



Firside Middle School, Hellesdon

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 120901
LEA NORFOLK LEA
Inspection number 280913
Inspection dates 3 July 2006 to 4 July 2006
Reporting inspector Mr. John Messer AI

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

Type of school	Middle deemed primary	School address	Middleton's Lane
School category	Community		NR6 5NF
Age range of pupils	8 to 12		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01603 426550
Number on roll	306	Fax number	01603 403361
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs.Tonia Rumble
Date of previous inspection	24 January 2000	Headteacher	Mr. Simon Fisher

Age group 8 to 12	Inspection dates 3 July 2006 - 4 July 2006	Inspection number 280913
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors

Description of the school

This middle school is due to close in 2007 and re-open as a junior school. Pupils are mostly from White British backgrounds. A small number are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Attainment on entry is broadly average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. The school judges its overall effectiveness as good and inspectors agree. Leadership and management are good. A key strength of the school is the passion for teaching and learning that is promoted by the headteacher and shared by the teachers. Pupils achieve well and attain standards that are above average in English, mathematics and science. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers are enthusiastic and are keen to explore different ways to make lessons exciting. There have been many improvements in recent years and the school has good capacity for further improvement. It has now reached a stage where it needs to review the curriculum and bind all the good practice together in order to promote continuity of teaching and learning across the school. Personal development and the care provided for pupils is good. Pupils are confident and feel safe and secure in school. A happy and purposeful ethos has been established. There is a strong emphasis on games and sports and pupils have good opportunities for physical exercise. Teachers use several different methods of setting learning targets for pupils. However, pupils do not always have a clear understanding of precisely what they need to do to reach the next stages in their learning. The introduction of interactive white boards is beginning to enhance the quality of teaching and learning. The school has rightly identified the need to make better use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support pupils' learning across the curriculum. The school gives good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Conduct a review of the curriculum and incorporate all the successful teaching and learning initiatives that have been introduced to promote continuity of practice across the school.
- Develop a common whole school target setting system and make sure that all pupils have short-term targets that help them to understand what they must do to reach the next stages in their learning.
- Further develop the use of ICT to support teaching and learning across the curriculum.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils, including those with learning difficulties, achieve well. Standards are above average in English, mathematics and science. This was confirmed in the results of national tests for Year 6 in 2006. Pupils make good progress because teachers are aware of their individual needs and match tasks to pupils' particular stages of development. Writing was identified as a weakness in 2005. The school put in place a highly successful series of strategies to improve writing. This involved placing pupils in ability sets, incorporating more drama in lessons and using short films as a stimulus for writing. The strategies were led by the subject leader for English. Now many pupils write exceptionally well. The school sets challenging targets for its performance in national tests in English and mathematics. In 2005 it met its targets in mathematics but not in English. This year it met all its targets. Shorter term targets that help pupils

