children understand their feelings so that, by the time they start Year 1, behaviour is excellent and attitudes to learning are good. All adults work closely together to plan and facilitate a varied curriculum. Planning has clear objectives and targets are in line with the new framework. This means that adults interact well with children during child-initiated and adult-led tasks, extending children's thinking and fostering their independence. The new accommodation is spacious, providing a stimulating and attractive environment, although the outside area lacks shade. There is a good balance of indoor and outdoor activities. All members of staff contribute to effective assessment procedures that monitor and measure children's progress. There are good links with parents, including home visits and careful induction of children. Staff value and respect each other's contribution and experience. Leadership is good with careful evaluation of how to enrich the provision even further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards, particularly in basic skills in mathematics, reading and writing.
- Provide rich contexts for pupils to develop their speaking skills and to rehearse and share their ideas and thus sharpen their thinking and increase their confidence.
- Enable pupils to become independent, take more responsibility for their learning and to see themselves more as partners in their learning in lessons.
- Improve teaching quality further, particularly to ensure that potentially higher attaining pupils are challenged sufficiently.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged to be satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next Section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards, particularly of the older pupils are well below average. The school was disappointed with the provisional results of the latest Year 6 tests which were low in English, mathematics and science, and below the school's target. However, current standards in Year 6 are better; achievement is currently satisfactory and improving. Many pupils made good progress last year, particularly in mathematics and reading, including pupils who have specific difficulties or have English as an additional language. Children are now receiving a good start to their education and this means that younger pupils are much closer to the expectations for their age. For some older pupils however, gains are currently hard won because the school is spending much time tackling gaps in pupils' prior knowledge and skills and building their confidence. The school has introduced phonics across the school and is reinforcing early mathematical skills in order to tackle this. The school is particularly sensitive and supportive to those pupils experiencing specific learning difficulties or who have personal problems that hinder learning. For some pupils, for example, learning to control their emotions or maintaining a positive attitude to school represents significant achievement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school succeeds in making pupils feel valued. Pupils have a good understanding of right and wrong. Behaviour is extremely good because all staff are consistent in their high expectations and the way they reinforce good behaviour positively through praise. Pupils report that there is little if any bullying. They are confident that they could approach an adult if they had a problem and that the headteacher would 'sort it out.' There are very few racist incidents. Any form of bullying is taken very seriously by the school and followed up appropriately. Attendance is satisfactory. Lessons, enrichment activities and themed events provide good contexts for developing pupils' social skills and extending their view of the world. These have a beneficial impact on pupils. Pupils have a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe and make a good contribution to their school and the local community. They take their various responsibilities seriously and have opportunities to show enterprise. Although skills are currently low, pupils' positive attitudes to school and strong personal development ensure that their preparation for future economic well-being is satisfactory. The school emphasises the importance of a healthy lifestyle although not all pupils adopt these principles. Many pupils lack the skills to work independently.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teaching has improved because of the support and guidance that teachers receive. Classrooms have a very positive feel because teachers are skilled in classroom organisation, have very good relationships with the pupils and are enthusiastic and encouraging. Pupils are cooperative, attentive and keen to learn. Even so, in many lessons, primarily in Years 3 to 6, where there is a very wide range of ability, pupils are not yet progressing fast enough to enable them to reach the expected standards for their age. This is because, as a result of past underachievement, many pupils have gaps in their basic literacy and numeracy skills or lack sufficient confidence to cope with the levels of work expected for their age. Teachers take care to address these issues. This is effective for most pupils, but by no means all. A significant number of more able pupils are not yet sufficiently challenged to enable them to make the progress of which they are capable if they worked more independently. Typically, they spend too much time listening to teachers, at the expense of being required to use their knowledge and skills to participate more actively in their own learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum provision for fostering pupils' personal development is currently a stronger feature than the fostering of academic achievement. There are good opportunities for enrichment and enjoyment because staff use visits to museums, activity and residential centres and after school clubs to provide memorable learning experiences. External visitors and links with other agencies provide added interest and expertise. This enrichment, along with the strong emphasis on personal, social and health education, positively influences pupils' outlook on life, helps them to be more receptive to learning and creates their very positive attitudes to school. The school effectively targets specific groups of pupils who need additional support and, by

