

Firside Junior School

Middleton's Lane, Hellesdon, Norwich, NR6 5NF

Inspection dates 16–17 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The executive headteacher and head of school provide good quality leadership. They are driving improvements in teaching and tackling underachievement effectively.
- Assessment information and pupils' work show that the current Year 6 pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils achieve well because of good teaching and teachers' high expectations in most classes. Pupils are expected to do the best they can and respond well to the challenges teachers provide.
- Behaviour and safety are good. Pupils get on well together and with their teachers and value the feedback that teachers give them. Pupils are keen to learn and behaviour is good in lessons, when moving between lessons and at break times.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and pupils are well-prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Governors have been instrumental in taking decisive action to ensure that this is a good school. They provide an increasingly good degree of challenge which promotes better teaching and higher standards across the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Guidance given in teachers' marking and feedback is not always targeted well enough on how pupils can improve.
- In some classes, teachers' expectations of the less-able pupils are not high enough.
- Teaching assistants are not always used to best effect in some lessons to promote pupils' learning.
- Middle leaders are not yet playing a key role in raising achievement across the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 16 lessons, including several that were jointly observed with the executive headteacher and head of school.
- Discussions were held with the executive headteacher, head of school, the Chair of the Governing Body, two additional governors, a representative of the local authority, senior leaders, staff, groups of pupils and parents.
- Inspectors took account of the 45 responses to the Parent View online questionnaire and the 20 responses from the staff questionnaire distributed for the inspection.
- Inspectors examined a range of evidence, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan, the system to track pupils' progress, policies and records relating to behaviour and attendance. They also looked at records of the monitoring of teaching by senior staff, performance management information, safeguarding documentation, reports from external personnel and samples of pupils' work.

Inspection team

Ruth Brock, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Marianick Ellender-Gelé	Her Majesty's Inspector
James Fuller	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized junior school and is situated in the northern part of Norwich.
- The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. Most pupils are admitted from the two local infant schools and live within the immediate locality.
- The school is housed in the original secondary school building for Hellesdon, which was built in 1937.
- The school was subsequently changed into a middle school and was then restructured into a junior school in 2007, as part of the Norfolk reorganisation programme.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for the pupil premium (which is additional government funding used to support pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after) is below the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below the national average.
- In September 2014, the headteacher from the local Hellesdon High Academy was seconded to lead as executive headteacher of the school. A head of school and heads of year were subsequently appointed.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school has recently set up a 'Rainbow Room' to help meet the needs of its disabled pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make learning outstanding by ensuring that teachers:
 - make the best use of teaching assistants in accelerating pupils' progress
 - always have the highest expectations of what all pupils can achieve, particularly the less able
 - provide clear guidance to pupils on how they can improve their work so that pupils understand their mistakes, and ensure they make the necessary changes.
- Improve the effectiveness of middle leaders by ensuring that:
 - year group leaders and subject leaders play a key role in raising standards across the whole school
 - leaders check the quality of teaching, have a clear overview of standards and act swiftly to bring about necessary improvements.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The executive headteacher and head of school provide strong, enthusiastic leadership. Their evaluation of the school's effectiveness is concise and provides an accurate picture of strengths and weaknesses, which link closely to the detailed school improvement and development plan.
- Since September 2014 there have been considerable improvements. There is strong leadership of teaching. High aspirations have been clearly communicated to staff, who have challenging targets and understand that they are accountable for the progress of all pupils in their class. However, leaders do not always ensure that all teachers have the highest expectations of the less-able pupils.
- Middle leaders, such as year group leaders, staff responsible for key subjects and special educational needs, know their roles well. They are working hard to improve standards and have improved their monitoring of pupils' work and progress. However, leaders are not always given sufficient time to intervene swiftly or challenge colleagues to improve their practice further.
- The school's performance tracking information is accurately recording pupils' attainment and progress across the school. This information indicates that better progress has been made this year and standards in reading, writing and mathematics are now higher. This shows that leaders' focus on improving teaching is having a positive impact on pupils' achievement.
- Senior leaders make accurate assessments of teaching and learning. The information that leaders glean from visits to lessons, checks on pupils' work in books and tracking assessment combines to give a clear picture of teaching and learning over time. This enables leaders to act decisively and quickly to address any arising concerns, which they have done successfully. These processes are now carefully linked to robust performance management, based on teachers' and pupils' performance.
- The curriculum includes a good range of subjects. Leaders maintain a daily emphasis on English and mathematics but recognise that some areas of the curriculum require more attention, for example art, design and technology and geography. Extra-curricular activities are both popular and well attended. An excellent range of visits, such as to the Theatre Royal to see the opera, 'La Bohème', provides pupils with extremely worthwhile experiences linked directly to what they are studying. The curriculum is organised to ensure that equality of opportunity is provided for all and that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The overwhelming majority of parents value the efforts of the school to respond to their queries and keep them informed about their child's progress and behaviour. The Parent View online questionnaire responses are positive about aspects of school life. Parents seen during the inspection were very complimentary about changes that have been initiated since September 2014 and that pupils 'get the right support they need'. The many parents of children who are due to start at the school in the autumn term and who visited during the week or the inspection, told inspectors that they had selected this school as their first choice.
- Pupil premium funding is spent effectively, leading this year to a narrowing of achievement gaps between disadvantaged pupils and their peers. Funding is appropriately prioritised and leaders could cite several activities that had benefited individual pupils, including buying each pupil a reading book from the Norfolk Children's Book Centre.
- The primary school sport funding is used well to raise participation rates and increase alternative sporting provision, for example, fitness and Zumba classes. Pupils were keen to say how well they are doing when competing with other schools and how, at the area sports day, they hoped 'to win again this year'.
- Arrangements to keep pupils safe are a strength of the school. Procedures and policies meet requirements and pupils' welfare has a high priority.
- Well-established links with the local secondary academy, to which most pupils transfer, enable pupils to

