

Firside Junior School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	120901
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	380129
Inspection dates	13–14 March 2012
Lead inspector	Karen Heath

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	279
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jennie Reynolds
Headteacher	Simon Fisher
Date of previous school inspection	17 June 2009
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Age group	7–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Karen Heath

Additional inspector

Graham Stephens

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Frances Le Pla

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. In planning the inspection inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). Inspectors visited 18 lessons, taught by eight teachers. Some pupils shared their work with inspectors and read aloud to them. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of staff and a representative of the governing body. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation including the school development plan, records that track pupils' progress and attainment, and the school's own monitoring and evaluation records. In addition, they looked at records of attendance and arrangements to secure pupils' health and safety. Inspectors analysed responses in the 91 inspection questionnaires returned by parents and carers. They also analysed the responses to those questionnaires returned by staff and pupils.

Information about the school

Firside Junior School is larger than the average-sized primary school. Pupils are admitted from two local infant schools, live within the immediate locality and the majority come from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than the national average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is also below the national average as is the proportion who have a statement of special educational needs. The majority of those with special educational needs have either moderate or specific learning difficulties while some others have speech and language needs. In 2011 the school met the government's current floor standards, the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment.

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	4
Achievement of pupils	4
Quality of teaching	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- In accordance with section 13(3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the progress made by some groups of pupils and the quality of teaching.
- The school is not satisfactory because too few pupils are making the progress they should. Pupils’ achievement is inadequate. Although some groups of pupils, notably the more able, are making expected gains, too many others are not progressing as quickly as they should by the time they leave the school. Pupils’ attainment is broadly average by the end of Year 6 but this masks inadequate progress for some groups of pupils. Middle-attaining pupils, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs do not attain well enough.
- The school is tackling underperformance, and has raised the attainment of more-able pupils, improved the progress made by some other groups and has increased their interest in reading and writing but some significant weaknesses remain.
- The quality of teaching is inadequate. The variation in pupils’ progress is the result of too many lessons that do not cater well enough for pupils’ different abilities. Sometimes pupils repeat work rather than being moved on to new and challenging learning. In addition, teachers’ planning for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is not good enough because it does not focus specifically on meeting their individual needs.
- Behaviour and safety are satisfactory. Pupils are polite and courteous and play well together in the playground; they feel safe and free from bullying. In most lessons the pupils are attentive and concentrate on their work.

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- The school is overcoming difficulties arising from changes in staffing responsibilities. Improved leadership in English has heightened the focus on reading, resulting in better progress. Senior leaders have also improved the quality of teaching and learning for more-able pupils so they are now attaining more highly.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress and raise attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - ensuring that lesson activities build effectively on pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding
 - making full use of assessment information when lessons are being planned to ensure that all groups of pupils are challenged consistently.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - providing learning tasks which are well matched to pupils' abilities so that they are motivated, enthusiastic and participate wholeheartedly in lessons
 - extending the range of practical activities for pupils
 - ensuring that planning for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs focuses precisely on their individual needs and helps them to make good progress
 - ensuring that teachers' marking identifies precisely how pupils can improve their work.
- Improve the effectiveness of leaders and managers by:
 - extending the role of subject leaders so that they focus sharply on evaluating the impact of teaching on pupils' progress
 - ensuring that the monitoring and evaluation of provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is focused on measuring its impact on their learning and progress
 - ensuring that governors are fully involved in evaluating the school's performance, by challenging and supporting developments and checking the impact of activities on pupils' progress.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils achievement is inadequate because not all groups of pupils make sufficient progress. Pupils' attainment at the start of Year 3 is broadly average. A minority of pupils enter Firside with above-average attainment and an increasing proportion of these pupils make expected progress by the end of Year 6. However, those with average prior attainment do not make enough progress so their achievement is inadequate. In addition, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs also make inadequate progress because work is not planned carefully to meet their

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needs. As a result, they are too heavily dependent on adult support.

There is considerable variation in the progress made by different groups of pupils in English and mathematics. In some lessons, pupils tackle challenging work by confidently adding and subtracting fractions and analysing the properties of shapes. These pupils attain appropriately for their age. However, in other classes, pupils are required to practise skills which they have already mastered and, consequently, they do not make sufficient progress. Writing in pupils' books shows that pupils of all ages are developing a better grasp of sentence structure and know about different features of writing such as connectives and interesting ways to start sentences. However, pupils are not always clear about how to use this knowledge to good effect or what they need to do to improve their writing.

The school has successfully focused on improving pupils' reading skills and stimulating boys' interest in books. As a result, pupils' attainment in reading, although broadly average by the end of Year 6, is rising throughout the school. Pupils' positive attitudes and increased interest were particularly evident during the school's book day when pupils enjoyed dressing up as story book characters. This event also promoted pupils' cultural and social development well. When pupils read to inspectors they showed good levels of fluency and enjoyment. Some pupils have been inspired to read books that have been recommended by their teachers who have shared their interests in reading and demonstrated good reading habits.

The large majority of parents and carers feel that their child makes good progress at school but these views do not accord with inspection findings.