reinforcing earlier learning, is working to ensure that pupils have a firmer foundation on which to build. The school is at an early stage of developing a creative approach to curriculum planning to develop links between subjects and provide different contexts to reinforce and use pupils' literacy and numeracy skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school's provision for pupils' pastoral care is outstanding. Staff responsibilities and roles are clear and relationships with pupils are excellent. Pupils feel included, secure and valued, enabling them to make good progress in their personal development. The school has developed strong links with a wide variety of organisations to support pupils' needs, which it uses to very good effect. It works hard, and with increasing success, to enlist the support of parents and the local community in promoting pupils' learning. The school gives a high priority to attendance, and rates are much improved. Systems for child protection and procedures for safeguarding pupils' health and safety are comprehensive. Arrangements for monitoring pupils' academic progress are thorough and effective, exceptionally so for the many pupils needing a lot of extra help and support.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The good quality and clear vision of the school's leadership is reflected in the fact that the school has established a firm foundation on which it can build. It ensures that the school encourages pupils' enjoyment of school through the activities it provides. It has also established high quality welfare, guidance and support for all pupils, but particularly for those with learning or personal difficulties in order to foster pupils' self-esteem and development. The leadership team is acutely aware of the priority to raise academic achievement and the role of all staff in this. Pupils' progress is monitored carefully and particular groups are identified for additional support. In the school's first year, there has been an understandable focus on monitoring the quality of teaching. Staff development is a high priority and has helped to raise achievement. School priorities are well-founded but the success criteria in the school's development plan are not yet clear enough to enable effective evaluation of progress. Governance is satisfactory. Governors have drawn up an improvement plan and receive the information they need to make strategic decisions. The move into the new building at the heart of the community - and staff and pupils' evident pride in it and its associated resources - provide a powerful added impetus to the leadership's good capacity to move it forward.

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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?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

15 September 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Mile Cross Primary, Norwich NR3 2QU

Thank you making me so welcome in your school. I enjoyed my stay very much. After so much change, it must be a relief to you all to be in your new building. You are clearly very proud of it. My particular thanks go to those Year 6 pupils who gave up some of their lunchtime to talk to my colleague and me.

This new school has come a long way quickly. It currently provides you with a sound education but is clearly improving because it has already established some strong features. The school looks after you extremely well. I agree with you that teachers are kind and helpful. It is also clear from the questionnaires that parents completed that you enjoy school because of the many exciting trips and things that you do. You also said that you feel safe and were confident to tell an adult if you had a problem and that your headteacher, Mr Allen, would sort it out. One of the most impressive things about the school is you. I thought your behaviour in and around the school was excellent. The school is helping you to develop as young people well. Your school is a very friendly place and you have clearly taken the school's values of 'respect' and 'caring for others' to heart.

The school is working hard to help you improve the standards you reach in all subjects. You have skilled teachers. Many of you made good progress last year, particularly in mathematics and reading. Overall, you are making steady progress. I have asked Mr Allen to work with the teachers to help you develop your learning skills so that you can achieve well and for some of you to catch up. I also asked him to ensure that teachers give you plenty of opportunities to talk together so that you share and develop your ideas. I think that you are a bit too dependent on the teachers sometimes and you could take more responsibility for your learning. Learning is a partnership and you need to bring your ideas to the lesson or read a book without being told or take that extra effort with your PowerPoint presentation. At the moment, teachers are sometimes working harder than you are! Lastly, I asked Mr Allen to make sure that those of you who find some topics quite easy are really challenged to do your best.

Sincere good wishes for your future school careers.

Roderick Passant

Lead inspector