move on with confidence to the next stage of their education. The school makes good use of the Year 2 performance information and pupils have a good start to their junior education in Year 3.

- Staff and leaders benefit from good links with other local schools, including the secondary academy. Work with various external experts, including a local leader of education and the local authority, has had a positive impact on raising pupils' achievement and extending staff expertise.
- The school's over-riding ethos of 'Become the Best We Can' supports well pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils work as playground sports leaders and organise fun activities at lunchtimes. Year 5 and Year 6 pupils are also very pleased with their separate, designated areas. They say 'they give us freedom as we get older and we feel special'.
- Through religious education and other lessons, pupils learn about other faiths and cultures. As a result they know how important it is to get on well together without any form of discrimination or prejudice. The school actively encourages the promotion of British values and is effective at helping pupils to understand what these are and how they relate to their own lives. For example, pupils learn about the way democracy works through holding their own school elections and producing their own manifestos.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors know the history of the school very well and are playing a significant and effective role in its development. They made the decision to appoint an executive headteacher for a two-year secondment knowing that this was the right way forward for the school at this time. They appreciate how much the school has improved, its strengths and weaknesses, and what needs to be done to progress towards becoming an outstanding school.
 - Governors receive good, detailed information on how far the school's use of additional funding is helping to raise disadvantaged pupils' achievement, and increasing participation in sport. Governors review information relating to the management of teachers' performance and understand that pay is linked to success in teaching and learning. They receive regular reports on the quality of teaching and now feel they have good, reliable information about pupils' performance. They know what the school is doing to tackle any underperformance.
 - Minutes of governing body meetings demonstrate that governors challenge leaders and monitor the impact of their improvement work.
 - Governors ensure that procedures to keep pupils safe are effective and meet requirements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils line up sensibly for the beginning of the day, assembly and lunchtime. They move between lessons quickly and quietly.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. As a result attendance is above average, including for those pupils who are disadvantaged or who have special educational needs or disabilities.
- Most pupils are eager to learn, and speak about their school with positivity and pride. Many represent the school in sporting competitions and other events.
- In the vast majority of lessons, pupils work hard and challenge themselves using the school's 'bronze, silver and gold' challenge system. Pupils like this and say they 'choose the level to work harder'. Occasionally, pupils' interest fades and a few do not persevere as they should without adult guidance.
- Pupils are courteous and polite to both their peers and adults. Disruption is minimal and pupils listen attentively to what they are asked to do and respond appropriately. Pupils are considerate of each-other when working in pairs or small groups and make good suggestions.
- There have been no permanent exclusions. The school's behaviour log confirms parents' and pupils' views about how behaviour has improved immeasurably since September 2014.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. All parents who offered a view stated that their children feel safe and are well looked after. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, particularly when using the internet, including social networking sites.
- Pupils are very aware of the different types of bullying. They say there are very few incidents and that leaders deal with them quickly and effectively when they do occur. The school has also used drama and visiting theatre groups to learn about anti-bullying techniques. There are, however, a few incidents of name-calling which leaders are aware of and respond to swiftly.
- The systems for checking and recording safeguarding matters are robustly monitored. All appropriate checks are made to assess risk in aspects of school life and any necessary actions are carried out rigorously.