to understand what they need to do to reach the next stages in their learning have not been established consistently across the school. Pupils do well in games and sports and attain high standards.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils develop well spiritually, morally, socially and culturally because of the school's all-round concern for their well-being. Pupils and staff respect each other. This is reflected in pupils' good behaviour in lessons and around the school, and their enjoyment of learning. Pupils take pride in the school and in their achievements and they strive to do well. Their views are taken into account. The school council encourages pupils to think about how to make the school better for everyone. Pupils readily take responsibility. Older pupils take pleasure in organising clubs for younger pupils. Pupils work and play happily together. Social and moral issues are explored and discussed. Pupils are confident that the adults in school will help them to resolve any problems. The school encourages pupils to take a lively interest in the wider world. Pupils learn to keep safe and healthy and to look after themselves. They understand the importance of a healthy diet. The school provides good opportunities for physical exercise and many children walk or cycle to school. Pupils learn to be good citizens and to contribute to the community. They acquire a wide range of skills that will serve them well in later life. Attendance is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers are energetic and enthusiastic, building good relationships with pupils and helping them to learn effectively. Classes are managed well so that pupils concentrate and try hard. Occasionally, teaching is outstanding. Expectations are high and activities are imaginatively designed to engage pupils and extend their thinking. The pace is fast. In some lessons, although teaching is clear, pupils are not challenged enough to think for themselves and to explain their ideas. Resources are not used to full effect to bring learning to life. Interactive whiteboards have been recently introduced and their use as a tool for teaching is developing. Some teaching is highly effective in using this technology to stimulate and involve pupils, leading to high quality work. Teachers have a good overview of the progress pupils are making. However, there is a lack of consistency in the setting of short-term targets and pupils' understanding of what they need to do to reach the next stages in their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum. There are inconsistencies in teaching the curriculum and the school has identified the need to develop a more unified approach. It is working to enrich the curriculum further by forging links between subjects where this serves to deepen learning. In pursuing a well-rounded education for all pupils, the school provides a good range of events and activities beyond lessons. Art, music, drama, dance and sports feature strongly. The school fosters pupils' interests by giving them many opportunities to participate and to excel, for example, by competing in sports teams, or performing in concerts or plays. The school has an excellent programme of residential visits for each year group. These visits extend learning and build confidence. Events such as the recent arts week and days when the whole school pursues a topic in mixed age groups add richness to the curriculum. Provision for ICT has improved since the last inspection. The school is now seeking to build on this to extend pupils' use of technology in all years as a tool for learning across the curriculum. The good provision made for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is carefully matched to their needs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. The school provides a safe and secure learning environment. Child protection procedures are in place and are understood by all staff. Pupils report that they feel confident about approaching teachers and other adults for help, knowing that they will be listened to sympathetically. Provision for pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities is good. Arrangements to track pupils' progress are satisfactory. The needs of pupils who fall behind are identified at an early stage and there is a good range of additional programmes that support their learning well. Teachers' marking gives good guidance about how pupils can improve their work. The school council represents pupils well and gives the headteacher a clear understanding of their opinions and suggestions for improvements. The school conducts surveys on issues such as how much pupils enjoy their lessons and whether they feel trusted and listened to. Pupils are confident that adults listen to and respond positively to their views.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the school are good. One of the main strengths is the leadership of the headteacher who has fostered a great enthusiasm for teaching and learning. The school improvement and development plan includes a 'Passion Statement' which clearly details the school's prime aims. The subject leaders speak passionately about their subjects and are eager to explore all avenues in their quest to improve learning and to raise standards further. The school's self-evaluation of its performance is accurate. All associated with the school are well aware of its strengths

as well as the most important areas for development. There have been many improvements in recent years. Staff say that the strong sense of teamwork that has been established is one of the most important developments. All members of staff feel valued and are enabled to take a full part in helping to improve the school. For example, one member of the support staff has taken a lead in developing the library. She has been highly successful and is justly proud of her achievements. Subject leaders produce clear action plans in response to the priorities identified through analysing the school's performance. These are used effectively to drive up standards and to improve the climate for learning. The school is now at the point where it needs to review provision and refocus its energies so that all the successful initiatives are evaluated and built upon systematically to further improve teaching and learning. The overwhelming majority of parents who returned questionnaires are pleased with the education provided for their children. They particularly appreciate the open avenues of communication that have been established. The school uses parents' views to inform its evaluation of how well it is doing. The governing body is effective and governors are closely involved with the life of the school. They are involved in school self-evaluation exercises and formulating the school's vision for improvement. Finances are managed well and the school is well resourced.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

We enjoyed visiting your school. Thank you very much for being so friendly and helpful. We think that the Firside Middle is a good school. Your teachers and the support staff work hard to help you improve. Teachers plan lessons thoroughly and give you a good range of activities that help you to develop skills and learn successfully. You have the chance to go on residential visits each year and this year's visit to France sound great. We were impressed with your maturity and how sensible you are. You are polite and thoughtful. You enjoy learning and want to succeed. You are making good progress in English, mathematics and science. Your writing has improved hugely and many of you write exceptionally well. The wide range of skills you develop help to prepare you well for the world of work. You are good at sports and games and know how to keep fit. You told us that behaviour is generally good and that there is no bullying. There are a few things that we have asked the school to do to improve things further. There have been many improvements in teaching and learning in recent years and we think it is now time for the staff to think hard about what has worked really well so that they can make lessons even more exciting for everybody. We also think that your teachers should make clearer exactly what you have to do to produce even better work. The school has lots of new equipment, like the interactive white boards, and we think that it is important to use new technology even more to help you with your learning. We know that you have sensible attitudes to work and are just as keen as the teachers to make sure that everybody does their very best. We wish you every success in the future.