Quality of teaching

Overall, teaching is inadequate. Although much of the day-to-day teaching is satisfactory and some is good, too many lessons include activities that do not enable all groups of pupils to make satisfactory progress over time. Pupils' progress accelerates towards the end of Key Stage 2 because the teaching of the older pupils is stronger. However, in some lessons, particularly for younger pupils, tasks are not sufficiently well matched to their abilities. Whole-class teaching and activities are sometimes pitched at one level so that some pupils mark time while others find tasks too difficult. Some younger pupils are not given enough experience of practical approaches to learning, such as working in groups or using resources which they can handle. In lessons where pupils make good progress, teachers have high expectations of pupils of all abilities and provide opportunities for them to work together. For example, when writing about dinosaurs or being interviewed as an 'expert' on dragons, pupils were motivated and worked together effectively in groups. Teachers use information and communication technology effectively to demonstrate teaching points.

Inspectors noted in some lessons, and pupils' books, that work which pupils had already covered was being repeated. In addition, when teachers mark pupils' work, misconceptions or errors are not routinely corrected or used to plan the next steps in

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their learning. Teachers do not routinely involve pupils in assessing how well they have done in order to help them gain a better understanding of how to improve.

Relationships between teachers and pupils are positive and promote pupils' moral and social development satisfactorily. Although most parents and carers feel the teaching is good, one parent stated, 'I feel my child would achieve more if given more focused teaching on her individual needs'. Evidence from the inspection supports the view that pupils' individual needs are not always sufficiently taken into account when lessons are being planned.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory. The school is a safe and orderly place for pupils to learn. Pupils' attendance is above average and continues to improve. This illustrates well the impact of the school's successful drive to reduce absence. Pupils are welcoming to visitors and show respect to each other and adults. They cooperate well when they have free time and return to class in a disciplined and orderly manner. They have a thorough understanding of different types of bullying and feel that any bullying is dealt with well by the school, describing to inspectors the procedure the school adopts in such cases. Pupils have a well-developed awareness of their own safety and how to help others to stay safe, including when using the internet.

The majority of parents, carers and pupils think that behaviour both in and out of lessons is good. Inspection evidence shows that pupils' attitudes in class are positive. They are generally well behaved, concentrate on their work and most are keen to answer teachers' questions. Inspectors did not see any behaviour which disrupted the learning of others. Pupils were occasionally inattentive when teachers spent too much time talking without providing sufficient opportunities for pupils to be actively and wholeheartedly involved in the lesson or to work together.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are satisfactory because the positive impact of actions taken by leaders and managers demonstrates that they have the capacity to improve the school further. There are clear plans to improve the quality of teaching and they are beginning to have a positive effect. The coaching system is bringing a greater consistency of approach and has strengthened the teaching for older pupils. The headteacher observes lessons regularly and gives helpful feedback. This supports, in particular, less-experienced staff to improve the quality of their teaching. However, some lesson monitoring focuses too much on pupils' engagement without sharp evaluation of the impact of the teaching on the progress of different groups of pupils. The governing body has been over-reliant on information supplied by the headteacher so have not always held the school to account by verifying judgements through their own monitoring. The school has thorough and effective procedures to safeguard children.

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The change of several subject leaders since the school's previous inspection has meant that the leadership of English and special educational needs has lacked continuity or a clear focus on improving pupils' progress. Although the monitoring role of current subject leaders is not fully established, new leaders are now tackling the school's weaknesses. Improvements are evident, for example, in the increasing progress that pupils are making in reading and writing. Introducing the teaching of phonics (the link between sounds and letters) has helped less-able readers to improve their skills. Targets for writing have improved the way pupils structure their sentences. These effective actions by leaders have led to a greater proportion pupils achieving more highly in writing and reading across the school. Nevertheless, differences in the progress made by different groups of pupils show that leaders and managers are not promoting equality of opportunity well enough. The school is now focusing on supporting the younger pupils in strengthening their basic skills in mathematics. The newly appointed special educational needs coordinator rightly recognises the need to monitor more effectively the quality of individual education plans and their use in supporting teachers to make improved provision and outcomes for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.

Although leaders and managers have begun to develop the curriculum it does not meet the academic needs of pupils in all lessons. However, the school promotes satisfactorily the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through a range of extra-curricular activities, including sports and music, which pupils enjoy. Pupils are learning about different cultures and this is helping them to develop an appreciation of the needs of other pupils, partly through links established with a school in Uganda. During an assembly used to launch book week, pupils had time to reflect on provision in their own school when compared with pupils in Magogo school who have limited access to books.

Nearly all parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire said they were happy with the school and the care it provides for their child. Only a few commented that they felt their child could make better progress. Evidence from the inspection confirms the view that pupils should be making better progress and achieving much more.

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



15 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Firside Junior School, Norwich, NR6 5NF

Thank you for making the inspection team so welcome and taking time to share your interest in reading and to talk to us about your work. You were very polite and courteous. We could see how much you and your teachers enjoyed dressing up as characters from stories on book day. We are sure Magogo School in Uganda will appreciate the proceeds from your fund-raising activities.

We are pleased that you enjoy your time at Firside, feel safe in school and are keen to take part in all the opportunities which the school offers. However we think that your school needs to improve some things urgently so we have given it a notice to improve. Here are the reasons for this.

- Many of you do not make as much progress as you should.
- Many of you do not learn as well as you should in lessons so we have asked the teachers to make sure that activities build on what you already know and can do.
- We would like the teachers, when marking your books, to give you clear guidance so you know how to do even better.
- Some of you receive extra support to help you learn and we have asked that teachers give you just the right amount of help in lessons.
- We have asked the governors to check in more detail what the school does well and what is required to ensure it improves further.

We noticed that sometimes when teachers ask you questions some of you were reluctant to answer. You can all help by participating more in lessons, so as you grow up you become independent learners. The inspection team is confident that your school can improve and we wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Karen Heath
Lead inspector

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