The quality of teaching is good

- Leaders' relentless focus on improving teaching has had a positive impact on pupils' learning and achievement. Teaching is enabling pupils to make good progress, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teachers typically establish good and effective relationships with the pupils in their class or group and manage them well. They have high expectations of pupils to do the very best they can and the large majority of pupils respond well to the challenge.
- The teaching of grammar, punctuation and spelling has been strengthened. Pupils refer to the school's 'I Spaced' guidance displayed in all classrooms. Its effective use is reflected in pupils' work and teachers' corrections of basic errors in pupils' books.
- Teachers develop speaking and listening well. Most encourage pupils to discuss their work and this promotes their progress, particularly in English lessons. However, in some subjects, progress is less rapid because there is limited discussion about how to solve problems.
- In mathematics, teachers use explanations and demonstration effectively to develop pupils' understanding of calculation and mathematical operations. The use and application of number is taught particularly well across the school as is the use of an approach to assist in solving problems.
- In most cases, teachers' effective planning helps to ensure that learning activities are suitably challenging for different groups of pupils. Teachers use the school's system of 'convince me' effectively. As a result, pupils are eager to get started on their work and make good gains in their knowledge and understanding. This is not always the case for less-able pupils in some lessons.
- Teaching assistants usually work effectively to provide additional support or challenge within the classroom to individual pupils who need it. Teaching assistants sometimes organise additional activities, such as the successful 'Fiesta' cooking day which helped pupils to develop their social and number skills. At times, however, teachers do not liaise effectively with teaching assistants to ensure the work pupils complete is sufficiently demanding. This means that some make slower progress than they could.
- The teaching of disabled pupils is good. The recent addition of the 'Rainbow Room' is clearly paying dividends. Pupils are benefiting from a dedicated space which enables them to learn in an environment that can quickly respond to their needs.
- Pupils know how well they are doing and are keen to meet their targets. Teachers' marking of work is effective in providing feedback. They praise good work and correct basic errors. Many teachers also challenge pupils to do better in their written work. However, this is not yet consistent across the school. As a consequence, pupils do not always know what it is they need to do to improve their work.
- Occasionally, the work is not set at the right level of difficulty for the less-able pupils. When this happens, pupils' learning slows down and some pupils can become distracted.

- The overwhelming majority of pupils present their work well. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' handwriting and model these in their own writing so that pupils can see the standard they are working towards.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Most year groups enter Year 3 with above-average attainment. Pupils at the school get a good start to their junior education and make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Attainment by the end of Year 6 in 2014 was above average in reading, writing, mathematics and grammar, punctuation and spelling. However, the progress these pupils made in Key Stage 2 was not good enough. Current pupils make good progress and the school's own assessment information, pupils' books and observed lessons show that progress has increased markedly.
- In 2014, the proportions of pupils who attained the higher levels by the end of Year 6 were above national averages. However, those who might have attained level 6 did not. Improvements to teaching and timely intervention mean that many more pupils are on course to achieve Level 6 in both English and mathematics this year.
- The proportion of pupils making expected and above expected progress from their different starting points now compares favourably with the national average. This is because the school has focused its attention on accelerating the progress of all groups of pupils, particularly the most able.
- The attainment of disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 in 2014 was at least as good as other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. Compared with other pupils in the school, the gaps in attainment for disadvantaged pupils were half a term behind in reading and mathematics and two terms behind in writing. Current assessment data for disadvantaged pupils in Years 3 and 6 shows that they are making good progress. In the current Year 4 and Year 5, progress for disadvantaged pupils is not quite as good.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is good. This is because the school acts swiftly to tailor programmes of support to meet their needs. Disabled pupils, in particular, benefit from the support they receive in the recently established 'Rainbow Room'.
- Pupils generally make good progress in developing speaking and listening skills. This is because most teachers enable pupils to discuss their work, and how they can improve it, with adults and each-other. After one such discussion about the pros and cons of graffiti, the agreement among one group was that 'expression is good but not necessarily everything should be made public'.
- Reading is taught well and pupils say they enjoy reading a variety of books, particularly since the new reading system was introduced. Those who have previously struggled with their reading are progressing well. They are given books that suit their needs. Consequently, they show good understanding of content and of how reading can support their writing.
- In writing, pupils are achieving well. They use their writing skills in other subjects and are taught well to ensure that they include what is needed to make their writing exciting. There is not as much writing in other subjects such as geography or history. Displays show that pupils have improved their writing skills through specific topics such as the Stone Age project and scientific investigations.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	120901
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	455553

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	283
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Edwin Pearson
Headteacher (Executive)	Gerard Batty
Date of previous school inspection	12 June 2013
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